

BURNOUT AMONG MOTHERS IN HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSION: DO FAMILY VARIABLES CONTRIBUTE?

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of family-related variables (number and age of children) on burnout among a sample of Nigerian mothers in human service profession (female teachers). Participants comprised 304 female teachers between the ages of 26 to 54 years ($M=40.37$, $SD=4.09$) drawn from 24 State Government Secondary Schools in Enugu, the capital city of Enugu State, South-eastern, Nigeria. They were selected using criterion sampling. Maslach and Jackson (1986) 22-item Burnout Inventory with three subscales measuring emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of reduced personal accomplishment was administered. Cross-sectional survey design was used. Results from 2x3 Analysis of Variance F-test revealed no significant influence of number of children on the three components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of reduced personal accomplishment) at $p > 0.5$. Moreover, age of children did not influence the three components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of reduced personal accomplishment) at $p > 0.5$. These findings were discussed in the light of previous related empirical evidence, collectivist culture and extended family system in South-eastern Nigeria and conservation of resources theory. Considering these results, it was concluded that number and age of children had no influence on burnout among a sample of Nigerian female teachers, thereby giving credence to social support derived from collectivist culture and extended family system in this part of the world.

Keywords: Number of children, Age of children, Burnout, Human Service Profession, Female Teachers

Introduction

The global rise in the number of women combining work and family roles within the recent decades has exposed women in South-eastern Nigeria to role conflict. Conflict between work role and family role has dramatic effects on individuals (Fu & Shaffer, 2001, Burke & Greenglass, 2001). Research has shown higher levels of work-family conflict to be related to lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, higher levels of turnover and burnout (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). Among married working women, work and family responsibilities interact closely that separating the two nearly becomes impossible. Antecedent conditions in work and family domains may not be highly stressful, when considered alone, but their joint occurrence is apt to produce stress and consequently burnout (Bedeian, Burke & Moffet, 1988), suggesting an additive effect (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992).

Burnout was first described in 1970s and originally referred to a reaction on interpersonal reactions on the job (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009). It is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of reduced personal accomplishment (Lee & Ashforth, 1990) that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). It is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Stress can intensify burnout but it is not the main cause (Burisch, 2006) and can be triggered by excessive job demands and the employees' inability to continuously invest energy when meeting the demands (Burisch, 2006). Researchers agree that stressors leading to burnout in human services can also be found in other occupations (Burisch, 2006, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2007), yet is a type of stress response that is on the rise among workers today and most common among those who have intense contact and involvement with others during the course of their normal workday (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

The first component or phase of burnout is emotional exhaustion. It is considered to be the most important of the three components. It is characterized by lack of energy, and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up. This may coexist with feelings of frustration and tension (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally over-extended and drained by one's contact with other people (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), and depleted of one's emotional resources (Schaufeli, Bakker, Van der Heijden & Prins, 2009). It can manifest itself in physical characteristics such waking up just as tired as when going to bed or lacking required energy to take another task or face-to-face encounter (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). This is consistent with early assumptions that burnout occurs in human services professions/people helping professions (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Frequent and intense, or emotionally charged interactions are thought to be more taxing on the individual and thus more likely to lead to emotional exhaustion. And this may have implications for mothers in Nigeria who are in human services professions (e.g. teaching).

High level of emotional exhaustion leads to withdrawal from people and job in general resulting in depersonalized reactions to people and in a cynical attitude towards the job (Taris, Le Blanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005). In a terminal stage, a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion will occur from which it is difficult to recover (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are the central elements of burnout (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Emotional exhaustion may lead to depersonalization stage of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Depersonalization is the second component of burnout. This phase of burnout typically occurs after emotional exhaustion and tends to be a direct response to the stressors of the job (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2000). It refers to an individual's personal detachment from work. For those who deal with people on a day to day basis (human services professions), it entails treating individuals (e.g. patients, clients, students e.t.c) as objects rather than people. Depersonalization is characterized by detachment and emotional callousness (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Employees in the depersonalization phase of burnout will take cool, distant attitude toward work and the people on the job (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

The final component of burnout, feeling of reduced personal accomplishment, is a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement (Leiter & Maslach, 1988). Individuals in this phase of burnout view themselves negatively in both their ability to perform their jobs and their ability to have positive personal interactions. Individuals experiencing feeling of reduced personal accomplishment trivialize the things that they are successful at and no longer feel they are able to make a difference through their work or personal interactions (Maslach and Leiter (1997).

Generally, burnout is not, as some people believe, simply excessive stress. Rather, it is a complex human reaction to stress (Kelly, 2008), especially when the stress is chronic. If people especially married female teachers with children who are under chronic state of stress because of work and family responsibilities, then their body might begin to show signs of stress overload, which include fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and physical exhaustion e.t.c. It is under conditions of chronic stress that the body can begin the slide into burnout. In other words, burnout is the end result of a tired body and mind (Kelly, 2008).

Burnout is most commonly associated with white collar professions (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) which combine a high level of interpersonal involvement with exposure to emotionally demanding situations. Such situations are prevalent particularly in the human services professions (people-helping professions), public service and managerial positions where clients impose constant demand or attention (Duxbury & Higgins, 1998). Workers in people-helping professions experienced more burnout than employees in non-people-helping professions (Ugwu, 1998). Chronic daily stressors, rather than unique critical life events, are regarded as central factors in generating burnout. Burnout leads to reduced job performance (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004, Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and results in employees being less willing to help colleagues and losing their concern for the organization (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke, 2004). It can lead to higher costs and financial losses because of higher absenteeism rates and more frequent sick leaves (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Burnout is more in occupations where employees are more in interaction with other people (e.g. clients, customers, students) rather than dealing with things and information (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Burnout is conceptualized as resulting from long term occupational stress, particularly among human service workers, including teachers (Jennet, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). Burnout may be the endpoint of coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress (Jennet, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). While researchers have shown that teaching is one of the most stressful jobs and this can lead to teachers suffering from burnout (e.g. Cooper & Travers, 2012, Larrivee, 2012), others have shown that female teachers experienced lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (e.g. Bayani, Bagheri & Bayani, 2013).

Contextual Factors

Family environment cannot be neglected when examining the development of burnout (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005). Research has shown that number of children and ages were significant indicators of burnout among the female teachers (Mukundan & Ahour, 2011). Women are susceptible to burnout since they often take responsibility for children in addition to their employment (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). To this end, Nigerian mothers who are more in human services professions such as teaching (Okonkwo, 2011) might slide into burnout because of the spillover from their work responsibilities with built-in strain to family responsibilities (e.g. home care and child care) and spillover from family responsibilities to work responsibilities. Specifically, teaching job among other challenges exposes teachers to intense contact and involvement with students during the course of a normal workday. Teaching responsibilities, also, extend beyond the work setting to the home setting (e.g. reading, preparing lesson note, and marking exam scripts e.t.c). These intense contact with students, extension of responsibilities from work setting to family setting and taking care of their children as prescribed by traditional gender-role socialization in South-eastern Nigeria which saddles women with the greater percentage of family responsibilities especially childcare, therefore, might expose this segment of women to work-family conflict resulting in chronic stress which if not properly managed might result in burnout, hence this study was interested in family-related variables (number and age of children) and burnout among mothers in human service profession (e.g. teachers).

Theoretical Background

Conservation of Resources Theory

This theory holds that individuals experience stress whenever they are threatened with resource loss or when their resources are actually depleted and, therefore, potentially inadequate to resolve any impending demands (Hobfoll, 1998). When resources are actually depleted they experience *actual stress*, when resources are threatened they experience *anticipatory stress* (Hobfoll, 1989).

In view of this theory, a female teacher with independent older children could be likened to an individual with a greater pool of resources. That is, because the children are independent and capable of taking care of themselves, they give the mother less pressure and more time since she spends less time and energy taking care of them. To this end, she is less vulnerable to resource loss or depletion, and more capable of resource gain. This gain translates into more time and energy being given to work responsibilities, thus she can spend more time on her job and become more committed. Invariably, this enhances her resource gain, and reduces both actual and anticipatory stress which could lead to burnout

In contrast, a working mother with large number of dependent young children is likely to spend more time at home and will lack enough resources (time and energy) to spend on her work responsibilities. Thus, effort to share the weak resource pool between family and work responsibilities results in a continuous draw on resources, leaving her with depleted resources to combat the chronic strain situation resulting in burnout. As this condition continues repeatedly, meeting family responsibilities exhausts the available resources thereby making it difficult for her to meet work responsibilities resulting in chronic high level of stress and the slide into burnout.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted among 304 female secondary school teachers drawn from 24 state government secondary schools within Enugu, the capital city of Enugu State in the South-eastern part of Nigeria. All the participants were qualified teachers with 24 percent holding a National Certificate of Education, 53 percent had Bachelor's Degree in Education, and 10 percent had Post-Graduate Diploma in Education and 13 percent with a Master of Science Degree in Education.

Criterion sampling, which involves selecting cases (participants) that meet some predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 1990), was used to select the participants. Following the criteria set for the sample selection, the female teachers selected for the study were aged between 26 and 54 years, had spent at least a year as teachers in the schools, were married and living with their husbands, had at least one child, and were living with at least one of their children. Widows and divorcees were not included. The principals of the selected schools facilitated the sample selection by examining the files of their teachers in order to identify those who met the set criteria

A total of 177 (58.2 percent) of the participants had children aged between 1 and 11 years, 87 (28.7) had children aged 12 to 17 years, and 40 (13.2 percent) had children aged 18 years and above. In addition, 198 (65.1 percent) of the participants had at least one person assisting them with domestic chores while the remaining 106 (34.9 percent) had nobody assisting with domestic chores.

Measures

Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire that had two components comprising demographic information and Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Demographic Information

This specifically collected the teachers' demographic information such as their age, educational qualification, rank, years of experience as teachers, marital status, as well as the number and ages of their children.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

Maslach and Jackson (1986) 22-item Burnout Inventory measured the various components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of reduced personal accomplishment). The inventory was originally designed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) and reported Cronbach Alpha of 0.71 to 0.90 and test retest reliability coefficients of 0.60 to 0.80. Coker (1999) using Nigerian samples reported Cronbach Alpha of 0.86 and split-half reliability coefficient of 0.57. And by correlating the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Inventory with Psycho-physiological Patterns of Anxiety Scale by Omoluabi (1987), Coker (1999) obtained concurrent validity coefficient in the range of 0.01 to 0.36. However, the present researcher reported Cronbach Alpha of 0.81 and split-half reliability of 0.58.

Procedure

Stage one, a letter was written officially to the Ministry of Education, Enugu State, Nigeria requesting for the number of state Government Secondary Schools within Enugu, the capital city of Enugu state and permission to use a sample of the female teachers in the schools as participants for the study. The requested information and permission were granted within two weeks of the application.

Stage two, equipped with the requested information (e.g. 24 state secondary schools and their locations) and permission, a visit was made to the principals of the schools in their schools respectively. The principals serving as research assistants facilitated the examination of files of these teachers in order to identify those teachers who met certain criteria which included spending at least one year in the schools, married with children (at least a child of one year per teacher), living with their husbands, living with their children (at least one child per teacher). However, divorcees and widows were not included.

Stage three, considering the number (N= 356) of the identified female teachers who possessed these criteria and volunteered to participate, all (N =356) were selected for the study. Three hundred and fifty six (356) copies of the questionnaire (measuring number of children, age of children and burnout) were given to the principals (research assistants) who administered them to the identified female teachers in their respective schools. The participants were instructed to take the copies of questionnaire home, study them carefully, complete and return them to the principals within one week. This was the procedure in each of the 24 schools.

Stage four, copies of the completed and returned questionnaire were retrieved from the principals. Of the 356 copies of the questionnaire administered, 304 (85.39%) copies were properly completed and returned

while 43 were returned but not properly completed and 9 were not returned. The 304 copies properly completed and returned were used for analyses.

Design/Statistics

Cross-sectional survey design was used. 2x3 Analysis of Variance F-test for unequal sample was used as statistical test for data analysis.

Results

The overall findings from the study as shown in tables 1, 2 and 3, using the Maslach Burnout Inventory described above, were that family variables (number and ages of children) did not influence the components of burnout among the female teachers studied.

Table1: 2x3 ANOVA table on Number-Age of Children and Emotional Exhaustion

Source	Type III sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	395.143	5	79.029	0.717	0.611	0.012
Intercept	81378.480	1	81378.480	738.99	0.000	0.712
Number of Children	66.612	1	66.612	0.604	>.05	0.002
Age of Children	8.052	2	4.026	0.037	>.05	0.000
Number & Age of Children	130.883	2	65.442	0.553	>.05	0.004
Error	32842.406	298	110.209	-	-	-
Total	169791.000	304	-	-	-	-
Corrected total	33237.549	303	-	-	-	-

Dependent Variable: Emotional Exhaustion

As shown in table 1, number of the children of the teachers had no significant influence on the teachers' emotional exhaustion, $F(1,303) = 0.60, p > .05$. The age of children of the teachers did not have any significant influence on their emotional exhaustion $F(2,303) = 0.04, p > .05$. No significant interaction influence of number and age of children on emotional exhaustion, $F(2,303) = 0.55, p > .05$.

Table2: 2x3 ANOVA table on Number-Age of Children and Depersonalization

Source	Type III sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	197.868	5	39.574	1.224	0.298	0.020
Intercept	13162.051	1	13162.051	407.134	0.000	0.577
Number of Children	0.030	1	0.030	0.001	>.05	0.000
Age of Children	5.528	2	2.764	0.085	>.05	0.001
Number & Age of Children	150.345	2	75.173	2.325	>.05	0.015
Error	9633.908	298	32.329	-	-	-
Total	32240.000	304	-	-	-	-
Corrected total	9831.776	303	-	-	-	-

Dependent Variable: Depersonalization

As shown in table 2, number of the children of the teachers had no significant influence on the teachers' depersonalization, $F(1,303) = 0.00, p > .05$. The age of children of the teachers did not have any significant influence on their depersonalization, $F(2,303) = 0.09, p > .05$. No significant interaction influence of number and age of children on depersonalization, $F(2,303) = 2.33, p > .05$.

Table3: 2x3 ANOVA table on Number-Age of Children and Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Source	Type III sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	259.902	5	51.980	0.443	0.818	0.007

Intercept	69559.115	1	69559.115	592.869	0.000	0.665
Number of Children	7.085	1	7.085	0.060	>.05	0.000
Age of Children	205.639	2	102.820	0.876	>.05	0.006
Number & Age of Children	92.306	2	46.153	0.393	>.05	0.003
Error	34963.256	298	117.326	-	-	-
Total	139860.000	304	-	-	-	-
Corrected total	35223.158	303	-	-	-	-

Dependent Variable: Feeling of Reduced Personal Accomplishment

As shown in table 3, number of the children of the teachers had no significant influence on the teachers’ feeling of reduced personal accomplishment, $F(1,303) = 0.06, p > .05$. The age of children of the teachers did not have any significant influence on their feeling of reduced personal accomplishment, $F(2,303) = 0.88, p > .05$. No significant interaction influence of number and age of children on feeling of reduced personal accomplishment, $F(2,303) = 0.39, p > .05$.

Discussion

Generally, while the findings are contrary to previous research findings (e.g. Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2009, Mukundan & Ahour, 2001, Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001, Lee & Ashforth, 1990), they support a tenet of the conservation of resources theory that individuals must invest resources in order to limit loss of resources, protect resources or gain resources such as time and energy (Hobfoll, 1998).

Despite being an oil producing country, Nigeria is one of the poorest nations in the world, ranking 178th out of 228 countries in Gross Domestic Product per capita because of ravages caused by bribery and corruption (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). Moreover, illiteracy and unemployment levels are very high. These together with the high levels of poverty, make domestic workers (commonly known as house helps) readily available at a very affordable rate. The house helps are usually hired on permanent basis to take care of non-job responsibilities thereby giving working Nigerian mothers enough time to focus on work responsibilities by reducing the pressure and stress associated with the presence of large number of dependent young children which would have made them slide into burnout. This supports a tenet of the conservation of resources theory that individuals must invest resources in order to limit loss of resources, protect resources or gain resources such as time and energy (Hobfoll, 1998). By, hiring house helps on permanent basis to take care of domestic challenges, these women invest more time and energy in their teaching responsibilities, hence protecting their resources (e.g. time and energy) and gaining more resources (e.g. time and energy) in the workplace and family.

Moreover, the kind of family system practiced in the South-eastern part of Nigeria somewhat gives a plausible explanation. That is, while the family structure in Nigeria, as in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa is definitely changing (Bigombe & Khadiagala, 2003, Mokomane, 2012), the South-eastern part of Nigeria is one of the areas where the extended family system is still predominant. This family system—which comprises the couple, their children, parents, siblings, in-laws, nephews, nieces, cousins and other extended family members living together—differs from the nuclear family system which is predominant in most Western countries where much of the literature linking number and age of children and burnout is located.. The social support and reciprocal care giving by relations inherent in the extended family system means that many of the working women studied had, at least to some extent, assistance with domestic responsibilities and tasks such as childcare, cooking, washing, shopping e.t.c. This is likely to have cushioned off stress from work and family responsibilities which ordinarily would have led to chronic high level of stress resulting in burnout. To this end, it can be argued that social support does not only help women to take care of domestic chores but to also develop emotional stability which enhances their well-being, thus giving credence to the view that social support is a highly effective intervention for coping with burnout (Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981). This supports another tenet of conservation of resources theory role which suggests that individuals with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more

capable of resource gain (Hobfoll, 1998). This follows because individuals use those resources that they have to offset resource loss, to protect resources, and to gain other resources. To this end, the social support provided by the extended family system could have accounted for the greater resources (e.g. time and energy) which made these women not to experience different levels of burnout in spite of the number and age of their children. In support of this view, researchers have demonstrated that experienced stress is related to the level of social support (Durup, 1993, Leiter, 1990). Moreover, social support is a fundamental coping resource in that it provides people with a greater range of options when attempting to address demands (Hobfoll, 1989).

In addition, Nigeria as a collectivist culture (Hoftsedde, 1997 & Gorodincheko, 2010) has always enjoyed help from other people that are not even family members. This help from other people especially coworkers who assist with work responsibilities often give Nigerians enough time for work and family responsibilities. This might explain why this women irrespective of the number and age of their children were not under chronic stress from work and family responsibilities which would have led to burnout, thus supporting earlier finding that people from collectivist culture experience fewer conflict between work and family (Grzywacz, Areury, Marin, Carrillo, Burke, Coates & Quantt, 2007) and the view that work and family issues are related to cultural values, norms, beliefs and assumptions (Poelmans, 2005). This social support engendered by collectivist culture which characterizes Nigeria supports one of the assumptions of conservation of resources theory that when individuals possess strong resource pools, they are more likely to accept or seek opportunities to risk resources in order to gain more resources (Hobfoll, 1998). Thus, this social support from coworkers might be responsible for the strong resource pool which enabled these working women seek opportunities to risk resources in order to gain more resources (e.g. asking coworkers to pick their children from school or leave their job responsibilities under the care of coworkers to pick their children from school).

In South-eastern Nigeria, the traditional gender-role socialization has made women to regard domestic responsibilities such as childcare irrespective of the number and age of the children as a way of life and pride of womanhood. This is in line with gender model which contends that on the basis of sex-role socialization, women are socialized to view their status of mother and wife as their primary role, and their social position as determined by the family (Feldberg & Glenn, 1979). Thus, in Nigeria, women do not regard any form of domestic work as burden rather it is a way of life and pride of womanhood. In view of this, if shouldering domestic responsibilities is considered an integral part of womanhood, then it is unlikely that supporting children would be considered stressful. In addition, these women from his part of the world believe that proceeds (e.g. income) from paid employment provide them with additional resources to shoulder their domestic responsibilities. In line with this, integration of work and family responsibilities leads to a net gain in resources (psychological, material, or other), which would protect individuals from ill effects of work-life conflict (Innstrand, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum & Aasland, 2008), thus reduced chronic strain which would have led to burnout among these female teachers.

Conclusion and recommendations

Although much of the related literature show that employees in occupations that encourage intense contact with people experience more burnout (e.g. Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, Karasek & Theorell, 1990, Duxbury & Higgins, 1998, Ugwu, 1998) and family variables influencing it among teachers (e.g. Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005, Mukundan & Ahour, 2001, Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001), there is a segment that argues that some teachers cope with burnout although it differs (e.g. Jennet, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). The spill-over theory, for example, posits that positive spill-over (work-family enhancement) referring to situations in which the satisfaction energy and sense of accomplishment derived from one domain transfers to another (Frone, 1992) can occur when work and family responsibilities are combined. Participation in multiple roles can have positive effects on general health and wellbeing as it provides a greater number of resources—such as better financial situation, greater social integration, improved social support, and higher self-esteem—that can be used to promote personal growth and better functioning in other life domains (Härenstam & Bejerot, 2001, Geurts, Kompier, Dikkers, Van Hooff & Kinnunen, 2005). Thus, having either large number of dependent young or independent old children can be stressful and make a working mother crave for more family time yet having them gives her sense of happiness and fulfillment since in South-eastern Nigeria, supporting large number of children earns a mother admiration and respect.

In line with this latter view it is argued, based on the results of this study, that in South-eastern part of Nigeria social support from house helps and extended family members has given credence to the view that social support is a highly effective intervention for coping with burnout (Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981). In addition, the findings are true reflections of collective culture and traditional gender-role orientation in Enugu, South-eastern Nigeria which give credence to the view that people from collectivist culture experience fewer conflict between work and family (Grzywacz, Areury, Marin, Carrillo, Burke, Coates & Quantt, 2007) and the view that work and family issues are related to cultural values, norms, beliefs and assumptions (Poelmans, 2005). The traditional gender-role socialization designates domestic responsibilities such as childcare the preserve of women irrespective of their participation in paid employment makes women view multiple roles as beneficial as it also provides adequate opportunities and resources which benefit both work and family, and lead to work-family enhancement resulting in no burnout irrespective of the number and age of children. This is indeed consistent with the Okonkwo (2011) findings that many Nigerian women are happy and satisfied with combining work and family responsibilities because resources from paid employment (e.g. salary) help them in shouldering family responsibilities.

Against the above background, it can be concluded that the results are vivid reflection of the Nigerian workers especially female teachers who because of traditional gender-role socialization, support from house helps, extended family members and collectivist culture and in South-eastern Nigeria have remained resolute in shouldering family and work responsibilities despite the general poor working conditions and remuneration. Most importantly the results have given credence to earlier views (e.g. Eya, 2002) that in South-eastern Nigeria, a woman's achievement is not generally considered successful unless she also has a husband and children.

In order to manage stress-related consequences emanating from the combination of work and family responsibilities such as burnout and enhance the benefits accruing from social support from house helps, extended family members and collectivist culture, and the fulfillment derived from having large number of children as enshrined in African traditional values, the following are some of the policy recommendations that are worthy of consideration by Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries:

- Policies that support family-friendly organizations in order to encourage African women who have remained resolute in shouldering work and family responsibilities.
- Policies that can provide additional allowance and other benefits for women who engage in paid employment since the traditional gender-role socialization in Africa saddles them with the greater percentage of domestic responsibilities such as childcare. This will help to cushion off chronic strain which might lead to burnout.
- Policies supported by adequate laws that protect and promote traditional African extended family system such as adequate provision of allowance by public and private sectors for workers which will enable them to support extended family members living with them. This necessary because it will strengthen the family tie and harmony among family members, thus more social support.
- Policies that will regulate the engagement of house helps. Such policies among other things will regulate the minimum age and educational qualification for one to become a house help in order to avoid child labor, child abuse and trafficking. Moreover, such policies supported by adequate laws will regulate the minimum salaries and other benefits to be received by house helps in order to avoid exploitation. This will adequately harness the immense contributions of these domestic helps to the society's workforce.
- Policies that will continue to strengthen the existing collective culture of group accomplishment and welfare in Africa especially South-eastern Nigeria. This will foster unity and social support even among people who have no blood ties.
- Policies such as giving financial assistance to married mothers with children and free education for these children. This will keep strengthening the importance attached to having many children and prevent Africa from being caught with the idea of people not having children even when they are married as experienced in the Western societies.
- Policies that will recognize that teaching profession is one of the most stressful professions yet Nigerian teachers who have remained resolute are among the least paid and worst working

conditions. Such recognition and adequate improvement will help to guard against this segment of the workforce sliding into burnout.

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