



Exploring the Relationship Between Mentoring, Work-Family Conflict and Career Progression Among Women

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Abstract

The present study explored the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among 200 women working in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, who served as participants in the study. Data were collected using mentoring scale, work-family conflict scale and career progression scale. Two hypotheses were tested in the study. The results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses showed that there was a significant relationship between mentoring, work family conflict and career progression thereby refuting the hypotheses. The result also showed that mentoring had a positive relationship while work-family conflict had a negative relationship. This implies that as mentoring is increasing among women, their career progression is increasing while as work-family conflict is increasing, career progression is reducing. Hence it is recommended that organizational managers and employers should encourage female employees to always seek mentoring as a means of increasing their tendency to progress in their career and also women should try as much as they can to reduce the rate of the occurrence of work-family conflict in other to increase their likelihood of progressing in their career.

Keywords: Mentoring, Work-family conflict, Career progression, women.

Introduction

In Nigeria today, due to some political, religious, social, and cultural differences or reasons, adequate measures are yet to be fully put in place to ensure that women are given equal opportunity with men in terms of career progression. This may be one of the reasons, Ahmad (2001) and Oke (2003) stated that women's career progression is hindered by the

social environment, legal and institutional structures, unequal employment opportunities, work-life balance and restricted access to professional development opportunities associated with economic resources. Although avenues for work are now increasingly open for women, they still have to fight against gender bias to gain acceptance as equals (Mirza & Jabeen, 2011). So, when considering the status of women in management positions, it is important to acknowledge the importance of social constraints to women's career progression. Because to tackle this constraint, extended efforts are required in all forums to transform these attitudes and to overcome traditional stereotypes and lessen the division of male and female at work. Failure to achieve the expected career progression among women can trigger some unwholesome organizational behaviours such as sabotage, turnover intention, poor commitment and so on. If these extraneous behaviors are not controlled, they can affect organizational effectiveness. A lot of women from the researcher's general observations over time, have somewhat suffered setback especially in career progression. Some indulge in unwanted behaviours due to this. Women in the university setting are not left out. It is perceived that out of frustration due to lack of career progression, they may start indulging in unhealthy behaviours, start having issues with their marriage and may exhibit antagonistic behaviour towards co-workers out of jealousy especially if the co-workers are progressing in their career. All these unwholesome behaviours if not controlled may hinder work efficiency in the university. Hence the need to carry out empirical studies to determine the factors that can affect career progression among women thereby ameliorating the problems and proffering good solution. Also little empirical studies has been conducted on the three constructs, most of them are outside Nigeria. While to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has looked at the relationship between the variables of this study among women of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Hence, in reaction to this research need, the present study attempts to fill in this gap by exploring the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among women.

Career progression has to do with making headway in one's career. It involves being successful with respect to one's job and cadre (Greenhaus et al, 1990). Career progression is one of the goals every viable employee is likely to achieve while in an organization. According to Dawn (2017), career progression can be defined as advancement in profession that forms a person's work identity. He added that it is a significant part of human development and spans over the individual's entire lifetime, beginning when the individual first becomes aware how people make a living. With respect to gender disparity on career progression, women's participation in the paid workforce is one of the most significant social changes of the last century. This is based on the fact that women have made noteworthy advances in management, which used to be a largely male preserve (Helfat, et al 2006); even so, women have not made inroads into the higher levels of corporate power (Davidson & Burke, 2000). Studies in various countries such as Norway

(Hoel, 2002), the US (Catalyst, 2004), Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Burke & Mattis, 2000) and the UK (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2003) monitor the presence of women in executive positions and reveal that the lack of women at the top of large companies is a global phenomenon. Surveys indicate that gender is still a common barrier to women's career advancement in many international contexts. It seems that their career progression to the senior executive level is blocked by some factors yet to be fully determined (Powell & Butterfield, 1994). In Nigeria, for instance, some of the factors may include but not limited to mentoring and family issues like work-family conflict among women.

Mentoring is traditionally defined as a developmental relationship between a mentor and protege who have different levels of expertise and skills (Ragins, & Kram, 2007). Mentors are usually competent senior employees who have rich experience in a particular field, while protégés are considered to have limited skills and experience (Woo, 2017). In this regard, mentoring is especially valuable for the transmission of positive attitudes as mentors provide invaluable information on the mission and philosophies of the organisation, help employees cope with career stress and give proper orientation towards workplace values (Payne, et al 2006). In organizational context, mentoring is often viewed as a Training and Development (T&D) programme that can be used to increase a group's and/or individual potentials to carry out particular duties and responsibilities, to familiarize with new techniques and care for all aspects of the mentees (Hanford & Ehrich, 2006). Mentoring is also viewed as integral to learning in the workplace, to receiving career help, and for development and psychosocial support (Cummings and Worley, 2009). Along with the opportunity to receive recognition and respect from peers for making a contribution to the development of a youth talent, internal satisfaction is a potential by-product for the mentor. In a mentoring relationship, protégés and mentors both win, resulting in long term benefit for society at large (Burstahler & Crohneim, 2001). Sweeney (2004) talks about expanding the definition and purpose of mentoring, and he viewed it as creating a more professional culture, where staff are continually learning on the job, where collaboration and openness are the norm. Traditionally, what distinguishes an adviser from a mentor is that the mentor focuses on career advancement for a longer time and at a higher and more committed level than the adviser. This means that mentoring is likely to have enormous positive influence on career progression. The use of mentoring specifically for women is a source of much discussion in the existing literature. Tharenou (2005) proposed that for women, particularly those working in male-dominated sectors, mentoring is a vital support and keystone for career progression. Ely and Padavic (2007) and Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, and Wiethoff (2010) acknowledged that such workplace settings, characterized by female underrepresentation where an "aggressive, engineering intensive, competitive 'up-or-out' corporate culture women are well served by developing mentoring relationships. Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz and Johnson

(2014) concur that the occupational environment is an important factor when examining the effectiveness of mentoring in career progression.

Apart from mentoring, work-family conflict is a factor that is likely to determine women's career progression. According to Goldberg et al, (2012) work and family balance is an "individual defining balance and engagement across roles in a way that is meaningful to her or him. Among Nigerian employees, the issue of work family conflict cannot be overemphasized. This is anchored on the fact that, by the nature of their jobs, most of them work for a very long hour and as such find it difficult to cope with some family demands or to reconcile family demands and that of work. The term work family conflict has received great attention of researchers for many decades. The conflict based on responsibilities between work and family and its outcomes on employees are the most important arising issue (Ahmed, Muddasar & Perviaz, 2012). It refers to a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of time devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities (Netemeyer, Boles & Mcmurrian, 1996). Work-family conflict has been defined as "A form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Although some authors (example, Heymann, 2000; Presser, 2000) have suggested that there are unique strains on families in which married mothers with children work evenings, Presser (2000) findings indicated that it is only among night shifts that there are elevated risks of marital disruption. This showed that work influence family relationship, hence work family conflict. Such conflict may affect one on the course of making progress in career. To prove this assertion, this study is aimed at exploring the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among women. Thus, it is hypothesized that;

- Mentoring will not be significantly related to career progression among women.
- Work-Family Conflict will not be significantly related to career progression among women.

Method

Participants

Via purposive sampling technique, a total of 200 women who are employees from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria served as participants for the study. This technique involves administering the questionnaire to every potential participant that is in line with the purpose of the study. This means that by virtue of being a woman working in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka qualifies one to participate. To locate the women, the researchers went to different offices within the university, introduced themselves, created

rapport and administered the questionnaire. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 60 years with a mean age of 31.89 years and standard deviation of 7.84. In terms of religion, all were Christians.

Instrument

Mentoring Scale

Noe's (1988) mentoring scale was used. It is a 21-item scale scored on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1-(strongly disagree) to 5-(strongly agree). A cronbach α of .89 was obtained by the author, while for the present study a cronbach α of .85 was established.

Work-Family Conflict Scale

This is a 6-item scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996). It assesses the degree to which work responsibilities interfere with family. The scale is scored using a 5point likert scale in which response categories ranged from 1-(strongly agree) to 5-(strongly disagree). A cronbach α of .88 was obtained by Netemeyer et al (1996), while for the present study; a cronabch α of .94 was established.

Career Progression Questionnaire

This is a 5-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al, (1990). The questions were answered using a 5-point likert scale anchored by 1-(strongly disagree) to 5-(strongly agree). A cronbach α of .81 was reported by the author, while for the present study a cronbach α of .72 was established.

Design and Statistics.

The research was survey, correlational design was adopted and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics was used in analyzing the data.

Results

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Correlation table among the variables of the study

Variable	R.cal	P
Mentoring	.90**	.00
Work-family Conflict	-.81**	.00
Career Progression		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results of the correlation analysis computed to ascertain the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among women revealed that mentoring was significantly related to career progression ($r = .90^{**}$, $p < .05$). Also work-family conflict was significantly related to career progression although it had a negative correlation ($r = -.81^{**}$, $p < .05$). Thus, both hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected. The findings therefore show that as mentoring is being increased among women, their career progression increases too. Hence, they move in the same direction. While as work-family conflict is increasing, career progression is reducing or vice-versa.

Discussion

The study explored the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among women. The findings of this study revealed that the two hypotheses stated yielded a significant outcome contrary to the stated hypotheses. The first which stated that mentoring will not be significantly related to career progression was rejected. Hence a relationship existed between the two. It was observed that as mentoring is increasing, career progression is increasing. This is in line with Hughes and Sheerin (2016) study which explored the effect of mentoring on women's career progression in occupationally segregated sectors of employment and found that for women, human resource mentoring as a resource was seen as an enabler to career progression and a means of learning their role. This implies that women should assiduously seek mentoring as a means of bringing about increase in their career progression.

The findings of this study also rejected the second hypothesis which stated that work-family conflict will not be significantly related with career progression. Hence a significant

relationship existed between work-family conflict and career progression although on a negative level, showing that if there is reduction in work-family conflict among women, there is tendency that there will be an increase in their career progression. Considering the implications of differences in work and family life, it is reasonable to assume that men and women have unequal career opportunities. In fact, scholars believe that a constraint for women in achieving management positions is the disproportionate responsibility they still bear for raising children and performing household tasks (Wirth, 1998). A study by Karimi (2008) and Namasivayam and Mount (2004) investigating relationships between work-family conflict, family-work conflict and job satisfaction found that when individuals' work roles interfere with family roles, the individual experiences lower job satisfaction. Therefore, it suffices to say that higher levels of work interference with family conflict were related to lower job satisfaction and career progress for working women. The finding of this study is also in line with the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) by Dawis and Lofquist, (1984). This is a class of theory in career development that is anchored on the individual difference tradition of vocational behaviour called person environment correspondence theory, viewing career choice and development as continual processes of adjustment and accommodation in which: (a) the Person (P) looks for organisations and Environments (E) that would match his/her "requirement" in terms of needs and (b) E in turn looks for individuals who have the capabilities to meet the "requirements" of the organization. To P, the most central requirements to meet from E are his/her needs (or reinforces), which could be further dissected into categories of psychological and physical needs that are termed values. While to E, the most central requirements are abilities which are operationalized as dimensions of skills that P possesses that are considered necessary in a given environment (E). Thus, the degree of P's satisfaction and E's satisfactoriness would jointly predict P's tenure in that work environment.

Based on the above findings and assumptions, the researcher recommends that organizational managers and employers should encourage female employees to always seek mentoring as a means of increasing their tendency to progress in their career. It is also recommended that women should try as much as they can to reduce the rate of the occurrence of work-family conflict in order to increase their likelihood of progressing in their career.

Limitations and suggestions for future study

Like many other studies, this study is not without limitations. First, the study cannot be generalized among private organizations based on the fact that the study was conducted in a public university setting. Future studies should explore both the private and public university women for better generalization. Another limitation is concerned with the sample size. Only 200 participants were sampled for the study, out of myriad of university women in Nigeria. As such, it becomes difficult to generalize the findings of the study.

Future studies should sample larger number of university women to justify any sense of generalization. Finally, the study was limited to determining how mentoring and work-family conflict are related to career progression. It failed to determine the causes of work-family conflict and the determinants of women's attitude towards mentoring. Future studies should consider the inclusion of these for more efficient results.

In conclusion therefore, the present study which explored the relationship between mentoring, work-family conflict and career progression among women indicated that both mentoring, and work-family conflict are related to career progression. Hence an increase in mentoring goes with an increase in career progression among women. While an increase in work-family conflict shift goes with a decrease in career progression and vice-versa. The study is also one of the first to attempt to expose the relationship between the variables of the study among women in Nigeria. Hence the study has added to existing literature in this regard.

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