

Home-Work Interface and Perceived Stress among Working Women in Nigeria

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Abstract: This article examined the relationship between home-work interface and perceived stress. The major objective of the study was to assess the work-home interface and experience of stress among working women in Borno State. The theoretical perspective adopted in study was the feminist theory with emphasis on the radical and Marxist theory. The research methodology included qualitative and quantitative techniques. The sample consisted of 462 respondents from University of Maiduguri, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, College of Education and the State Specialist Hospital. The data were analyzed using percentages, chi-square (X^2) and Spearman RHO. The findings indicated that working women do experience stress from many sources, the most important of which were being overloaded with domestic chores, cleaning, low pay etc. It was also revealed that relaxation, planning and taking hired help were preferred techniques for managing stress. It was concluded that the spill over from work to family affects the family by impairing both individual and family functioning. Furthermore, respondents adopt more than one coping mechanism to combat stress.

Keywords: Women, Interface, Stress.

INTRODUCTION

Women have always worked; however, the transformation of the work into paid labour outside the home occurred somewhat later for women than it did for men. Domestic chores and other family care responsibilities were naturally assigned to women while men were primarily concerned with instrumental task. The scenario has now changed and women now work and fend for themselves and their families. This is because, in Nigeria today the standard of living has greatly increased and there is need for family's economy to be augmented. This has prompted many women to look for employment in order to improve the family's finances [1].

Whether it is simple employment, a business or a full fledged career, working empowers a woman with confidence, independence and security. It is indeed a great feeling for a woman to be able to utilize her education and skills, benefit society and perhaps contribute to her household economy. Many women now exercise their freedom to work. Writers such as Oakley [2] have argued that women have increasingly been taking on a dual burden, they have retained primary responsibility for household tasks and also expected to have paid employment. Women are thus confronted with the challenge of playing the dual role of

maintaining the home and working as well. In a bid to prove their competence on both fronts, women are facing the problem of overwork, and are often being stressed or drained of their energy.

The problem is further intensified especially for working women with children as they have to cope with the pressure in the work place as well as looking after the home and the children. Being torn between the demands of work and home was what led Horschild [3] to propose the metaphor "the second shift". She strongly supported the idea that home making was a shift. This is the story of a working woman with a family. And that is why women tend to be more tired, "sick and emotionally drained".

This is an extremely important issue for organisations even though the situation where the fathers work and the mothers stay at home to care for the home and children is undergoing changes. Most work places are still guided by traditional policies that were fashionable when that pattern was typical. Such arrangements are no doubt clearly distant from the reality of today's diverse workplace that is increasingly populated with mothers and single parents. The potential for conflict and stress increases as most

Nigerian working women struggle with the demand of balancing paid work and domestic responsibilities.

This now brings us to the issue of stress. Stress according to D'Arcy [4] is the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet tough demanding situations with focus, strength, stamina and heightened alertness. Ofoegbu and Nwadimu, [5] see stress as a process in which environmental events or forces threaten the wellbeing of the individual in the society. To Adeyemi and Ogunyemi [6] stress is an unavoidable characteristic of life and work. Thus, in relationship to occupation, it is the physical mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by incongruence between the requirements of the job, on the one hand, and capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands, on the other.

The Nigerian woman has been caught up in the dilemma of competing demands for time and energy to fulfil her traditional roles in the home and her career obligations. This role conflict has become so threatening that it sometimes leads to stress.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Women are very important in national development, and the role of women at home cannot be overemphasised. In spite of being employees in organizations, female workers are also expected to keep their homes. This dual role of women calls for attention, in finding out the source of stress for women in organizations.

Stress affects individual, family, the community and the nation at large. Available research clearly shows that career women encounter stress in their attempt to fulfil home and out of home demands [7]. Women today are in a situation where both the monetary and human effects of stress take their toll as they face unprecedented pressures in accommodating the demands of home and personal family stress that often results. Despite major changes in the labour-force characteristics, resulting in significantly more women not only working but pursuing careers, employers have frequently failed to address the organisational implication of these trends. Such as lack of good day care, inadequate maternity leave policies, and inflexibility in the work place.

Women workers have various responsibilities as child rearers, bearers and house holding. How do they cope? In a situation where women go out to work and at the same time cater for their family at home, could that not be too stressful on them? Are women in a better position to balance the demands from the two domains of life? Could their productivity be sound? These are unsettled issues relating to the day-to-day experience of work-home roles of women.

What is the effect of stress on women as a result of the combined responsibilities? Does the fact that women have double responsibility lead to their being stressed up? There is need for a holistic approach to understanding the job stress experience. Stress may not be for work-arena alone.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to assess the work-home interface and perception of stress among working women in Maiduguri, Borno State. The specific objectives are to:

- examine factors leading to stress among women as a result of the dual roles they play at home and at work in Borno State;
- examine the extent of relationship between home-work interface and stress; and
- Identify strategies employed by working women to combat stress as a result of the dual roles they play.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions to which answers are being sought are the following:

- What are the factors leading to stress among women as a result of the dual roles play at home and at work in Borno State?
- Is there any relationship among home-work interface and stress?
- What are the strategies used by working women to combat stress as a result of the dual role they played?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature in order to put the study in its proper conceptual, theoretical, empirical and methodological contexts. The review is organized according to the following sections: conceptual definitions and theoretical postulations.

STRESS

The word "stress" means different things to different people, so that defining it is extremely difficult although it has become part of our daily vocabulary. Yet how are we to cope with the stress of life if we cannot even define it? Stress is an unavoidable feature of modern living, the impact of dynamic and uncertain environment characterized by restructuring, reengineering, layoff and downsizing which threatened one's personal security of employment [8]. Generally, stress is always thought of in negative terms. That is, stress is perceived as something bad, annoying, threatening and not wanted [9]. For example, words or phrases such as depression, feeling out of control, overworked, migraine or headache, time pressure, anxiety, lack of sleep, are commonly used to express what stress means to us personally [10].

Stress that is not well managed will bring negative consequences not only to an employee, but also to the organisation [11]. Stress that is not well managed can cause emotional and physical illnesses such as coronary heart disease, cancer, lung problems, diabetes, accident and committing suicide. Also there are some types of occupations which can cause an individual experiencing stress dilemma particularly occupations that involve high risk of life, illness and safety. Even though stress is hardly to be eliminated in our daily life, a proper way of coping with stress can be practiced in order to reduce stress [12]. Stress is one of those words that everybody knows the meaning of but none can define it [13]. As a result, it is vital to give attention to what stress is not about in today's organization. As pointed out by Luthans [14] three major misconceptions about stress are as follows:

Stress is not simply anxiety. Anxiety operates solely in the emotional and psychological sphere, whereas stress operates both and also in the physiological sphere. Thus, stress may be accompanied by anxiety, but the two should not be equated.

Stress is not simply nervous tension. Like anxiety, nervous tension may result from stress, but the two are not the same. Unconscious people have exhibited stress and some people may keep it "bottle up" and not reveal it through nervous tension. Stress is not necessarily something damaging, bad or to be avoided. Stress is inevitable. Stress is not damaging or bad and is something people should seek out rather than avoid.

Akinboye [6] outline some common causes of stress in the workplace which include: low pay; promotion delays; threat of redundancy; job insecurity; change in working hours; employee lack of control; career development and achievement factors; conflict at work; heavy work load; new management technology. Workplace stress is a major problem for both organizations and employees, and it has been estimated that approximately 13.4 million working days in Britain is lost per year due to stress, depression or anxiety long hours of working; work shifts; sensory factors such as noise; sexual harassment; ageism; meeting deadlines; burn out; poor social skills; bullying at work; automatic leadership; concept change at work etc.

Stress derived from work and/or home can create problems in the workplace, and has a variety of outcomes. These may be objective and quantifiable factors such as sickness, absence [12, 15, 16] and labour turnover. However, there are also less quantifiable outcomes of stress such as the people who physically turn up for work but are unable to contribute fully because of their stress related problems [12]. Such forms of stress may be evidenced by irrational thinking and rigidity of views [12]. These manifestations of

stress are important as they contribute to deficient work performance and loss of productivity, not only from the individuals under stress, but potentially from those who have to work with them. The outcomes of pressures experienced in the workplace can also manifest themselves in the employee's well-being in several ways: tension headaches, allergies, back problems, colds and flu, depression, anxiety, irritation, tension and sleeplessness [17].

SOURCES OF STRESS

What factors contribute to stress in the work place? A variety of studies have shown that quantitative work overloads are potent sources of stress in the work place in which individuals are asked to do more work than they can complete in a specific period of time Mullins[18]. Another major source of job stress is research in this area has concentrated on role ambiguity and role conflict as job stressors

Rice [14] has stated that role ambiguity is a community cited cause of work stress. Role ambiguity occurs when there is a lack of clarity as to what is actually expected of the person fulfilling a specific role [19,20]. Role ambiguity may also result from dissonance between the individual's perception of what the job should entail and what members of the organization expect [19, 20].

EFFECTS OF STRESS

By understanding the nature of stress and major sources of job stress, it is important to know the effects of job stress on physical health, psychological and behaviour of an individual. There is overwhelming evidence to indicate that continuous exposure to stressful situations, or an accumulation of stressors over a period of time, is directly associated with the onset of illness, emotional stress and engaging negative activities [21, 17]. Stress can make people ill and is implicated in the incidence and development of coronary heart disease, mental illness, certain types of cancer, smoking, dietary problems, excessive alcohol consumption and substance abuse, life dissatisfaction, accident and unsafe behaviour at work, migraine, stomach ulcers, hay fever, asthma and skin rashes, marital and family problems [14, 22]. Moreover, it was identified that an individual who has poor problem-solving and coping skills, inability to understand and cope with own emotions, and lack of social and self-assertion skills is more vulnerable to stress and subsequent alcohol and drug misuse.

Generally, the effects of work stress occur in three major areas. The physiological effects of stress include increase in blood pressure, increase in heart rate, sweating, hot and cold spells, breathing difficulty, muscular tension, and increase of gastrointestinal disorders. Psychological effects of stress consist of

anger, anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, poorer intellectual functioning, inability to concentrate and make decisions, nervousness, irritability, resentment of supervision and job dissatisfaction [23]. Decreased performance, absenteeism, higher accident rates, higher turnover rates, higher alcohol and other drug abuse, impulsive behaviour and difficulties in communication are few effects of stress on behavioural [13, 24].

According to Cunningham [25], in addition to physical illnesses, individuals experience significant pain and discomfort due to disturbances of the psychological and emotional systems. An angry, frustrated, emotionally unstable person is not capable of rational responses and good judgement. Such stress repercussions hinder a person's effectiveness in relating to others. They result in emotional disturbances, alcohol or drug abuse, impaired relationships, sleeping difficulties, disturbances in one's thought processes and concentration, behavioural disruptions and occupational burnout [25].

GENDER

Ginn and Sandel [26] found that men were significantly more likely than women to report that their job kept them away from their family too much, that there was a poor balance between job and family time, with time off fitting badly with family activities. Pleck [27] also found that for men the work role was allowed to intrude into family (such as arriving home later than expected), but for women the family role was allowed to intrude on the work role (such as caring for sick children). Inevitably, this is bound up in the traditional roles ascribed to men and women.

Gender has been found to affect career advancement, perhaps through differential access to valuable work networks [28], work and family time investment, work-family conflict and role stress and strategies for managing the work-family interface [29]. These gender differences may be due to gender role socialization and different opportunity structures for men and women which can lead men and women to have different psychological experiences of work and family roles. [30].

Men and women have different perceptions of their work roles [31]. Women's perceptions of their work role are often shaped by barriers to career advancement, compensation and networking opportunities [31]. Such barriers start with sex typing of jobs [32] and persist with differential access to development opportunities such as international assignments [43].

Men and women's experience of family roles is similarly affected by different sets of expectations for role enactment. Societal norms and gender role

socialization suggest that women are expected to identify more with the family role [33, 34] and spend more time on household activities [35]. Indeed research suggests that there is a substantial gender gap in household work between men and women (up to 19 hours per week) such that women engage in household work to a much greater extent than men. Studies in the work-family arena also provide evidence for the idea that women participate more in the family role than men. For example, a recent study of time investment in work and family roles found that women devoted 7 hours more per week to family than men (Rothbard and Edward

ROLE CONFLICT

Kahn and his colleagues found that one-third of male employees were concerned with the extent to which their jobs interfered with their family lives [36]. Other recent studies have demonstrated that there are quite a lot of conflict between work and family roles. The presence of children for instance, has been related to increased feelings of pressure in marriage and contributed to stress and lower life satisfaction [28]. Work and family life have always been interdependent, but the increased employment of mothers, rising family hours of work, today's service-intensive globalizing economy and the trend toward long working hours for some and inadequate family income for others have rendered this interdependence both more visible and more problematic.

The increased number of hours family members are contributing to the paid workforce means that both work and personal lives are not only under stress, but have changed in ways not anticipated by the assumptions, policies, and institutions that have previously shaped experience in both work and family life. As a result, to understand both the experiences of employee, and the changes that organisations can make to assist their employees, is an important consideration for work and family researches.

Role theory is a useful framework to understand how women and men as the case may be attempt to balance multiple roles. Within role theory, the Scarcity Hypothesis [37] proposes that the amount of time and energy individual have is constant. Thus, any increase in roles results in the increased likelihood of role conflict, over load and negative repercussions. Likewise a scarcity of energy creates conflict that produces stress and anxiety [44, 38]. observed that multiple roles lead to perceptions of conflict and overload and have negative repercussions for the well being and performance of employees.

Role conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of role pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult the

compliance with the other [36]. These study focuses on stress that occur as a result of inter- role conflicts among women. Inter-role conflict results when pressures in one are incompatible with pressures in another role. For example woman may lack the necessary time to meet obligations at home and work or experience stress at home [39, 40]. For instance, in the occupational world in recent years, despite a reduction of gender differences, one occupational role remains entirely feminine (the role of house wife). No law bans men from this occupation but the weight of cultural, economic, social and psychological pressure is against their entry into it. The equation of femaleness with housewifery is basic to the structure of modern society [2]. Housework is work directly opposed to the possibility of human self actualisation. It has become acceptable for a husband to “help” his wife; provided, he does not over do it. So the concept of “help” is obviously political. Women’s domesticity is a circle of learnt deprivation and induced subjugation; a circle decisively centred on family life. It is embedded in social perceptions and social norms, which affects economic outcomes for women in every sphere.

Men are often seen as bread winners and women as helpers. Some social norms enter almost every sphere of activity. It defines gender division of labour, like limiting the range of tasks women may perform, defining child care as their duty, restricting their mobility, promoting certain job options, etc. In summary, gender inequality among workers takes therefore, both a material form and an ideological form; the former is embedded in who commands public and private assets and the latter is embedded in social norms and perceptions. Both aspects must be addressed. The question therefore is how women integrate work and family roles?

Adekola [41] carried out a study on interferences between work and family among male and female executives in Nigeria. The paper examines two aspects of work family interfaces; work interferences with family and family interferences with work in Nigerian context. Survey data from business executives in Nigeria confirmed that job related factors (such as career salience, hours of work, work involvement) were largely associated with work interference with family for both male and female executives, family-related factors have no effects on work interference with family. The number of children was also found to have significant effect on female executives’ family interference with work. The result highlights the impact of gender division of labour in the household upon work-family conflict as experienced by male and female executives. It has been suggested that in order to reduce work- family conflict, an effective way is to increase job flexibility so that employees are in a better position to balance the demands from two domains of life

WOMEN AND STRESS

The conceptual literature on stress suggests that working women are prone to the same stressors experienced by working men. Yet, women are also confronted with potentially unique stressors such as discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation and work-home conflict and aging parents [42]. Even though women in paid work force face numerous stressors, the conventional wisdom that work is necessarily harmful to women has not been proven. Repetti, [42] found little evidence to support a global relationship between paid employment and either mental or physical health in women. Instead, they found that paid employment had clearly beneficial health effects for some women and clearly detrimental effects for others. These effects depend on the characteristics of the individual woman, her family situation, and the properties of her job. Even though employed women experience a multitude of work-related stressors, they appear to be better off than women who are not employed.

However, multiple roles for women produce a number of benefits. certain work conditions are deleterious to women’s well-being. Sex segregation serves as a source of stress. While women’s work-force participation has doubled in the last 25 – 30 years, most women are still employed in a limited number of occupations, performing labour differently from the kind of labour performed by men. For example while six (6) out of the every ten (10) women are in the paid labour force, 58% of Canadian women work in clerical, sales, or services occupations. Men are employed in a wider range of jobs and more frequently hold higher paying jobs [45].

In Nigeria, the situation is not different. Sex segregation of work roles creates further stressors unique to women. For example, secretaries, waitresses, and nurses experience high demands, but receive limited autonomy and low pay. Routine bureaucratic work is common in female dominated jobs (e.g. clerical work). In addition women in jobs that remain male-dominated often experience social isolation a situation that limits women’s opportunities for social support. Although women are joining the paid work force in record numbers and are moving into men’s occupations, men are not moving into women’s occupations. Until women’s work is valued as much as men’s, this imbalance is unlikely to change.

Stone [46] in her article titled *The Opt-Out Revolution* focus on high-achieving, economically privileged, married, U.S. women who gave up their careers to devote themselves full-time to home and children. The book is based on extensive interviews with 54 married, college educated, high achieving professional women who exited the labour force to focus on home and family.

Halpern [47] attempts to offer advice to female high achievers about how to have it all. He interviewed a selected sample of 42 women in powerful top-level positions in China and Hong-Kong and 20 high-achieving American Women. These are mothers and wives sacrificing personal needs for the sake of the family welfare and career success. These powerful spouses sometimes experienced extreme strategies; sleep deprivation, and no personal time. Searching for an optimal balance between work and home is a process in which increasing numbers of workers are involved. Besides the experience of demands in the work domain, it is very likely that workers experience demands in the home domain as well.

Findings by Ofoegbu and Nwadini [5] reveal significant factors influencing stress among academic staff to include strike and school interruption, delay and irregular payment of salary, lack of facilities of examination result, invigilation of examinations, campus militancy, high costs of living, office accommodation, lack of research facilities, lack of annual leave and under-funding of education.

Adeoye *et al.* [48] examined the predisposing source of stress and coping strategies among career married women as expressed by female civil servants in Ilorin metropolis. Five major predictive variables were considered, namely; workload, interpersonal relationship at work, organizational issues, home-work interface and pressure from friends and relations. Also, two main coping strategies, that is, combative and anticipatory coping, were investigated. The study also sought to find out the influence of variables such as age, highest educational qualifications and working experience on stress experienced by the respondents. Samples were drawn from teachers and civil servants. A 30-item questionnaire was administered to the respondents. Data were analyzed using mean ranking, t-test and ANOVA. The main findings revealed that "too much workload" was the main coping strategies employed by respondents. Other findings indicated that, there were no significant differences in sources of stress based on age, religion, highest educational qualification and working experience. Similarly, no significant differences were found in coping strategies on the basis of age, highest educational qualification and working experience. The counselling implications of the study were discussed and recommendations were made in line with the findings.

Adekola [41] examined the relationships between stress, social support and work/family conflict on Nigerian women's mental health. The sample consisted of two hundred working women from the teaching and health care professions. To achieve the objective of the study six hypotheses were formulated and tested. The data were analyzed using the student t-

test statistics, Pearson product moment and multiple correlation coefficients. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference between young and old women in the level of stress experienced. There is significant difference between young and old women in the level of stress experienced. There is also a significant difference between junior and senior staff in the social support experienced between single and married women. However, no significant difference existed between single and married women based on their experience of work/family conflict. Based on these findings, it was recommended, among others, that direct efforts specific to primary prevention of mental disorders should be made, that employers of labour should establish family supportive and friendly interventions to assist women in their ability to cope with competing demands, and that women should be integrated into social network and high levels of social support as this will neutralize and control situations of stress and work/family conflict problems in Nigeria.

WORK-HOME INTERFACE

Much of past research in the work-family area focused on detrimental outcomes of actively participating in multiple roles such as framework. Dumas [49] allowed for the possibility that individuals might identify equally with their work and non-work roles. She then compared outcomes of those who identified equally and unequally with their work role and their role in a community based volunteer orchestra. She hypothesised and found an interaction between the individual's relative identification and role boundary management strategy such that those who identified more equally with their work and non-work roles experienced greater role conflict.

According to Cooper [50], work stress does have a home-work interface connection. This was also reflected in the findings of Adeoye [51]. Durosaro [19] also indicated that the dual role of female lecturers as wives/mothers as well as lecturers was a source of stress. While the husbands go to clubs and other relaxation centres to unwind, the female lecturers go back home to attend to domestic chores and care of children. Odebunmi [52] found that one way to help female academics to cope with stressors was to use role models from which they could learn some adjustment tactics.

The problems of women lecturers seem compounded because of the sex-role stereotyping in which power and independence is not traditionally assigned to the Nigerian women. Some women lecturers, according to Odebunmi's [52] report, seemed to feel guilty when they try to assert themselves. Female assertiveness is not part of the Nigerian traditional culture. Specifically, therefore, the Nigerian female lecturer has the peculiar problem of having to cope with the role of the token woman. (i.e. a woman to be seen

but not heard), lack of role models to learn from, feelings of isolation, strains of coping with male prejudices and overt or covert discriminations from senior colleagues. Nigerian women are fast becoming a force to reckon with in the world of work and female university lecturers cannot be neglected. They constitute a sizeable proportion of Nigerian lecturers whose impact can certainly be felt. Recent statistics [6] do indicate that 20.3% of Nigerian university lecturers are females. As at the end of 1997/98 session at the University of Ilorin, there were 53 female lecturers as compared with 481 male counterparts. In the same year, there were 2 females out of a total number of 116 lecturers in the professional rank.

Comparatively, this is rather small. Nevertheless universities have produced at least two female Vice-Chancellors. What seems to be responsible for this low participation of women in top rank lecturership position however, cannot be unconnected with the struggle to keep the home and function maximally on their jobs at the same time? The home-work interface stress [50, 51] for female lecturers are likely to be more profound than for their male counterparts. Also in a survey on female participation in teaching in Nigerian Federal Universities, 53% of the participants believed there was a distinct disadvantage in being a woman or in desiring a career in lecturing at the university level [19]. Results from this survey also show that the women lecturers perceived themselves as a minority group in a male-dominated environment. Indeed Babajide [53] found that female lecturers are subjected to greater work-related pressures than their male counterparts. The perception of the female lecturers is probably best understood if consider the fact that teaching in the university in itself is a very high-pressure job [54, 19]. In Nigeria part of these pressures include the “publish or perish” syndrome, teaching and research work load, paper writing for conferences, seminar and workshops, marking of scripts, meeting deadlines, supervising students projects and other practical work, attending and making meaningful contributions at post-graduate thesis and dissertations defense, emergency meetings at departmental and faculty levels as well as membership of various committees.

Stress and stress-related outcomes do have serious consequences on an individual’s personal, mental, psychological and physical health [19]. Thus the female lecturer may become a nagging mother, difficult or uncooperating co-worker and someone who may be highly intolerant of everyone else around her [19, 55] came up with findings which did indicate that female lecturers, living and working under great pressure and the resultant stress, expressed complaints of constant fatigue and exhaustion.

Recently, more women are entering the previously male-dominated occupational areas in Nigeria and university teaching is one of them. An investigation into what problems and pressures women lecturers face seemed expedient at this point in order to be able to tackle the job-related stressors better. The few studies [6, 51] on women lecturers are recent as there had been a paucity of research studies in this area.

COPING MECHANISMS

Based on the above reviews, job stress can be detrimental to the health and well-being of an individual. Therefore it is important to discuss effectively ways of responding to stress on the individual level. The major purpose of this sub-section is to summarize and integrate a body of literatures pertinent to understanding how an individual copes with stress occurring in organizational and non-organizational life. Generally, coping has been focused on internal and external resources for coping with stress which deal with work and general life stressors [56]. Coping can be defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person [57].

Lazarus and Folkman [57] identified two general types of coping, namely Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves the attempt to understand and define a problem and to work out possible solutions or do something to alter the source of stress. Emotion-focused coping is oriented towards reducing or managing the emotional distress that is related to, or brought about by, the stressful situation. Both of these methods are usually utilised when an individual is confronted with stress, and these processes may then either facilitate or impede each other. Problem-focused coping strategies laid to predominate when individuals perceive themselves as capable of doing something constructive, while emotion-focused coping is used more often by individuals who believe that stressors must be endured [57].

According to Nixon [19], the division of coping strategies into only two general types is too simplistic, because it does not offer a precise distinction between sets of strategies. However, Billings and Moos [58] admitted that the acknowledgement of all possible types of coping behaviour used to manage the demands of everyday life, is a formidable task. There seems to be many expansions and combinations of the various approaches to coping.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist Theory on Stress

This study is based on feminist theory with emphasis on the radical and Marxist feminist theories.

The development of feminism has led to attention being focused on the subordinate position of women in many societies. Radical feminists blame men for the exploitation of women. To them it is primarily men who have benefited from the subordination of women. Radical feminists see society as patriarchal, which is dominated and ruled by men. From this point of view, men are the ruling class, and women the subject class. Women have always been exploited and only revolutionary change can offer the possibility of their liberation. Marxist feminists however do not attribute women's exploitation entirely to men. They see capitalism rather than patriarchy as the principal source of women's oppression, and capitalists as the main beneficiary. Like radical feminists they see women's unpaid work housewives and mothers as one of the main ways in which women are exploited. Although men in general benefit, it is primarily capitalist who gain from women's unpaid work since new generations of workers are reproduced at no cost to the capitalist.

Capitalism benefits from a large reserve labour force of women to keep wages down and profits up. In their roles as secondary bread winners, married women provide cheap and easily exploitable labour. Because women have been socialized to comply and submit, they formed a docile labour force that can be readily manipulated and easily fired when not required. In this study the distinction between the domestic or private sphere and the public sphere provides useful way of analysing and explaining the relative powerlessness of women in many societies. However, there are many ways in which public and private lives overlap. In modern industrial societies it is women's labour in the home that makes it possible for men to devote themselves to work in the public sphere though women's activities tend to be devalued even when they take place in the public sphere. When women take paid employment outside the home, the job they do are often regarded as being of less importance than those of men. From this point of view, the devaluation of women has deeper roots than their association with domestic life.

The following are the main highlights of the conceptual framework:

- Patriarchy and ideology of domesticity are responsible for the subordinate position/oppression of women in every society.
- That on the basis of the demands from the basic domestic responsibilities, married women's professional career advancement is usually hampered.
- That on the basis of biological function of women, such as child rearing/bearing, the career/work development of married women is undermined in the labour market.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To achieve the aims of the study, a two- phase study was carried out including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative method was adopted because it is well equipped to examine human relations and problems and also provides for the understanding of the various strands of social relations which women undergo in the cause of performing their roles. Qualitative method made it possible for us to capture what women will say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their experience and their world in terms of stress. It also helped us to understand events from the view point of the women. Focus group discussions were held, as they are useful for exploratory and evaluative purpose.

Eight group discussions were conducted, two in each of the four organisations in February and March 2012. Each group comprised staff from the same level within the organisation to encourage dialogue and contrast the experiences of staff with similar job functions. Each group discussion was moderated by a moderator with a tape recorder, and lasted an average of 60 minutes. Some factual information was sought from the participants at the beginning of each session. This acted as an ice breaker for the participants and gave an insight into their job, and family/home circumstances.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The quantitative research instrument for this study was the questionnaire; the questionnaire was designed to measure the type of stress women experience and their coping strategies. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, A, B, and C. Section A contained information about the demographic variables of level of education, number of children and age of the respondent. Section B dealt with the nature and type of stress encountered by women in discharging their duties in the work-home domain. Section C measured the coping strategies adopted by the women in countering stress.

The questionnaire contains 85 items. The majority of those questions were likert-type rating scale, where in relation to each item, respondents are asked to indicate the point on the scale, which most effectively describes their opinion. The questionnaire concludes with an open ended question to record any issues not covered and also to provide some qualitative information.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The target population for this study consist of all working women, both married and unmarried in the four selected organizations within the Maiduguri Metropolitan. These organizations were selected because of the large population of women in them. In

the health and the educational sectors, one institution each was selected from Federal and State services.

A stratified sampling technique was utilized to select the respondents for this study. This method was chosen because it is a simple and straight forward way of drawing a probability sample since most of the organizations have sample frames.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the primary data collected through the survey and Focus Group Discussions. Based on the data presented and analyzed, the findings are discussed in relation to the objectives of the study, the research questions and the hypotheses. Computer based data analysis were carried out using the windows based statistical package SPSS; the tables were created in Microsoft word packages. Any discrepancies noted on the tables are due to missing values in the data.

The results are divided into three sections that reflect the format of the questionnaire providing a composite description of the survey population. The first section deals with back ground information relating to the respondents. These include age, group, and employment status, level of education, marital status and religion. The second section focuses on the source, nature and type of stress. The final section concentrates on the coping strategies utilized.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

In this section, the basic social-economic characteristics of the respondents are presented and discussed. Five socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents namely, age, education, marital status are presented and discussed. Data related to the four organizations are tabulated with frequency and percentage distributions to give a comparative view.

Table-1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age	Unimaid		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-24	14	13.5	12	10.0	34	33.3	54	39.7
25-34	24	23.1	29	24.2	21	20.6	25	18.4
35-44	35	33.7	46	38.3	35	34.3	32	23.5
45-54	28	26.9	33	27.5	10	9.8	9	6.6
55 and above	3	2.9	0	.0	2	2.0	16	11.8
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Highest Educational Qualification	Unimaid		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Non formal Schooling	4	3.8	0	.0	3	2.9	0	.0
Primary	4	3.8	0	.0	4	3.9	11	8.1
Secondary/Teacher Training	9	8.7	20	16.7	14	13.7	18	13.2
OND/NCE	22	21.2	18	15.0	44	43.1	69	50.7
HND/BSC	35	33.7	44	36.7	26	25.5	13	9.6
Master/Ph.D	24	23.1	8	6.7	8	7.8	18	13.2
Others	6	5.8	30	25.0	3	2.9	7	5.1
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Respondents' Religion	Unimaid		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Christianity	61	58.7	41	34.2	37	36.3	49	36.0
Islam	42	40.4	73	60.8	65	63.7	57	41.9
Traditional	1	1.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	.7
Others	0	.0	6	5.0	0	.0	29	21.3
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Marital Status	Unimaid		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	11	10.6	12	10.0	29	29.3	23	16.9
Married	87	83.7	103	85.8	56	56.6	51	37.5
Divorced/ Separated	0	.0	5	4.2	5	5.1	10	7.4
Widowed	6	5.8	0	.0	9	9.1	31	22.8
Cohabiting	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	21	15.4
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	99	100.0	136	100.0
Years of Experience in Marriage	Unimaid		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-5 yrs	21	22.6	39	36.1	18	25.7	51	46.4
6-10 yrs	21	22.6	26	24.1	14	20.0	29	26.4
11.15 yrs	9	9.7	22	20.4	13	18.6	15	13.6
15 and above	42	45.2	21	19.4	25	35.7	15	13.6
Total	93	100.0	108	100.0	70	100.0	110	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2011).

The results indicate that a third of the respondents, representing 32% of the total, fall into the age category 35-44 years. From the responses 24.7% of the respondents' ages ranges 15-24 years, 17.3% of the respondents' ages ranges 45-54 years, 55 and above carries the lowest percentage of respondent (4.5%). We can say these responses are reliable because the ages between 25 and 35 are the busiest in a woman's life either for the pursuit of career or homemaking.

As indicated in table 5.2 only 1.5% has no formal education; majority of the respondents (33.1%) have Diploma and NCE; HND/B.Sc holders are 25.5% while master/Ph.D holders are 12.6%. This shows that majority of the respondents have formal educational background. This is to be expected as education is a requirement in getting employment in both the Federal and State establishments.

Majority of the respondents (64.7%) as shown in table 5.2 are married, as expected. In the area of study, marital status is considered an important determinant of social status, and marriage is an indicator of responsibility and achievement in the society; 16.2% of the respondents are single, 4.3% are divorced/separated while 10% are widowed.

Table 5 shows that 33.9% of the respondents have been married for 1-5years while 23.6% have been married for 6-10years. This shows that majority of the respondents have been married for a long time. Also notable is that 103 of the respondents representing 27% have been married for 15 years and above. The table indicates that majority of the respondents were Moslem and this is represented by 51.3%, while 40.7% were Christians. However, adherents of the African traditional religion were represented by less than 1%.

In this section, the causes of stress for participants as a result of factors within the home are presented and discussed. This is done in order to meet the first objective of this study, that is, to examine the factors leading to stress at home and at work. The task is first, to determine whether a respondent experiences stress, and second, to identify the factors that cause the stress being experienced. For example, if a working woman who is also married obtains strongly agree to any of items in the questionnaire, she is deemed to have experienced stress. As was mentioned in chapter three, researchers have found that working women are involved in multiple roles, as they have responsibilities both at work and at home. It must be kept in mind that the stress that an individual expresses at work is often taken home and this affects other areas of the person's life [59]. This is referred to as spill over [22].

The majority of respondents (University of Maiduguri 39.6%. University of Maiduguri Teaching

Hospital 38.3, Specialist Hospital 35% and College of Education 35.7) agree that they are being over loaded with domestic chores (University of Maiduguri 27.7, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital 27%, Specialist Hospital 24.5 and College of Education 25.6) and overloaded with domestic chores.

Co-workers uncompromising attitude yielded interesting findings. The experience of this particular behaviour was very prevalent among the survey sample. According to Travers and Cooper[6], Wallius *et al.* [61], the pressure of relationship at work can be both a source of stress and a source of social support. If a woman is not in good working relationships with management and colleagues, it will make her particularly vulnerable to stress. Support from colleagues has also been emphasized in early study as helpful in handling stress [62]. Table 14 shows that most respondents strongly agree that co-workers uncompromising attitude is a source of stress for them (29% and 13.9% strongly agree).

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The focus group data were collected to supplement the quantitative data so as to give more depth to the findings and to see if any emic issues were being overlooked. In this section, we first examine the nature, experience and consequences of work-family interface stress among working women, their main coping strategies, and lastly we look at the kind of organization support for women at play in these organizations.

The Nature, Experience and Consequences of Stress on Women Workers

Under this section respondents were asked the following questions:

- Do you in any way experience stress in carrying out your role as a worker and as a married woman at the same time?
- If yes, what is the nature of stress you experience? Is it your work roles that is interfering with your family roles or vice versa or both?
- Can you please describe how these roles are conflicting?
- What do you think is or are causing these conflicting situations?

The responses to the interviews clearly demonstrate that both categories of women viewed work – family integrating as a major problem. Each of the women had to cope with the problems individually, and did so without organizational support. The case seems to be more critical for women in educational institution.

The question therefore is: How do these women define the problem of work-home integration?

Foremost, majority of the women discussants felt that work-home integration was a major issue faced by women. The primary reasons given by women for experiencing stress as a result of conflict in their home and work were mostly child care problems

Some participants noted a number of negative outcomes that had resulted from their double roles. These include: Lack of time for partner/children, tiredness, negative emotions and distraction, lack of

time for self and lack of professional growth. From the above responses it has been clearly demonstrated that both categories of women viewed work-home conflict as a major.

Interface between Work-Home and Stress

The data gathered on this objective was analysed using Spearman ranked-ordered correlation coefficient. The results of the analysis are presented in the table bellow:

Table-2: Spearman Ranked-ordered correlation coefficients

Variable	Spearman coefficient	Rho	Significance level	Type of variable
1	Too little work	0.384	.01	Office
2	Low income support	0.326	.01	Home
3	Financial constraints	0.318	.01	Home
4	Children illness	0.297	.01	Home
5	Lack of promotion	0.267	.01	Office
6	Being overloaded with domestic chores	0.231	.01	Home
7	Lack of advancement	0.210	.01	Office
8	Domestic violence	0.201	.01	Home
9	Waking up early and preparing breakfast	-0.191	.01	Home
10	Poor supervision	0.189	.01	Office
11	Discrimination	0.162	.01	Office
12	Cleaning the home	-0.140	.01	Home
13	Lack of communication	0.139	.01	Office
14	Excessive work load	0.114	.01	Office
15	Getting children ready for school	-0.111	.05	Home
16	Low pay	0.090	NS	Office
17	Unclear work schedule	0.090	NS	Office
18	Co-Workers' uncompromising attitude	0.073	NS	Office
19	Sexual harassment	0.061	NS	Office
20	Poor conditions of service	-0.055	NS	Office
21	Husband's unhealthy habits	0.047	NS	Home
22	Trouble with in-laws	0.041	NS	Home
23	School run	-0.013	NS	Home

Source: Field Work, 2011.

The Spearman's rank order correlation (rho) was used to calculate the strength of the relationship between two ordinal variables [63]. In the present study the analysis indicate the relationship between Home-Work and Stress. The table shows that a total of 15 of the 23 variables were significantly related to stress. Out of the 15, eight (8) are home factor while seven(7) are office factors. This means there is an interface between the home and work factors. Among those variables related to stress are the following home factors: Low home support, Children illness, Financial constraints, Being overloaded with domestic chores, domestic violence, waking up early and preparing breakfast, cleaning the home and getting children ready for school. Among those related to stress are the following office factors; too little work, lack of promotion, lack of advancement, poor supervision, discrimination and lack of communication. This means equal number of home-work variables were significantly correlated with stress.

The table further shows that eight (8) home-work variables are not significantly correlated with stress. Out of this eight (8), five are office factors and they are low pay, unclear work schedule, co-workers, uncompromising attitude, sexual harassment and poor condition of service. The three (3) home factors are husband's unhealthy habits, trouble with in-laws and school run.

Too little work coming top is not surprising given the fact that among variable for stressor are too little work and too much work. Too little work at office and probably too much work at home there is a link between the two, given this prevalent condition, this result is therefore explainable. Troubles with in-law and school run ranked last, probably because most of the women explain that their husbands do the school run. This was discovered during the focus group discussion. Most of the women also revealed that they do not have problems with their in-laws, hence these two factors seem to pose little or no stress to the women.

Table-3: Stress Management Strategies

Change in Routine	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	54	51.9	60	50.0	48	47.1	60	44.1
Sometimes	13	12.5	16	13.3	14	13.7	25	18.4
Rarely	20	19.2	25	20.8	22	21.6	31	22.8
Never	17	16.3	19	15.8	18	17.6	20	14.7
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Recreation with family	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	61	58.7	67	55.8	57	55.9	67	54.5
Sometimes	20	19.2	24	20.0	21	20.6	34	25.0
Rarely	9	8.7	14	11.7	10	9.8	23	16.9
Never	14	13.5	15	12.5	14	13.7	12	8.8
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Talk to someone	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	63	60.6	75	62.5	61	59.8	87	64.0
Sometimes	14	13.5	15	12.5	14	13.7	19	14.0
Rarely	16	15.4	19	15.8	16	15.7	26	19.1
Never	11	10.6	11	9.2	11	10.8	4	2.9
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Attend to social gathering	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	61	58.7	68	56.7	58	56.9	74	54.4
Sometimes	19	18.3	24	20.0	20	19.6	34	25.0
Rarely	10	9.6	13	10.8	10	9.8	16	11.8
Never	3	2.9	4	3.3	3	2.9	8	5.9
Don't know	11	10.6	11	9.2	11	10.8	4	2.9
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Take hired help	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	55	52.9	59	49.2	49	48.0	60	44.1
Sometimes	13	12.5	15	12.5	14	13.7	18	13.2
Rarely	10	9.6	13	10.8	11	10.8	15	11.0
Never	9	8.7	14	11.7	10	9.8	22	16.2
Don't know	17	16.3	19	15.8	18	17.6	21	15.4
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Assign work to others	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	58	55.8	69	57.5	56	54.9	82	60.3
Sometimes	14	13.5	15	12.5	16	15.7	17	12.5
Rarely	4	3.8	4	3.3	3	2.9	1	.7
Never	6	5.8	8	6.7	6	5.9	16	11.8
Don't know	22	21.2	24	20.0	21	20.6	20	14.7
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Take out time for leisure	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	49	47.1	54	45.0	45	44.1	60	44.1
Sometimes	25	24.0	29	24.2	26	25.5	26	19.1
Rarely	0	.0	1	.8	0	.0	0	.0
Never	9	8.7	12	10.0	10	9.8	24	17.6
Don't know	21	20.2	24	20.0	21	20.6	26	19.1
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Exercise/ relaxation	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	52	52.0	59	50.4	50	51.0	67	49.6
Sometimes	14	14.0	17	14.5	14	14.3	18	13.3
Rarely	10	10.0	13	11.1	10	10.2	16	11.9
Never	6	6.0	9	7.7	6	6.1	15	11.1
Don't know	18	18.0	19	16.2	18	18.4	19	14.1
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0
Setting priority	UNIMAID		UMTH		Specialist Hospital		College of Education	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	55	52.9	63	52.5	52	51.0	75	55.1
Sometimes	12	11.5	10	8.3	11	10.8	4	2.9
Rarely	10	9.6	13	10.8	10	9.8	16	11.8
Never	3	2.9	4	3.3	3	2.9	8	5.9
Don't know	24	23.1	30	25.0	26	25.5	33	24.3
Total	104	100.0	120	100.0	102	100.0	136	100.0

Source: Field Work, (2011).

In question 16, women workers were given a list of nine coping strategies and were asked to indicate their responses on a five point likert-type rating scale ranging from 1(always) to 5 (don't know). For the presentation of results the data were collapsed into one table showing the percentages and frequencies in table 5.14. In terms of the 3rd objective of this study a descriptive statistic was used to identify strategies employed by working women in combating stress as a result of the dual role they played at home and at work. The results of the analysis are presented and discussed in this section. This is done in order to address the 3rd objective of this study. Table 5.14 shows that 54.5% of the respondents said they always resort to recreation with family as a source of coping with stress while 25.0 said they sometimes do; 12% of respondents never while 11% said they don't know.

61% of the respondents always talk to someone to manage stress; 13% sometimes do while 16.7% never talk to someone to reduce stress. Over half of the respondents 54.4% said they attend social gathering as a coping mechanism against stress while 21% never do. Only 8% never attend social gathering as a way of managing stress. Taking hired help has 48.3% for those that always did while 13.0% sometimes did; only 11.9% never take hired help as a way of coping. Table 3 further shows that 57.4% always assign work to others to reduce stress; 13.4% sometimes do while only 7.8% never assign work to others. Taking out time for leisure was also identified 45% always do, 22.9 sometimes do and notable here is that only 2% never do.

More than 50.7% of the respondents are engaged in exercise and relaxation as a way of managing stress; 10.9% sometimes do while 8% never exercise. Fifty three percent (53%) of the respondents indicated they always set priority for themselves so as to reduce the stress level while 8% sometimes, only 10.6% never do.

It can be concluded that the participants in this sample do not rely on only one type of coping strategy even though there appears to be preference for some like exercise and relaxation. It can be concluded that women in this sample are able to select the most appropriate strategy when confronted with stress.

Coping Strategies

Under this section respondents were asked the following questions:

- How have you been coping?
- What are the strategies you have been applying?
- Has your strategies brought relief from stress?

The women clearly experienced childcare issues as a personal problem. A common thread through the interviews was that all the women referred to childcare as "My" problem. The majority of the solutions were individually based. Women found ways to change their lives, instead of attempting to challenge their organization policies for fear of being laid off; perhaps the most glaring example of women making "Choices" were the women who chose to have limited number of children.

The participants spoke about a variety of strategies for coping with work – family stress. These include hiring house help, attending social gathering, negotiating roles with their partner and relaxation, recreation with family, change in routine, crying and assigning work to others.

Several of the women made individual choices to arrange their childbearing and rearing around the organization; this was not the only strategy they employed in which they made accommodation. Majority of the women had to adapt their work in the private sphere to better integrate work and family demands Gatta and Ross [64].

Many of them hired nannies and house-keepers to share the responsibilities at home front. Research has substantiated women's claims that they bear the burden of work-family conflicts. Hoch's child [35] referred to this as "Second shift."

Basically, it was found that most women address the needs at home by making changes in their lives. They employed domestic help and schedule their families around their office duties. The majority of the women said they felt like "outsiders" and experience stress all the time. These women had to confirm to the culture that reinforces the idea that the home sphere is the responsibility of women and it is therefore up to them to negotiate home and work balance.

The respondents were asked the following questions:

- Has your organization in anyway supported you by finding relief for your stress at work?
- If yes, how?
- If no, what are your suggestion.

Generally, respondents believed that organizations should address family needs. Since women still tend to be the primary caregiver of the family they are more likely than men to experience a greater burden of the work-home integration throughout their careers. Many felt torn between the home and work lives. Each of the women had to cope with the problems individually, and did so without any

organizational support. The respondents were asked to specify any other coping strategy they use other than the nine listed. A total of 395 suggestions were put forward by the women in the survey.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULT

The purpose of the study was to determine the home-work interface and stress and identify coping strategies among working women as expressed by women in Maiduguri. To a large extent the purpose of this study has been achieved. This is evident from the results.

The results showed that the most common sources of stress among women in the home was domestic chores, children illness, getting children ready for school, financial constraints. The findings of the study support the earlier studies by Palmer [64] who observed that stress is a serious problem that women deal with on a daily basis. However, for the working women, their stress situation is more serious and crucial considering their peculiar situations as workers and mothers at the same time. Jobs on their own are stressful; therefore women who work are exposed to more occurrence of stress. Thus, among working women, changes in everyday events such as demands of combining work and household chores become more stressful. Burke [65], found that constant stress at work or at home may be more dangerous for women than men. Higgins *et al.* and Kristiana Cryllensten [45], also found that family involvement and family expectations were related to stress among women. Studies also reported that women having younger children experience more stress [46]. Work place characteristics also contribute to higher level of stress.

The evidence above therefore shows that certain organizations provide an uneven distribution of work-related stress within the population as a whole. Majority of the married women in the research work have decided to employ combative coping strategies when stressed by talking to someone whenever work load is too heavy. It is also evident that career women employed "hired help" and take out time for leisure. It was noted that assigning work to others, exercise/relaxation and setting priority are also important coping strategies that the women employed. This finding is in line with Adeoye, [51] who noted that physical exercises, recreational activities and extracurricular activities are very significant coping strategies among women.

The use of religion emerged in the analysis of coping activities in the present study. Carver *et al.* [54] suggest that one might turn to religion when under stress for widely varying reasons; religion might serve as a source of emotional support or as a tactic of active coping with a stressor. Emotion-focused and problem-

focused coping strategies seeking comfort in religion can serve as both an emotion-focused and a problem-focused coping strategy.

During the FGD, Informants were questioned on the definition of stress in the workplace on the first session of the interview. In conversation, the researcher asked the informants what they knew about stress, when and what made them felt stress in the workplace. All the informants understood the definition of stress in the workplace and were able to provide situation when and what made them felt stress. The demands of life and work are contributing factors to stress. Whenever work or non-work demands exceed an individual's coping abilities, some form of stress occurs. Most respondents have their own unique definitions of stress. Informants were also able to define stress with physical health, psychological, and behavioural perspective. In sum, there is no single definition of stress, as one can see from the literature review. The characteristic of many of these definitions are focused on work related stress, external factors, and life-related stressors. In addition, they also indicated that stress may cause discomfort, disturbance, frustration and irrational judgement. Therefore, stress is a global human response resulting from the perception of an intense or trauma experience and has tremendous influence on one's physical health, psychological and behavioural.

The researcher encouraged informants to describe the sources of job stress that had occurred during the course of their job. Each informant identified more than one stressor and varied considerably. Informants also mentioned that interface between work and family is an issue that inflicts stress at workplace. Most informants have family and children that demand high level of attention, care and support. Working long hour causes informants to sacrifice their time with family and children at home. Working mothers are always worried of their children safety at home while they are at work. Moreover, working mother has a role to play at home such as cleaning, cooking, tutoring etc. Besides, a few informants had difficulties sourcing baby sitter to look after their children. Obviously, job satisfaction and work performance are influenced by the demand and conflicts of home and family life.

Informants cope with interface home and work stress by practicing effective time management. They schedule their time between work and home tasks to achieve personal enjoyment. They also stressed that it is important to set priorities, both work and home tasks. Informants also highlighted that one should not overload the schedule because overloading schedule will add more stress in work and home life. Taking a break is another way to reduce stress load and refresh one's mental and physical well-being. Moreover,

spending time with family can foster family relationship with spouse, children and family members.

Social support from family and friends is important to most informants as a mechanism to cope with job and home stress. A helpful hand by partner and friends regarding work and home problems, gives most informants the confidence and opportunity to look for support in their work-home situation. Informants described that social support helps to build bridges between the work and the home providing opportunities for informants' partners to understand the duties of the their spouses. Moreover, this will offer the informants' partners to express their views about the consequences of the informants' works on family life and be involved in the work-related decision-making that will affect all members of the family unit. During the interviews, some informants disclosed that taking leaves from work, leaving the unsettled work problem, keep silence, pretending to forget the problem, and accepting the work problem as it is, are ways to escape stress in the workplace. Informants mentioned that there are times certain problems are hard to settle due to lack of information, resources and time constraint. Informants also said that shifting their problems to other people or superiors helps to free their minds from stress on finding ways to settle their problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The results indicated that working women do experience stress from many sources. The most important stressors found were being overloaded with domestic chores, cleaning the home, lack of promotion, etc. women must deal with those and manage them constructively in a way that positive consequences will be maintained and negative ones will be eliminated.

Both the qualitative and quantitative results showed that home-work interface was an important issue. In the qualitative results respondents were able to express themselves more. The results presented indicate that there is a relationship between home-work, and the work micro system and family micro system significantly influence one another through a permeable boundary. Spill over from work to family affects the family by impairing both individual and family functioning. Spill over from the family to work takes the form of lower productivity and higher absenteeism.

Majority of the respondents reported using various stress management techniques like relaxation, planning and taking hired help. Planning their time and taking hired help were most preferred techniques. Thus there is need to find a way of removing stress or reducing it to the barest minimum. The reduction of this would boost career women performance and thus make them more efficient. From the respondents it was clear that they experience time constraints as they hardly find time for physical exercises and recreation.

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