

# **Influence of Work Family Conflict and Longer Hours of Work on the Job Performance of Married Confidential Secretaries in Government Establishments in Osun State in South West of Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the influence of work family conflict and longer work hours on the job performance of married male and female confidential secretaries working in government establishments in Osun State in South West of Nigeria. This is against the background that confidential secretaries are indispensable partners to successful executives. In addition, their duties demand that they should stay long hours at work more than other office workers with attendant effect on family life that can generate conflict and impact negatively on their job performance. To carry out the study two research questions were asked and answered while two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The population comprised 93 (33 male and 60 female) confidential secretaries. The sample size was 85. A survey design was employed and a questionnaire was the instrument used to gather the required data. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions asked; while t-test was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings revealed that the job performance of the respondents was not influenced by family life demands and longer hours of work. Based on this it was recommended that the factors that balanced respondents' work and family life; longer work hours and the job should be sustained. It was further recommended that superiors (bosses) of confidential secretaries should give them some level of freedom in choosing to work extra hours.

**Keywords:** Work, family, longer hours and job performance.

## Introduction

In spite of the advancement in office technology the secretary still remains an indispensable assistant to executives in both public and private organizations all over the world. Among the several attributes of the secretary he/she must possess the mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, display initiatives, exercise good judgment and make decisions within his/her scope of authority. Some of the secretary's duties include: arranging meetings, compiling minutes, keeping simple and correct records of accounts and of consumable stock, and prepares the executive's itinerary and makes travel arrangements. These are quite onerous and enormous responsibilities in the context of either modern day businesses organizations or government establishments. To underscore their relevance and importance in Nigeria, confidential secretaries have been reclassified with higher academic qualifications attached to their job entry points. For instance, a fresh graduate into the Nigerian civil service begins as Confidential Secretary 1 with a minimum academic qualification of Bachelor of Science Degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) in Secretarial Studies or its equivalent. They can rise up to Chief Confidential Secretary after passing through four other stages. It is noteworthy that academic qualification is now required unlike in the past when only the skills proficiency mattered. In addition, the nomenclature for Secretarial Studies in tertiary institutions has been changed to Office Technology and Management. This is a reflection of the need for the secretary to meet the demands of a fast changing and challenging world of work.

With competing demands over scarce resources, organizations source for competent hands not only to manage and efficiently allocate but utilize their resources maximally. To this end both private and government organizations employ competent manpower including confidential secretaries for efficient and effective management of available resources. Since the important factor in any productive enterprise is the human element, organizations place high premium on the effective job performance of their employees. Job performance is an extremely important factor that determines organizational outcomes and success. It is accepted that Job performance is any recognized accomplishment of a given task (Wikipedia, 2009). It reflects how well an individual is fulfilling the requirements of the job. Effective job performance has positive effects on both an organization and its employees. For the organization, it is a means by which it ensures productivity, economic growth and survival. Similarly, effective job performance provides employees with economic gains, security, social status, family and social prerogatives, medical benefits and recreational and educational opportunities (Yahaya, 2008).

Work family conflict is defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Chen; Powell and Greenhaus (2009) opined that work family conflict occurs when participation in the work role and the family role is incompatible in some respect. As a result, participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role. Lu, Gilmour, Kao and Huang (2005) defined work family conflict as a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. Work life conflict refers to the perceived incompatibility role pressures between work and family so that participation in one role makes participation in the other role more difficult (Barrah, Shultz, Baltes & Stolz, 2004). The occurrence of work family conflict should be understood as a reciprocally recurring process where the work and the household duties hinder each other, instead of only one of them hindering the counterpart (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 2002).

The other factor is working longer hours. The confidential secretary is not a robot; he belongs to a family; shares his feelings and aspirations with his family. His work demands especially

staying longer than other workers in the office might not only affect his family relationship but can certainly affect his job performance.

Nigerian workers are increasingly working longer hours in comparison with employees in other nations. This is taking place at a time when the structure of Nigerian families and the labor market is changing. Dual earner families and female earner families have become more common than the traditional male-headed household. There have long been a proportion of Nigerian households that are dual earners in structure, and time has always been in short supply in these households. The relationship between working hours, work family conflict and job performance is complex. Hours issues are critical aspect of work life, as balancing work hours for effective job performance is crucial leaving enough hours for healthy family life is germane.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the clear cut process of evaluating job performance and compensating workers many factors some beyond their control tend to limit their performance. Two of such factors are work-family conflicts and longer hours of work. The employee is not a robot without emotions, feelings, and family commitment hence there arise conflict that tend to impinge on the employee's effective job performance.

Secretarial profession is a unique profession that requires dedication and tolerance. A confidential secretary that wants to be successful in his/her career must have these two attributes in generous terms. A confidential secretary must be in the office before the resumption time and most especially before the boss; at the same time no secretary is expected to leave the office before the boss. Peradventure, the boss stays late in the office till 8 pm, the secretary is expected to stay with the boss irrespective of his/her marital status.

In the course of their work family conflicts and longer hours of work among several other factors rear their head and if not properly managed take their toll on employees' job performance. The extent to which work-family conflicts and longer hours of work influence the job performance of married confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State of Nigeria remains to be determined. In line with the stated problem the main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which work family conflict and longer hours of work influence the job performance of confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State of Nigeria

## **Research Questions**

The following questions were asked to guide the study:

1. To what extent does work-family conflict influence the job performance of married confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State?
2. To what extent do longer hours of work influence the job performance of married confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State?

## **Hypotheses**

Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State on the influence of work family conflict on their job performance.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State on the influence of longer hours of work on their job performance.

## Method of Study

The study employed a survey design and the population comprised all male and female secretaries working in all the thirteen government establishments in the three senatorial zones of Osun State. A total of six government establishments were systematically selected from three senatorial zones thus making two per senatorial zone. Due to the small number of subjects all the 93 male and female secretaries (33 married male and 60 married female) were used for the study. A 21 items questionnaire titled “Influence of Work Family Conflict and Longer Hours of Work on Job Performance of Married Confidential Secretaries” was developed by the researchers to gather data for the study. The subjects responded to the statements on a five point Likert scale. To ensure face and content validity three experts in Business education and Measurement and Evaluation validated the instrument. Their suggestions resulted in the final instrument. The split-half method was adopted for the reliability test while the Spearman Brown’s formula was applied to correlate the two parts resulting in a reliability coefficient 0.73. The questionnaires that were distributed by the researchers generated the data analyzed. Of the 93 questionnaires distributed 85 were returned. This gave a percentage return of 91.

## Data Analysis

In analyzing the data collected the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (SD) and the t-test were the statistical tools used. The mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) of 3.50 was used for the decision, such that a mean rating on any item by the respondents equal to or above 3.50 was taken as “Agree” while any mean rating lower than 3.00 was taken as “Disagree”. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

## Findings

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does work-family conflict influence the job performance of married confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings and Standard Deviations of respondents on influence of work-family conflict on their job performance

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK
		M	M		F	F	
1	Family responsibilities make me to experience greater difficulties in balancing work and family	2.93	1.64	Low	2.65	1.32	Low
2	Children responsibilities make me to frequently be absent from work	1.50	.82	Low	1.85	.89	Low
3	Home chores make me to be more stressed and depressed which affect my job performance negatively	2.27	1.17	Low	2.15	1.16	Low
4	Extension of office work to home for completion in the evening or at weekends has affected my responsibility at home negatively	2.90	1.49	Low	2.55	1.35	Low

5	Child/family health problems make me to be absent from office and miss a higher number of days of work per year	1.57	.94	Low	1.89	1.07	Low
6	I find it difficult to arrange my work schedule to meet personal and family commitments	1.80	.81	Low	1.85	.95	Low
7	Marital role overload makes me not to be committed to my boss/employer	1.67	.84	Low	1.80	.89	Low
8	Family role interference makes me to be less satisfied with my job	1.93	.94	Low	2.22	1.10	Low
9	Refusal to take work home, stay overtime in the office reduces my family-work conflict	2.53	1.38	Low	2.95	1.46	Low
10	My commitments in the office associated with the role as a spouse and parent make it difficult for me to fulfill my family role responsibilities	2.40	1.25	Low	2.05	1.03	Low
11	Family responsibilities make it difficult for me to advance in my office career	2.13	1.01	Low	1.91	1.01	Low
12	My family life interferes with my ability to concentrate at work	2.60	1.30	Low	2.15	1.22	Low

**Source:** Field work

The data presented in Table 1 showed that the means of the items ranged from 1.50 to 2.95. All of the items had their means below the cut-off point of 3.50. This indicated that work-family conflict had no influence on the performance of married male and female confidential secretaries. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.81 to 1.64 indicating that the respondents were close in their responses.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do longer hours' of work influence the job performance of married confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State?

**Table 2:** Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on influence of longer hours of work on their job performance

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK	$\bar{X}$	SD	REMARK
		M	M		F	F	
13	Working longer hour makes me to miss important family activities and it affects my work demands negatively	3.00	1.31	Low	2.75	1.39	Low
14	Longer hours of work make it difficult to fulfill family demands and responsibilities and this makes it more difficult for me to fulfill work role responsibilities	2.33	.92	Low	1.98	.87	Low
15	Not working longer hours increases my ability to easily schedule time within my family and this enhances my work performance	3.50	1.17	High	3.27	1.25	Low
16	My sleep and leisure are sacrificed due to longer hours in the office leading to low job performance.	3.60	1.22	High	3.02	1.45	Low

17	Longer hours in the office make me feel overworked and limit my productivity.	3.30	1.24	Low	2.89	1.46	Low
18	I experience health challenges and less ability to cope with everyday life events due to longer hours at work	3.40	1.25	Low	2.89	1.36	Low
19	I experience higher levels of job-related stress due to longer hours at work	3.33	1.24	Low	3.16	1.32	Low
20	Longer hours at work have negative spillover effects on my personal life and well-being and affect my productivity	3.23	1.19	Low	3.04	1.33	Low
21	Longer hours at work make me feel burned-out and limit time for my families and also affect my job performance negatively	2.50	1.11	Low	2.42	1.21	Low

**Source:** Field work

The mean ratings of the items in the data presented in Table 2 ranged from 1.98 to 3.60. Seven of the items presented in this table had their means below the cut-off point of 3.50 which indicated that the respondents disagreed that working longer hours had influence on their job performance. Two items (15 and 16), however, had their mean scores for male above the cut-off point of 3.50 and for female below the cut-off point of 3.50; which indicated that male respondents agreed on the items, while, female respondents disagreed on the items. This indicated that majority of the respondents perceived that working longer hours had no influence on their performance. The married male respondents indicated that refusal of overtime work increases their ability to easily schedule time and increase their job performance; and that their sleep and leisure are sacrificed due to long hours in the office. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.87 to 1.46 thus indicating that the respondents were close in their responses.

## Hypotheses

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State on the influence of work-family conflict on their job performance.

**Table 3:** The summary table of t-test of difference between married male and female confidential secretaries on influence of work-family conflict on their job performance

S/ N	Item Statements	Male Secretaries N1= 30		Female Secretaries N2= 55		t-cal	P	Rm k
		$\bar{X}1$	SD1	$\bar{X}2$	SD2			
1	Family responsibilities make me to experience greater difficulties in balancing work and family	2.93	1.64	1.57	1.32	-.853	.396	Sig
2	Children responsibilities make me to frequently be absent from work	1.50	.82	1.85	.89	1.802	.075	Not Sig
3	Home chores make me to be more stressed and depressed which affect my job performance negatively	2.27	1.17	2.15	1.16	-.458	.648	Sig
4	Extension of office work to home for completion in the evening or at weekends has affected my responsibility at home	2.90	1.49	2.55	1.35	-1.117	.267	Sig

	negatively							
5	Child/family health problems make me to be absent from office and miss a higher number of days of work per year	1.57	.94	1.89	1.07	1.398	.166	Not Sig
6	I find it difficult to arrange my work schedule to meet personal and family commitments	1.80	.81	1.85	.95	.266	.791	Sig
7	Marital role overload makes me not to be committed to my boss/employer	1.67	.84	1.80	.89	.672	.504	Not Sig
8	Family role interference makes me to be less satisfied with my job	1.93	.94	2.22	1.10	1.197	.235	Not Sig
9	Refusal to take work home, stay overtime in the office reduces my family-work conflict	2.53	1.38	2.95	1.46	1.268	.208	Not Sig
10	My commitments in the office associated with the role as a spouse and parent make it difficult for me to fulfill my family role responsibilities	2.40	1.25	2.05	1.03	-1.373	.174	Sig
11	Family responsibilities make it difficult for me to advance in my office career	2.13	1.01	1.91	1.01	-.982	.329	Sig
12	My family life interferes with my ability to concentrate at work	2.60	1.30	2.15	1.22	-1.600	.113	Sig
	Total/Summary	2.19	1.13	2.17	1.12	0.183	.326	Sig

**Source:** Field work

t-test analysis in table 3 revealed that the t-cal of the items ranged from -1.600 to 1.802; while, significant (p) value (2-tailed test) ranged from 0.75 to 0.791. Seven of the items showed that the significant (p) values (2-tailed test) were greater than the alpha values ( $p > .05$ ) at 83 degree of freedom. Five of the items showed that the significant (p) values (2-tailed test) were less than the alpha values at 83 degree of freedom. The total or summary of the table, however, revealed that the significant (p) value (2-tailed test) is greater than the alpha value ( $p > .05$ ) at 83 degree of freedom. This indicated that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significance difference between the mean scores of married male and female secretaries on the influence of work-family conflict on their job performance is retained.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State on the influence of longer hours of work on their job performance.

**Table 4:** The summary table of t-test of difference between married male and female confidential secretaries on the influence of longer hours of work on their job performance

S/ N	Item Statements	Male Secretaries N1= 30		Female Secretaries N2= 55		t-cal	P	Rmk
		X1	SD1	X2	SD2			
13	Working longer hour makes me to miss important family activities and it affects my work demands negatively	3.00	1.31	2.75	1.39	-.822	413	Sig
14	Longer hours of work make it difficult to fulfill family demands and responsibilities and this makes it more difficult for me to fulfill work role responsibilities	2.33	.92	1.98	.87	-1.741	.085	Sig

15	Not working longer hours increases my ability to easily schedule time within my family and this enhances my work performance	3.50	1.17	3.27	1.25	-.818	.416	Sig
16	My sleep and leisure are sacrificed due to longer hours in the office leading to low job performance.	3.60	1.22	3.02	1.45	-1.869	.065	Sig
17	Longer hours in the office make me feel overworked and limit my productivity.	3.30	1.24	2.89	1.46	-1.300	.197	Sig
18	I experience health challenges and less ability to cope with everyday life events due to longer hours at work	3.40	1.25	2.89	1.36	-1.700	.093	Sig
19	I experience higher levels of job-related stress due to longer hours at work	3.33	1.24	3.16	1.32	-.579	.564	Sig
20	Longer hours at work have negative spillover effects on my personal life and well-being and affect my productivity	3.23	1.19	3.04	1.33	-.675	.502	Sig
21	Longer hours at work make me feel burned-out and limit time for my families and also affect my job performance negatively	2.50	1.11	2.42	1.21	-.306	.760	Sig
	Total/Summary	3.13	1.18	2.82	1.29	-1.090	.344	Sig

**Source:** Field work

The t-test analysis in table 4 revealed that the t-cal of the items ranged from -1.869 to -.306; while, significant (p) value (2-tailed test) ranged from 0.65 to 0.760. All of the nine items showed that the significant (p) values (2-tailed test) were greater than the alpha values ( $p > .05$ ) at 83 degree of freedom. The total or summary of the table, however, revealed that the significant (p) value (2-tailed test) is greater than the alpha value ( $p > .05$ ) at 83 degree of freedom. This indicated that null hypothesis which states that there is no significance difference between the mean score of married male and female confidential secretaries on the influence of longer hours of work on their job performance is accepted.

## Discussion of the Findings

The finding on the influence of work-family conflict on the job performance of married male and female confidential secretaries revealed that work-family conflict had no influence on their job performance. This finding contrasts with the study of Dexbury and Higgins (2001) which found that work and family systems are highly interlinked and that negative conditions at work spill over into the home environment. This contrast may have been due to the different environments at which the researches were conducted; differences in respondents family size, the nature of the work or duties performed by the respondents. This finding also supports Cha's study (2001), which reported that married employees work performance was very high despite role conflicts caused by taking roles in both the work place and the family. There is the possibility, however, that the subjects of this study responded defensively to the survey by attempting to overstate how hard they were working despite many difficulties caused by taking double roles. In addition, confidential secretaries are known to work longer hours in the office than many other office workers due to their nature of work, hence they may have adjusted to the schedule and not perceiving their job as interfering with the family life.

The finding on the influence of longer hours of work on the job performance of married male and female confidential secretaries revealed that refusal of overtime work increases the ability of married male confidential secretaries to easily schedule time within family. This finding agrees with Thomas and Ganster (2003) study that found that it is important for employees to refuse overtime, since; employees who can refuse overtime are better able to balance work and family. The study showed that married male confidential secretaries' sleep and leisure are sacrificed due to longer hours in the office and family care. This finding is contrary to

UNESCO, 1991 study which found that women bear the responsibilities of home and family care, so that sleep and leisure are sacrificed. The contrast may be due to the fact that married female confidential secretaries are used to the conflict (both work and family conflict) and they were able to schedule their responsibilities in order to avoid the conflict, while, the conflict has negative influence on married male confidential secretaries performance that seem not to be used to it.

It was also found that the following items on longer hours of work had no significant influence on the job performance of married male and female confidential secretaries: feeling overworked due to long hours in the office which affects family relationship; and higher level of job-related stress due to longer hours in the office. These findings are contrary to the finding of Evans (2001), who found that higher levels of job-related stress were associated with employees working more hours than were preferred. And the study of Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg (2001); Galinsky, Kim and Bond (2001) that found that there was close relationship between long hours and feeling overworked which affects marital relationships and children's welfare. The contrast may be due to the fact that married male and female confidential secretaries are used to staying longer hours in the office due to the nature of their profession and in view of this, they might have made proper arrangement at home for their families before leaving home.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the data collected, analyzed and the findings; the following conclusion and recommendations were made: Work-family conflict had no influence on the performance of married male and female confidential secretaries in governmental establishments in Osun State. Also longer hours of work had no influence on the performance of married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State. It was further established that married male and female confidential secretaries in government establishments in Osun State did not differ significantly in their mean scores on the influences of work-family conflict and longer hours of work on their job performance. It is recommended that married male and female confidential secretaries working in government establishments in Osun State should be encouraged to sustain the arrangement that enables them to balance their work and family life; and working longer hours without affecting their job performance. It is further recommended that superiors (bosses) of confidential secretaries should give them some level of freedom in choosing to work extra hours.

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