

# A comparative analysis of marital obligation of child care of woman working in the private and public sector in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This is a comparative study of work-family conflict in the private and public sector of Nigeria. It comparatively analyzed the impact of long hours working mothers spend at work on child care obligation. The study adopted a survey and descriptive research design. The target population consisted of 524 married women selected from United Bank for Africa (UBA), Nigerian Brewery, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Labour and productivity representing the private and public sectors. A hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Open-ended and close-ended questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. The Cronbach Alpha test was used to test for the internal consistency, and the reliability index of the instrument. The data gather was analyzed using chi-square and independent t test. The findings revealed that the independent sample t-test analysis of the differences between the hours women spend at work and the marital obligation of childcare based of both sectors showed that women working in the private sector ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) spend significantly more time at work than those in the public sector [ $M = 1.87$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ;  $t(522) = 13.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. Also, the result shows that women working in the private sector ( $M = 23.06$ ,  $SD = 10.96$ ) scored significantly higher in variation in terms of time spent at work as well as scoring lower in child care obligation than their counterparts working in the public sector [ $M = 27.98$ ,  $SD = 8.08$ ;  $t(522) = -5.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. The study recommended that government should prosecute private sector organizations that fail to inculcate and implement family flexibilities that will enable married women to cushion the effect of work-home conflict, Family flexibility that allows married women spend less time at work place or to work from home should be encouraged in the private sector, and maternity leave allowance for nursing mothers should be extended to 5-6 months from the usual three months.

**Keywords:** Child care; Family flexibility; Public sector; Private sector; Work-family conflict.

**Resumo.** *Análise comparativa da obrigação conjugal de cuidar de crianças de mulheres que trabalham no setor privado e público na Nigéria.* Este é um estudo comparativo do conflito entre trabalho e família no setor privado e público da Nigéria. Foi analisado o

Received:  
May 27, 2018

Accepted:  
Aug. 11, 2018

Released:  
Aug. 31, 2018



Open access



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impacto comparativo das longas jornadas de trabalho das mães sobre a obrigação de cuidados infantis. O estudo adotou um levantamento e delineamento descritivo. A população-alvo consiste de 524 mulheres casadas selecionadas do United Bank for Africa (UBA), da cervejaria nigeriana, do Ministério do Comércio e Indústria e do Ministério do Trabalho, representando os setores público e privado. Hipóteses foram formulada para orientar o estudo. Questionários aberto e fechado e entrevista foram utilizados para coleta de dados. O teste Alpha de Cronbach foi usado para testar a consistência interna e o índice de confiabilidade do instrumento. A coleta de dados foi analisada pelo teste qui-quadrado e teste t independente. Os resultados revelaram que a análise do teste t para amostras independentes das diferenças entre as horas que as mulheres gastam no trabalho e a obrigação conjugal de cuidar dos filhos de ambos os setores mostrou que as mulheres que trabalham no setor privado ( $M = 2,54$ ,  $DP = 0,64$ ) gastam significativamente mais tempo no trabalho do que aqueles no setor público [ $M = 1,87$ ,  $DP = 0,48$ ;  $t(522) = 13,32$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ]. Além disso, o resultado mostra que as mulheres que trabalham no setor privado ( $M = 23,06$ ,  $DP = 10,96$ ) obtiveram uma variação significativamente maior em termos de tempo gasto no trabalho e menor pontuação na obrigação de cuidados infantis do que suas contrapartes no setor público [ $M = 27,98$ ,  $DP = 8,08$ ;  $t(522) = -5,74$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ]. O estudo recomendou que o governo processe organizações do setor privado que não inculquem e implementem flexibilidades familiares que permitirão às mulheres casadas amortecer o efeito do conflito entre o trabalho e a família. Flexibilidade familiar que permite que mulheres casadas passem menos tempo no trabalho ou trabalhem em casa deve ser incentivada no setor privado, e o subsídio de licença maternidade para mães que amamentam deve ser estendido para 5-6 meses a partir dos três meses habituais.

**Palavras-chave:** Cuidados infantis; Flexibilidade familiar; Setor público; Setor privado; Conflito trabalho-família.

## Introduction

In many African societies the male is regarded as the head of the family and the sole provider for sustenance. The female on the other hand, is expected to mind the home front and take care of the children (Abdulraheem, 2010). She is expected not to take up paid employment that will take her away from the domestic chores of child care, housekeeping, and caring for the spouse etc. However, with the educational opportunity available to women in the society they have become highly educated like their male folks

(Maiya and Bagali, 2014). And this has enhanced their economic value and exposed them to the fact that they can equally be engaged in paid labour just like the male. According to Maiya and Bagali (2014) with the educational advancement of women they have engaged in all occupations even in the ones dominated by the male which such as medicine, engineering and constructive job, military etc.

Nigeria, as an African society, is characterized by a marked sexual division of labour both within and outside the family (Adekola, 2006). Married women shoulder a great deal of

domestic burden, child care and household chores even when they are gainfully employed in the paid labour market. Family, as an important agent of socialization, has a major function in child rearing and up-bringing. According to Bell and Robert (2009), the family has remained the primary agent for the initial socialization of the young for a significant period of time after birth. As a result of this fact, women play a significant role in shaping the attitude, values and beliefs of the child. Since housework is still considered the woman's domain, working women shoulder additional responsibility at the work place as well as at their domestic front.

With civilization and adoption of privatization in most societies of the world women are found both in the private and public sectors of the economy. Both sectors strive for efficiency as such that the workers are expected to diligently perform their tasks towards achieving the goals and aspirations of the establishments irrespective of gender of the staff. In this emerging complex social scenario, married women have a vital role to play in the sectors where they work. Considering the nature of work in the private and public sectors in Nigeria, married seem to have preference for jobs in the public sector than those in the private sector. This may be due to the assumption that jobs in the private sector exert much crunch on them and affect their ability to perform their marital obligations. As a consequence, mothers in the private have a shorter time for nursing and catering for their children than those who are employed in the public sector. Children of mothers in the private sector seem to have little time with their mothers, they leave the home for work early and return late. Considering this assumption this study focused on comparing the impact of paid labour on child care obligation of women working in public and private sectors.

### **Conceptual issues**

The economy of most of the societies of the world is made up of the private and the public sector. These sectors work together for the sustenance of the economy. The private sector comprises businesses which are owned, managed and controlled by individuals. The basic objective of private sector organization is to earn profit, while the public sector is made up of business enterprises owned and managed by the governments; such organizations are either fully or partly owned by federal or state and come under the separate ministry; and their basic objectives are to serve the citizens of the country and to raise Public Revenue.

The work benefits in the public sector appear to be better in the sense that there is some form of leisure, promotion, job security, allowances, and retirement benefits etc (Chothani, 2015). Though the private sector workers seem to have good salary package, competitive environment, and incentive most people in Nigeria seem to prefer the public sector because of these benefits. The objectives and orientation of both the private and public sectors in terms of remuneration, employee incentives and fringe benefits are not similar. In the private sector, remuneration, financial incentives and benefits are generally associated with superior performance. The superior performance is a clear feature of the private sector and time is of essence to the employer and this message is usually passed to the workers. The emphasis on superior performance that comes with long hours away from home has triggered the debate on whether married women in the public sector are able to perform childcare obligation more than their counterparts in the private sector. This is because considering the demands of work place and its time requirement, the children may not be given an adequate or quality time and attention.

The issues on how many hours a week, should women be in or away from

their homes, and how their responsibilities of full time employment interact with their homework have been studied by some scholars. Anyaoha and Onyema (2015) discovered that long hours married women stay away from the home affect their ability to adequately cater for the children. For Ugwulebo (2011), presence, attention and care from parents stabilizes the emotions of the child. The presence of the mother with her child may give confidence and makes it easier for the mothers to know the kind of peers their children mingle with. Nezhad (2013) maintains that working mothers long absence from homes leads to child care arrangements. This, he argued is unsatisfactory in terms of their children's health, affection and psycho-social development. Mothers have a lot to do in the area of proper child care and development. The result of this is that children grow up to exhibit various forms of nonchalant behaviours that are highly detrimental to the society.

But Nicodemo and Waldmann (2009) insisted that women involvement in paid labour be it in the private or public sector does not negatively affect their childcare obligation in the family. They argue that organizations have in place family flexibilities such as leave, maternity care, lunch breaks, sick leave and tea times in a bid to enable women cope with the demand of marital life. Jacobs and Gerson (2001) argue that jobs that require very long hours are not family friendly. Long hours restrict the hours that mothers can spend with their children, which may have an impact on the emotional and intellectual development of a child. They were of the opinion that gender equity is undermined by long hours of work because it is women who are most likely to give up their careers for the sake of their children.

To justify the involvement of married women in paid labour

irrespective of the sector, Blundell and McCurdy (1992) developed a family models which predict changes in the proportion of married women in the labour force known as labour supply theory. According to this theory, women are assumed to decide whether and when to join the labour force based on the opportunities afforded them by paid work, relative to the opportunities of home duties. This theory which is based on the "new home economics" assumes that the goal of individuals and families is to maximize the consumption of goods and services, given resource constraints. Labour supply theory proposes that a woman choose to participate in the labour force if the value of her market is greater than her reservation wage, defined as the value of her time at home. This decision results in an "opportunity cost of time" which is defined as the value of what a woman forgoes in order to spend her time in the way she wants.

Social Constructionism feminist perspective of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman maintains that women have the capacity to perform their home chores as well as get involved in paid jobs outside the home, (Collins, 2001). It views gender issues in the society as a social construct embodying cultural meanings of masculinity and femininity (Fox and Murry, 2000). Ellman and Taggart (1993) suggest that differences in power between women and men are institutionalized by culture and are expressed in the everyday relations of men and women, particularly in families. In Nigeria, some people assume that women are unable to perform their home chore of childcare due to involvement in paid labour. Based on this the main objective of this study was to comparatively examine the extent the hours spent at work by working married women in the private sector on one hand and public sector on the other can affect the quality of their child care obligation.

## Methodology

The study adopted a survey and descriptive research design. The rationale for this was that survey provided an appropriate framework for the collection of data for the development of an in-depth understanding of the research focus. While the descriptive research design allowed the respondents to express themselves about the topic under study through an in-depth interview and the questionnaire. The target population consisted of 542 married women selected from four purposively chosen organizations representing the public and the private sector. United Bank for Africa (UBA) and Consolidated Breweries represented the private sector while the public sector comprised of two ministries (Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Labour and Productivity). The choice of these two ministries out of 13 ministries in the state was as a result of similarity in the nature, mode of operation and their work duration as a bureaucratic environment; while the choice of UBA and Consolidated Breweries from the

private sector was because of their similarities, in-terms of job demand, operations and services, and hours spent at work. This study was a total census survey since the sample size of 524 where all the 524 married women were used for this study. A 41-item structured open-ended and close-ended questionnaire and interview were used to collect data for the study. The Cronbach Alpha Test was used to test for the internal consistency, and the reliability index of the instrument. The data gather was analyzed using chi-square and independent t test.

## Results

### Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>1</sub>** Hours women spend at work significantly affect the quality of child care obligation of women in the private sector more than women working in public sector.

**H<sub>0</sub>** Hours women spend at work does not significantly affect the quality of child care obligation of women working in the private sector more than the women working in the public sector.

**Table 1.** Chi-square Test on Hours Spent at Work and Childcare Obligation by Sector.

Sector		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Private	Chi-Square	35.310 <sup>b</sup>	2	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio	39.766	2	0.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	34.231	1	0.000
	N of Valid Cases	162	-	-
Public	Pearson Chi-Square	47.321 <sup>c</sup>	2	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio	57.004	2	0.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	47.163	1	0.000
	N of Valid Cases	362	-	-
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	107.527 <sup>a</sup>	2	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio	125.393	2	0.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	107.127	1	0.000
	No of Valid Cases	524	-	-

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 36.02.

b. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.90.

c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.66.

Table 1 shows that those women working in the private sector have less than the minimum expected value on hours spent at work than the women working in the public sector. This means that the more time a woman spends at work, the less time attention she gives to her children.

Comparatively, the independent sample t-test analysis of the differences between the hours women spend at work and the marital obligation of childcare based on work sector (public or private) as presented in Table 2 and Table 3 above show that women working

in the private sector ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) spend significantly more time at work than those in the public sector [ $M = 1.87$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ;  $t(522) = 13.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. Also, the result shows that women working in the private sector ( $M = 23.06$ ,  $SD = 10.96$ ) scored significantly higher in variation in terms of time spent at work as well as scoring lower in child care obligation than their counterparts working in the public sector [ $M = 27.98$ ,  $SD = 8.08$ ;  $t(522) = -5.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ], who spent relatively same time/hours at work.

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Hours Spent at Work and Child Care Obligation across Private and Public Sectors.

	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hours women spend at work	Private	162	2.54	0.641	0.050
	Public	362	1.87	0.479	0.025
Child care obligation	Private	162	23.06	10.961	0.861
	Public	362	27.98	8.079	0.425

**Table 3.** Independent Sample t-test Comparing Number of Hours Spent at Work by Sector and Child Care Obligation by Sector.

	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Hours women spend at work by sector	13.323	522	0.000 <sup>Sig</sup>
Child care obligation by sector	-5.743	522	0.000 <sup>Sig</sup>

Note: <sup>Sig</sup> = significant.

Summarily, the result implies that hours women spent at work significantly affect their marital obligation of childcare. However, the finding shows that working in the public sector affords women less work time and more time to fulfil their child care obligations than their counterparts in the private sector.

## Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the time women spent at work significantly influence their marital obligation of quality childcare, and that women in the private sector have less time with their children unlike those in the public sector and are unable to fulfill

their child care obligation. This result is supported by the study conducted by Anyaoha and Onyema (2015) in which they discovered that women level of involvement in paid labour significantly influence the number of hours they spend with their children, in other words women involvement in paid labour affect their childcare obligation. This position is also in line with Chothani, (2015) who was of the view that women in the banking sector do not have enough time for family obligations which include child care. This was the reason Nezhad (2013) insisted that long working mothers spend in the private organization lead to child care arrangements. Because of their lack of time to tend to their children due to work engagement, mothers make arrangements on how their children are taken care in their absence.

The qualitative data gotten from the interview is also in accordance with the quantitative data. Majority of the respondents agreed that the longer hours married women spend at work in the private sector affect the quality of child care than those in the public sector. They were of the view that married women in the private (Bank and Brewery) put in more hours than their counterparts in the public sector. The women leave the home very early and come back later than those in the public sector. In some cases, they work overtime and at weekends thereby making their presence not to be felt by the children.

## Recommendations

The following recommendation are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Laws should be made by the government to prosecute private sector organizations that fail to inculcate and implement family flexibilities that will enable married women to cushion the effect of work-home conflict. As this will

enable them cope with their jobs and childcare obligation.

2. Family flexibility that allows married women spend less time at work place or work from home should be encouraged in the private sector as this will allow them more time with the children.

3. The maternity leave allowance for nursing mothers should be extended to 5-6 months from the usual 3 months, to enable the nursing mothers spend adequate time with their babies, especially with this new trend of exclusive breast feeding.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has shown that hours women spend at work affect the quality of their child care, especially those women working in the private sector.

## Conflicts of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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