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WORK LIFE BALANCE AS A PANACEA FOR INNOVATIVE CAPACITY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Women in modern times are faced with the task of managing their traditional domestic roles and work responsibilities. Striking a balance between these roles is increasingly challenging especially for women entrepreneurs who are solely responsible for the success and performance of their businesses. The inability to balance these roles could lead to psychological distress which could hamper mental health, creative reasoning and innovative capacity. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine how work-life balance impacts on innovativeness of women entrepreneurs using a thematic analysis. The study adopted a qualitative research approach to enhance the insight into the issue of work-life balance and innovative capacity of women entrepreneurs in Lagos state Nigeria. Multistage sampling was adopted in selecting 10 women entrepreneurs who are members of the Nigeria Union of tailors in Lagos State while data for the study was collected using semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. Responses from the interview were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically using Nvivo 12. The findings of the thematic analysis reveal that women's aspirations to improve their innovative capacity is often frustrated by the pressure that comes from balancing so many roles at the same time. This is also compounded by issues such as societal and patriarchal norms, which are deeply ingrained in the culture. It was concluded that women entrepreneur's innovative capacity is usually constrained by their domestic roles and this is compounded by cultural issues such as patriarchal norms and unsupportive spouses. The study recommended that women entrepreneurs should adopt work life balance strategies which could assist them in improving their innovativeness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Innovativeness, Women, Work-life balance, societal norms

Introduction

Today, in the world of business, women entrepreneurship has become an essential force in many countries and has been accepted in all areas of work. Women entrepreneurship has received a lot of attention from researchers, academicians, Government, decision makers and the society at large. They are now considered important forces in economic development of their nations as many women go into alternative avenues of generating income, with a greater number of women setting up businesses, taking risks and ensuring performance. Businesses are now competing globally and there is continuous evolvement to meet the demands and expectations of customers. The resultant effect of this scenario is overwork on the business owner without considering family obligations and responsibilities, rather they tend to concentrate more on their work alone and neglect other aspect of life activities that need to be balanced with job such as leisure or elderly care among others. Despite the active roles of these women in business, paid employment and entrepreneurship, their roles as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and home-keepers need to be maintained.

Work-life balance does not mean equal balance between professional and personal life. It is careful synchronization of an individual's varied pursuits that may include family, leisure, social obligations, health, career and spirituality with work. While some of the pursuits need greater attention, others may require lesser focus. Work-life balance is one of the most challenging issues faced by women in the 21st century (Abdulraheem, 2014). Most times, entrepreneurship is perceived as an alternative especially for women. Women want to leave paid employment either as a result of work pressures or family demands even though it is assumed that work pressures and family demands are not faced by women entrepreneurs. There is an increasing concern for managing the demands from work and family for women both in paid employment and entrepreneurship. For those in paid employment, Government policies and organizational initiatives have been deployed to foster work-life balance of their employees. These initiatives include education programs, leave policies, child care, telework, work schedules and other practices that contribute to employees' work-life balance. Government policies also ensure that employment guidelines and regulations are followed by organizations to promote work-life balance.

Twenty first century businesses are characterized by persistent changes, uncertainties and excessive pressure to increase productivity. These changes disturb the balance in the lives of women entrepreneurs causing

confusion and stress. This is also fuelled by extreme levels of competitiveness in the business sphere posing new challenges and problems to owners. Technological advancements and new inventions in the fashion world have impacted the socio-cultural context by introducing multi-cultural life styles. In the midst of all this, the compelling need for growth in all spheres, for individuals as well as their businesses has resulted in imbalance in the lives of the women. The incessant demands on their time and effort to enhance performance have created enormous stress and pressure. This has led to disequilibrium between work-life and family life. Consequently, the quality of life of most women entrepreneurs has been compromised because of long hours they spend at work place and the need to carry work home.

The concern for work-life balance largely focused on people who are into paid and structured employment because of its closed system design. Employees are not the only category of people who need to balance their work and life involvements. Women entrepreneurs' financial sustenance, personal satisfaction, and the ability to balance work and non-work responsibilities are crucial success factors. They are not exempted from the routine demands that society places on them as women and at the same time they are responsible for driving the success and performance of their businesses. The increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship, active labor force, job demands and the diversity of family constellations have impact on their output, hence, the need to assess how women entrepreneurs balance their work and non-work domains and its effect on their innovative capacity.

Most women entrepreneurs either spend long hours at their work place or carry work home thereby compromising on the quality of life. According to Neneh (2018), most women entrepreneurs struggle to balance their work and family lives and this could have negative effects on their business output. The inability to strike a balance may have a direct consequence on their level of innovativeness and business output.

The objective of this study is to determine the effect of work life balance on the innovativeness of women entrepreneurs in Lagos state.

Literature Review

Concept of work-life balance

Work-life balance is one of the most relevant Human Resource practices in relation to productivity and performance of the organization (Ojo, Salau & Falola, 2014). Work-life balance issues affect both men and women, as it can cause conflict for both men and women leading to psychological strain, physical health, depression, burnout and anxiety. The main thrust and perception of work-life balance include the negative attitude towards work, the problem of work long hours, separation of work from life and the target is on women with the responsibility of child care (Abdulraheem 2014).

Different definitions of work-life balance each have a value perspective that determines what factors will be seen as relevant to achieving balance (Reiter 2007). According to Forsyth'staxonomy of ethical ideologies, there are four classifications categorizing the ethical positions of individuals: situationists, absolutists, subjectivists and exceptionists. Reiter, argues that definitions of work-life balance reflecting a situationist perspective are the most valuable because they will involve making optimum choices for individuals. Definitions framed from a situationist position focus on a fitting definition of balance for a person depending on his or her personal contexts. The situationist perspective offers an opportunity to explore what factors contribute to the attainment of work-life balance because the focus is on the individual relative to his or her circumstances. Situationists would argue that work-life balance is not an end in itself, but a perception; it is a state that gives rise to satisfactions that are of value to the individual and his or her stakeholders (Reiter 2007).

Taking all of the above into consideration, work-life balance is herein conceptualized as the broad assessment that individual and environmental resources are sufficient to meet demands, evidenced by reduced conflict and greater facilitation, such that integration is perceived between work and personal life domains resulting in positive general health, satisfaction, behavioral and work performance outcomes. This conceptualization parallels and expands on previous handling of the work-life balance concept because it takes into account the antecedents of work-life balance(individual and environmental work and non-work demand and resource characteristics), aspects of the work-family interface (reflected in the degree of conflict and facilitation present), the individual's perception of work-life balance (through a validated work-life balance measure) and the personal and organizational

consequences of balance (such as general health, behaviors, satisfaction and performance).

In Nigerian culture, women, regardless of their status and professions, are responsible for domestic responsibilities such as household chores, bearing and raising children, doing the laundry, cooking, etc. Women play the traditional roles that are recognised by their society as well as other economic and social roles. Harriden (2012) pointed out that women are not confined to domestic roles; rather, they can seek positions of public authority. However, women face many challenges in their attempts to achieve WLB. They are expected to perform certain roles arising from the religious and cultural obligations that are associated with their gender. This gives rise to conflict between a woman's work and her traditional role in the family. This may be the reason why work-life conflict is very common among women, with their careers pulling them in one direction and their family obligations pulling in the other (Adisa, Gbadamosi & Osabutey, 2016). It may therefore be argued that the work-life imbalance experienced by women is a result of the conflict between their traditional roles in their families and their career. In other words, women often experience great difficulties when the competing roles of work and non-work domains clash (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015).

Concept of Innovativeness

Innovativeness plays a significant role on how individuals think, learn and use their knowledge to sense and produce new ideas and ventures. According to Schumpeter innovators are creative destructors who destroy the old market with their innovation. Nonetheless, how a company innovates can be very versatile; a company can develop a new product or service, a new production technology, a new operation procedure or even a new management strategy (Sanchez, Gonzalez &Skerlavaj, (2011). Accordingly, there are many definitions of innovation, all focusing on a different aspect of innovation. These aspects are novelty, necessity and sufficiency, intentionality, beneficiary and implementation/exploitation (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). There is no single overarching definition of innovation as Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook, (2009) found 60 different definitions of innovation in their literature review. These definitions had, however, one thing in common, which is the concept of new. Thus, simply said, innovations are about newness, new products, new methods of production, new sources of supply, the exploitation of new markets, or new ways or organization.

Moreover, innovation is not only about a new idea, but also about successfully applying and exploiting it. This makes innovations different from inventions; an innovation brings something into new use, not only into existence. Innovation is more than outcomes, it is also about the process leading to a new product, process or service (Zeng, 2017). It is about bringing change and it requires the generation of new ideas, making decisions, taking action, carry out actions and pursuing them (Hornsby, Kuratko, Shepherd, & Bott, 2009). Summarily, it requires entrepreneurship (Shane &Venkataraman, 2000). Entrepreneurship has been associated with new business creation by the individual entrepreneur, this can be seen in the abundance of definitions of innovation which do not solely focus on introducing something new to the market place, but also include elements of strategic renewal (e.g., new business practice). The OECD definition of innovation which is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations. From this definition it becomes clear that innovations become visible in concrete products, processes, methods and networks. (Schott & Jensen, 2016).

For small firms, (e.g. firms with less than 10 employees) where the entrepreneur is the sole decision maker, individual innovative performance outcomes and organizational innovative performance outcomes can be very different. The individual contribution to the early stages of introducing new products, processes or services comes from the work on opportunities, one of the central concepts in the field of entrepreneurship. For example, research has revealed the innovative practices of tailors and seamstresses who constantly transform products and adopt new materials, use various sources of inspiration to adapt styles to suit new tastes and set new trends. In the fashion world, the ability to tweak and twist existing styles and processes creates new products ahead of competitors and gives customer/product advantage.

Theoretical Review

Role Conflict theory

Conflict occurs when the demands of work and home roles are incompatible in some respect such that meeting the demands in one domain (work or home life) makes it difficult to meet the demands in the other domain. Inter-role conflict theory refers to what occurs when meeting the demands in one domain makes it challenging to meet the demands in the other domain

(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In the literature, this has also been termed opposition or incompatibility theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).The conflict model proposes that with high levels of demand in all spheres of life, some difficult choices have to be made and some conflicts and possibly some significant overload on an individual occur (Guest, 2002), i.e. satisfaction in one environment entails sacrifices in the other due to the fact that these two environments are incompatible because each of them has its own norms and requirements. Seventeen conflict models have been recently given particular attention, especially in dual career families (Adisa, et al., 2019). All of these models have in common that they merely describe the WLB; however, they do not go deeper into exploring the nature, causes and consequences of balance or imbalance between work and the rest of life.

A person must be satisfied with her/his job and feel well inside as well as outside the job in order to be able to harmonize her/his working and personal life. The right balance depends on every individual and is influenced by many factors. Adisa, *et al.,* (2019) also suggests that it might be helpful to make a distinction between objective and subjective indicators. He adds that any objective indicators (e.g. working hours) reflect the subjective social values and that any use of subjective indicators may benefit from some kind of stakeholder analysis. In other words what may seem like balance to one individual may not do so to his or her partner or boss. Recently, interest has been focused in particular on the conflict model, especially in dual career families, although research on the spillover and compensation models continues to be widely reported. What these types of model cannot so easily address is what constitutes a balance between work and the rest of life. In contrast to the spillover perspective, a number of partly overlapping theoretical approaches (conflict, resource drain, compensation and accommodation) proposes a negative relationship between the two spheres. Most often, these approaches are applied to studying involvement in one sphere and comparing it to involvement in the other sphere. Most notably, the conflict perspective maintains that high involvement in one sphere entails sacrifices in the other.

The main premise of this approach is that while interconnected, the two spheres are inherently incompatible, given their differing demands, responsibilities, expectations and norms. For example, this approach would suggest that satisfying demanding work expectations may result in not meeting expectations in one's non-work-life. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) have identified time-based conflict (insufficient time to meet the demands of both roles), behavior-based conflict (behaviors appropriate in one

environment may be incompatible with behaviors needed in another) and strain-based conflict (strain produced by one role makes it difficult to meet the responsibilities and requirements of another).

However, despite the many good assumptions of this theory, the role conflict theory has been criticized as providing the most penetrating arguments and analysis of the deficiencies where it was argued that the theory falsely represents certain social ideologies into concrete realities or objective templates and names them roles.

Empirical Review

Adisa, Gbadamosi, Mordi and Mordi (2019) carried out a study on Entrepreneurs' Work-Life Balance; In Search of Perfect Boundaries. The objective of the study was to find out if the self-employed nature of entrepreneurs' business ventures mean that they have perfect boundaries between their work and non-work lives. The study examined entrepreneurs' work-life balance (WLB) in terms of how they construct and manage the borders between their work and non-work lives. The study adopted a qualitative research approach to enhance understanding of entrepreneurs' WLB using border theory. The study focused on Nigerian migrants in London who represent a distinct minority group living in urban areas in the developed world. Data for the study was collected over a three-month period, utilizing semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. Findings from the research indicate that entrepreneurs prioritize 'work' over 'life' and reveal that entrepreneurs have little desire for boundaries as they work everywhere, which makes long working hours prevalent among them. Furthermore, the findings brought to the fore a prevalent social variance of these entrepreneurs preferring to be unmarried, single, and even divorced as a result of or associated with the entrepreneurs' boundaries creation and management.

Mushfiqur, Mordi, Oruh, Nwagbara, Mordi, and Turner (2018) examined the impacts of work-life-balance (WLB) challenges on social sustainability of Nigerian women medical doctors. This study focused on Nigeria, with its peculiar socio-cultural, institutional and professional realities constitute WLB as well as social sustainability (SS) challenge for women medical doctors. The study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach and informed by institutional theory, explored how Nigeria's institutional environment and workplace realities engender WLB challenges, which consequently impact social sustainability for women doctors. A total of 43 semi-structured

interviews and focus group session involving eight participants were utilized for empirical analysis. Findings from the research revealed that factors such as work pressure, cultural expectations, unsupportive relationships, challenging work environment, gender role challenges, lack of voice/participation, and high stress level moderate the ability of women medical doctors to manage WLB and SS. It also identified that socio-cultural and institutional demands on women show that these challenges, while common to women physicians in other countries, are different and more intense in Nigeria because of their unique professional, socio-cultural and institutional frameworks.

Talreja (2017) conducted a research on Women entrepreneurship and work-life balance in India. The objective of the study was to examine how women entrepreneurs maintain a balance between the household and entrepreneurial work. A sample of 80 women entrepreneurs was selected randomly from the Kota district of Rajasthan and the primary data are collected through the questionnaire. The study found that most of the women are overwhelmed by the conflicts that arise from domestic and entrepreneurial duties. It recommended that family members of the women entrepreneurs should encourage them by sharing the household responsibilities, moral support and making suitable adjustment for smooth running of their firms.

Neneh (2017) investigated the relationship between family support and the performance of women-owned businesses. Empirical data from 251 women entrepreneurs in South Africa were used to assess the postulated relationship. The findings showed that all three examined types of family support (i.e., emotional, instrumental and financial family support) were positively associated with firm performance. The study recommended that by emphasizing the need for the current system to take into account the distinctive needs and challenges of women entrepreneurs and provides the necessary support and environment to foster their growth and prosperity.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach for data collection as this provided better data and deeper understanding of the variables under study. The research approach used for the qualitative study was interpretive based on inductive reasoning which complied with, and satisfied the ethical standards that guided the study. Data for this study were collected by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews from women who are engaged in full-time

business (business which develops largely on the level of creativity) and also have family commitments including domestic and childcare responsibilities. This research approach is appropriate for this study as it focus on activities and situations as they occur in daily lives of the participants.

This study focused on women tailors/fashion designers in Lagos State as it is one of the fastest growing industries that opened entrepreneurial opportunities to small businesses particularly among women in Nigeria. The Nigeria Union of Tailors is the association of Tailors operating in the informal sector for members who are not registered under corporate affairs commission (CAC).The association holds a regular monthly meeting for members from different zones and units meet to deliberate and discuss on matters affecting members. The population of study comprised of 11,904 members of the Nigeria Union of Tailors. The ten participants of this study were women who are members of the Nigeria Union of Tailors in Lagos state, and were purposively selected because they run full-time tailoring businesses and have other family commitments, while interview recordings were transcribed and thematic analysis carried out using Nvivo 12 software where four themes emerged.

The participants were asked open-ended questions about their understanding of work-life balance and how it impacted on their innovativeness. They were able to express themselves well and share their experiences as the questions were not close-ended. The interview took place at the state association house and lasted between fifty and ninety minutes per interview session. To ensure accuracy, the study used recording device to record responses from the interviewees, this was transcribed and then coded to ensure nothing from the interview was missing.

Results of Qualitative and Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted using the data generated from interview responses from the women entrepreneurs in the study area. This data driven thematic analysis was adopted to determine the effect of work-life balance on innovative capacity of women entrepreneurs in Lagos State, Nigeria. Thematic analysis involves encoding qualitative information by using explicit codes. The themes and patterns identified in the information can either be manifest (directly observable) or latent (categorising issues underlying the phenomena) (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Isiaka, 2019). Based on the study objectives, the coded data were thematically analysed using Nvivo 12 and from the analysis, themes and sub themes were identified.

Findings from the thematic analysis reveal how work-life balance serves as an innovative capacity of women entrepreneurs in Lagos state. The study was able to ascertain the perception of the respondents on what work-life balance is. Various responses were given as to what work-life balance is and this was reported anonymously to protect the participants. The analysis of the responses presented below.

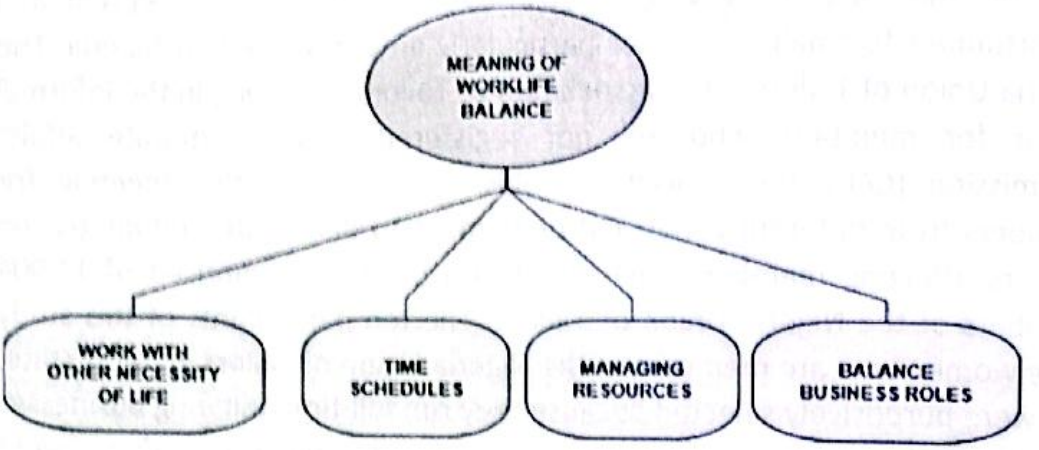


Figure 1: Meaning of work-life balance based on the respondent's perception
Source: Author's field survey (2020)

The perceptions were categorized into four sub set which included: working with other necessity of life, time scheduling, managing resources and balance business roles. For instance, work with other necessity of life, the respondents coded R1 in her words described work-life balance as *"the ability to relate or combine work with other necessities of life that requires the same amount of concentration that is put into work. As much as possible doing both with less efforts"*. Also, respondent R5 viewed work-life balance as" *Work-life balance as an entrepreneur means I schedule my time for work, family and other things"*. In addition, respondent R8 said *"Work-life balance is balancing work family and life roles to a satisfactory level"*.

On perception that relates to time schedule respondents R2, R4, R5 and R10 were captured. R2 in her response said *"It means the division of one's time and focus between work, family or leisure activities. It's a term commonly used to describe the balance that a working individual needs between time allocated for work and other aspect of life"*, Also, respondents R4, submitted that *"WLB as an entrepreneur is the ability to manage working hours, spend quality time with loved ones and do personal fulfilling activities at the same time, getting enough sleep, healthy meals and exercise"*. R5 also viewed WLB as *"It means the division of one's time and focus between work, family or*

leisure activities. It's a term commonly used to describe the balance that a working individual needs between time allocated for work and other aspect of life". Similarly, R10 responded that "it is managing work family and life roles with minimum conflict in a way that does not lead to stress".

Respondent R9 in her opinion described work-life balance as "Work-life balance is being able to do business, manage the family and live your life as a human being", from the various description of work-life balance the study was assured of validity of the responses.

Work-life Balance and Innovativeness

The respondents' reports on work-life balance and innovativeness revealed that women can either abandon business commitments to meet family demands and vice versa. They can also generate a feeling of loss in either the family or business place. However, most of the respondents claimed that the technological supports, spousal support and family work load can have significant effect on innovativeness. On the family work load, most women reported that closing up their businesses to concentrate on pressing family roles comes without a feeling that they must have missed out on something, mostly in creative thinking in their business place. For example, R6 submitted that "in the morning, I have to prepare the kids to school, get the meals and do some early morning chores, by the time I'm through I already get exhausted and can hardly think. The situation would have been better if my husband helps with school runs and a few other things but he is not so willing. ". She further stated that "if my husband understood the stress level, he could help with some chores, but you know he is the head of the house and it is my duty to take care of the home". Also R7 commented that "I have to combine the demands from my customers with the demands of my home and it is really challenging for me. I have noticed that most times I turn back customers because I know I can't deliver on time and this is making me loose customers. I know I can't turn down my family, so the business suffers. Recently, my husband approved my getting a house help and this has reduced the burden a little so I am better at my business. However, I still have to organize and coordinate the tasks, because traditionally, that is my duty".

On technological supports, R5 submitted that "I do feel relaxed when I know that I can monitor my business through phone. I communicate with my valued customers on social media, by sending styles and samples to them", also R9 said that "in this century, I cannot come and kill myself, I use my phone for business a lot. I download styles from instagram, I have collections

of styles which my customers choose online. I registered my number as a business line on whatsApp, this enables me communicate with the customers with ease. So even if I am at home, my mind will be at rest on my production level". In addition, R4 said, "before now, fashion designers especially at local level like ours, are faced with challenges of new designs, what is in vogue, and so on. With technology, we now have platforms that update us on latest activities in the fashion industries. I also make order of materials online and they deliver within few days". As for R6 "I don't have to meet with my customers before we conclude a transaction. I have customers in Abuja, Lagos, even Maiduguri and we communicate through social media. This ease my burden and increases my innovative prowess".

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study showed that work-life balance had a significant effect on innovative capacity of women entrepreneurs in the Lagos State, Nigeria. From the study, it was concluded that balancing business roles with other necessity of life as well as time schedule management have significant effect on innovativeness. Most women reported how much their business suffers at the expense of their domestic roles. The societal norms attached with womanhood frowns at women not fulfilling their traditional roles. Also, because of the patriarchal society we live in Nigeria, most husbands do not see the need to support their wives in the domestic roles.

Similarly, family workload was identified as a contributor to the innovativeness of women entrepreneurs. Many women considered balance to be conditional and unattainable, largely because of the thin line available between the work and family domains and also as a result of the cultural stereotypes available to women generally. A lot of the women highlighted that they do not feel comfortable combining both roles without a helping hand.

i. The study therefore recommends that women entrepreneurs should seek help and support when needed to enable them effectively manage their domestic roles.
ii. Also, they should maximize the advantage that comes with technological advancements to improve their innovative capacity.
iii. While family demands are inevitable, the study is of the view that these patriarchal norms that considered women as solely responsible for domestic roles should be eradicated. In developed countries, most of these norms do not exist and it allows women contribute maximally to

the development of the economy.

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