

# IMPACT OF CAREER AND FAMILY ROLES CONFLICT AMONG EDUCATED WOMEN IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

*B. R. Allison, Ph.D*

## **Abstract**

*This study examined the impact of career and family roles conflict experienced by educated working mothers in different professions. The population covered by the study is 300 respondents in six LGAs of Taraba state, a stratified random techniques was used to select 270 educated working mothers for the study. Questionnaire was designed and used for the collection of data. The reliability of the instrument was established through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.76 index. The two research questions were analyzed through the use of percentage and frequency. The findings of the study include the following: Educated working women go through stress as a result of their dual roles of work and parenting, and the level of stress experienced by working mothers varies from profession to profession and their husbands are majorly responsible for the day to day running of the home. It was concluded that stress-induced illnesses are inevitable as working mothers continue to experience role conflicts in their jobs and at home, also as long as the educated working mothers are over stretched in the office it will affect their home and recommendations were made which include the following: Working mothers should locate jobs that would give them flexibility in their work schedules and should give birth to fewer children (like 1 to 3) are recommended.*

**Key words:** Impact, Career, Roles, Family, Conflict, and Educated,

## **Background of the Study**

In every society members occupy a number of social positions known as status – occupational status, family status and gender status. An individual in modern society usually has an occupational status such as teacher, lawyer, doctor, engineer, accountant, nurse and the like. This same individual has a family status of son, daughter, husband, father, wife, and mother and will have a gender status of male or female. Haralambos and Heald (1980:8) said “each status is accompanied by a number of norms that define how an individual occupying a particular status is expected to behave or act. These norms that direct the behavior of individual in the society are called ROLES”.

ROLE is a key concept of sociological theory that highlights the social expectation attached to particular statuses (Marshall 1998). Thus, the status mother is accompanied by that role expectation, the status of a wife is accompanied by the role of a wife and so on. Most educated women occupy at least three status – wife, mother, worker (professional). Each of these positions has a different role set or expectation. When this expectations are in disagreement, as is frequently the case, role-conflict arise (Marshall, 1998: 57).

As a wife, a woman has conjugal role towards her husband such as being a confidant and sexual partner. This woman has a domestic role also towards the household which she shares with the husband. Holding the status of a mother, she has responsibilities towards her children (maternal role) guiding, monitoring and supervising the children as well as other civic roles. As a worker (secular

job), she has duties to perform in the office. These status with their corresponding roles expectation are incompatible. Therefore, Macionis (1999:151) contends that “the incompatibility among roles corresponding to two or more statuses is ROLE-CONFLICT”.

Conflict arises as a result of two or more incompatible roles. Conflict therefore is, “a situation in which they are two or more jobs, aims, role and it is impossible for both of them to be treated equally and fairly at the same time” (Horn by, 2006:305). The roles, norms and values are culturally determined and socially transmitted from one generation to the other, thereby considering the culture. As society is diverse, so is culture diverse. The culture of a society determines whether to go hunting while the women pick vegetable or vice versa. Ortner (1974) cited in Haralambos and Heald (1980:377) remarked that “...by the use of culture, man does not have a passively submit to nature, he can regulate and control it”.

The delineation of roles according to gender enables both sexes to carry out their responsibilities better. This is the origin of sexual division of labor. “The sexual division of labor refers to the specialized gender roles of male, breadwinner and female, house wife (Marshall, 1998:577).

In response to the gender status and roles, men tend to have greater physical strength by nature, thus they perform outdoor task requiring mechanical aptitude while women take charge of family life, assuming primary responsibility for managing the household and raising children (Parsons in Macionis 1999:338).Parsons further explained that socialization teaches the two sexes appropriate gender identity and skills needed for adult life. Thus society teaches boys – presumably destined for the labor force – to be rational, competitive and self-assured. This complex of traits, Parsons called instrumental. To prepare girls for child rearing, their socialization stresses the expressive qualities such as emotional responsiveness and sensitivity to others. The woman bears and nurses children, so she is tied to the home base and her physique is limited to less strenuous tasks. In essence, nature assigns to the woman functions that center around the heart or home. According to Ike Mark-Odu (1994:19). The sexual division of labor is supported and justified by a belief and value system which states that gender roles are normal, natural, right and proper (Tucker 2006).At home, the responsibilities of women revolved around procreation, washing, cleaning, caring for the young and dependent children and also caring for the husband who is the head of the family in a patriarchal society.

Grooves (1972) cited in Eboh (2004:52) states that women are weaker sexes, and believe social traditions had strongly ascribed lesser jobs and occupations for them” Grooves further stated that to match their sex roles, domestic functions were predominantly assigned to them. This situation is changing fast as opined by Oputa (1989) in Zuofa (2006:60),

*The myth that the woman exists only to bear children and to take care of the kitchen could be traced to pre-historic era when man left the cave to hunt for food. This condition however, no longer holds because the women, in addition to bearing children and attending to kitchen duties also go out to work in order to raise the economic base of the family.*

The changing role of women was as a result of formal education acquired by women. Although, even before the introduction of formal education women were engaged in subsistence agriculture.

Education as we can see is not only an instrument of stability, but also an instrument of change (Uchendu 1995: 126). As an instrument of change, the roles of women have also changed. Their roles are no longer tied to the role of mother-wife but co-breadwinners. Many aspects of the family have undergone rapid changes due to the influence of western education. Parents have lost

their places as major agents of socialization due to work pressure. As the desire to make a living keeps the parents (mother especially) less at home than is normal, Salau (2008) has asked, “what becomes of the traditional role of women which is primarily childbearing and childrearing?” Salau advised that the women folk should strike a balance between motherhood and career.

Enene (2006) concludes, “Those career women who could not place their allegiance in two places (home and work) have to abandon one for the other in order to have a fulfilled life of their choice”. In a research study, Hochschild (1997) indicated, “employed women are over committed and find combining work and family conflicting and stressful. He further maintained that, “Educated women experience role conflict as a result of performing diverse social roles that demand incompatible behaviors”. The roles of work and parenting are incompatible and thus leads to role-conflict. Also in Orden and Bradburn (1968), Cooke and Rousseau (1984) and Crosby, (1990) in their different works indicate that the main source of women’s role conflict is insufficient time to perform all the tasks expected of them and meet all their obligations especially, when they are married and mothers of young children and when their paid job demands long inflexible hours.

Educated working mothers have multiple roles, which often compete for their time. In more severe conditions, many of them do not have time to attend to their young children and husbands. The end result of negligence could be devastating. Whenever there is an emergency in the family, it is still this woman that is often expected to take care. For instance, the illness of a child which periodically disrupt their already over loaded schedules. “It could leave marriage mates very little time for each other” (Awake 2008:3).

The status of a father has a corresponding role of breadwinner, providing security for family members, playing the family bills and so on. The mother takes care of the home management including child care and childbearing. The children are socialized along gender roles strictly. “The roles are determined by shared expectations of the members of the nuclear family, extended family, the community” (Ahonkhai, 2005). Functionalists see this sex division of labor as normal. The status quo is natural, universal, necessary and unproblematic. Functionalists like Durkheim 2004 believe that division of labor could increase the interdependence of members of society and as such reinforce social solidarity. Similarly, the division of labor in the family could increase the interdependence of members. The woman looks up to the man to provide money while the man looks up to her for food. The children also look up to their mother for care. Individuals are significant not in themselves but in terms of their status, their position in patterns of social relation and roles, the behavior(s) associated with their status. The social structure is the network of statuses connected by associated roles. Roles, according to Ifeanchu (2007) describe how status occupant should behave or really behave. Persons (1961:43) defines roles as the “normatively regulated, participating of a person in a concrete process of social interaction with specific, concrete role-partners”. Although any individual can fulfill any role, they are expected to conform to the norms governing the nature of the role they fulfill (Cuff and Payne, 1984:44). Women in their different professions, perform various roles as assigned to them by management and according to their educational qualification. You are expected to do your duties in conformity with the norms governing that position. Also, Kephat (1972) defines role “as the result of expectations of others about appropriate behavior in a particular position”. Roles are parts which individuals are expected to play in order to bring about the realization of a certain collective aim or goal. For educated women, their duty in their places of work is to work to ensure that the goals of their establishments are achieved. Their roles at home (wives-mothers) or maternal role should be in conformity with the norms governing the role. For instance, a mother’s duty is to bear

and nurse children and also serve her husband. Education has added occupational role to the wife-mother role and there seems to be role conflict because wife-mother profession (worker) are incompatible

Thus, this study is designed to find out the impact levels of role conflict that exists among some selected professions in Taraba state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the acquisition of formal education, there is rapid entry of women into the labor force despite the primacy of the mother – housewife role. The metamorphosis of housewife to co-breadwinner (worker) sends tremor through marriage/marital relationships. The traditional household responsibilities are under threat due to neglect because many women today are working in different fields of study – medicine, teaching, accountancy, engineering, law, banking among others. Time becomes a constraint to such women. Time to do the domestic responsibilities in addition to secular jobs. Most women return from their secular jobs to face a second shift at home thereby doing the equivalent of two jobs. This is stressful and exhausting. A strong commitment to and involvement in work is largely incompatible with the successful performance of the mother – housewife role.

Educated working women, therefore experience role conflict as they find themselves pulled in various directions. This necessitated the question; is there a role conflict among educated working women in Taraba State? And this research work seeks to find answers to that.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions formed the focus of this study:

- I. To what extent are women experiencing stress due to their duties as wives, workers and mothers?
- II. To what extent are the husbands disturbed by these roles performed by their wives?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose /objective of this study is to determine career and family roles conflict among educated women. The specific objectives are to:

- I. Determine the extent to which educated women experience stress as a result of role-conflict in their chosen professions
- II. Determine the impact on husbands by these many roles performed by their wives.

### **Significance of the Study**

Many working mothers, especially those who have acquired professional skills through education often find themselves in a dilemma on how to manage their homes and career responsibilities. In most situations, their attempt to balance their home career may lead to conflict. Time becomes a problem because at home they may not be able to carry out their traditional roles of managing their homes; taking care of the health, education, supervision of their children to ensure they imbibe good moral values and attend to their husbands' needs. If the working mothers decide to pay more attention to their professional responsibilities, their home front will experience crises and if they pay more attention to their home responsibilities, their professional obligations will experience crises.

To help proffer solutions, this study – Role Conflict among Educated Women, provided information in the following areas: It will provide information to government on the nature of the conflicts

experienced by the working mothers in their attempt to hold onto professional and home responsibilities. The findings of this work will be of great importance to career women in particular and other working women both in the public and private sectors in general as it will seek a balance between work and family. Finally, the study will provide information on how government can assist in this conflict.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study was limited to role conflict experiences of professional women as wives, mothers and workers. It was limited to professional working women who are married, single mothers, widows and divorcees in the fields of humanities, management sciences, education, medicine; these group of women may be working in public or private sectors in Taraba State. The study covered six out of eight local government areas of the state. These include Wukari, Ibi, Donga, Kurmi, Takum, Ussa local government areas.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study used the survey research design. "Survey design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group" (Nworgu 2006:54). In this study, the researcher collected data from a representative sample of educated working mothers in different (Selected) professions in Taraba State.

#### **Sampling and Sampling Technique**

The sample for the study comprised 270 educated working mothers that is made up of married women, single mothers, widows and divorcees in different professions. Through random sampling, using the ballot method, six out of the sixteen local government areas in Taraba State were selected for the study. The selected professions were gotten through the ballot method, then using the stratified random sampling technique, the targeted educated working women were stratified according to profession and marital status and the sample size of 270 was drawn randomly out of the target population (300) to constitute the respondents population.

The sample was selected from six out of the sixteen local government areas in Taraba State. It included 130 teachers, 65 Nurses, 24 doctors, 25 lawyers and 56 bankers. Out of these numbers, 270 respondents returned their questionnaires.

#### **Data Collection**

A self-designed instrument with the title Role-Conflict Among Educated Women Questionnaire (RCAEWQ) was designed and used for data collection. The questionnaire contains two sections. Section 'A' contains personal information of the respondent while section 'B' the main body of the questionnaire that provided data based on the variables covered by the research questions. The questionnaire comprised of 25 questions relating to role-conflict experiences among educated women. It was constructed based on the Likert type scale. This required the respondents to select and rate their responses thus:

Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points, strongly disagree (SD) 1 point

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data was collected through the use of questionnaire and was analyzed using percentage, frequency, and chi ( $x^2$ ) square.

**Data Analysis and Presentation**

Determine the extent to which educated women experience stress in their different professions

**Table 4.1: Presentation of the Level of Stress Women Experience due to Conflict**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Educated working mothers get exhausted before they get home because of their work Schedule.	60 (22.2%)	117 (43.3%)	78 (29.0%)	15 (5.6%)	270
2	I often quarrel with my superior for imposing new job roles on me.	41 (15.1%)	88 (49%)	131 (49%)	10 (3.7%)	270
3	At home I tend to be very aggressive to my husband and children due to work pressure/	29 (10.7%)	64 (23.7%)	130 (48.2%)	47 (17.4%)	270
4	I often experience one type of illness or the other such as nervous breakdown	52 (19.3%)	99 (36.7%)	70 (26.4%)	49 (18%)	270
5	I suffer from high blood pressure due to stress and instability at home as a result of work	66 (24.4%)	120 (44.4%)	52 (19.2%)	32 (11.8%)	270
6	I experience exhaustion due to work pressure both at home and in the office	30 (11%)	56 (21%)	140 (52%)	44 16%	270

N = 270

Table 4.1 presents the types of stress educated working mothers go through due to job demands and their home responsibilities. Majority (65.5%) of the respondents agreed that educated working mothers because of their tight schedule get exhausted before they get home and that makes them unproductive at home. About (47.8%) that they often quarrel with their supervisors for imposing

much job roles on them. And at home 34.4% of the respondents tend to be very aggressive to their husbands and children, while some working mothers disagree that they suffer from the stress induced fatigue (34.5%), quarrel (52.2%) and aggression (65.6%). Many mothers are seriously suffering from pains that they could not explain to any one since they are trying to support their husbands and make their children happy. This fatigue has resulted into quarrel of different kinds in the home and unnecessary transfer of aggression that sometimes lead to child abuse and humiliation of their husband.

Many (56%) of the respondents often experience one type of illness or the other such as nervous breakdown due to role conflict, majority (68.8%) of the respondents suffer from high blood pressure due to stress at home and in the office, others (31.8%) respondents as a result of exhaustion they dose-off immediately they get home and are most times not really useful at home, making the house-help do most of the home work including making their husband's food, bed, and taking care of the children, while 44%, 31.2% and 68.2% of the working mothers disagreed that they suffer from these stress induced illnesses.

**To what extent are the husbands affected by these roles performed by their wives?**

**Table 4.2: Presentation of the Extent Husbands are Disturbed as a Result of the Various Roles Performed by their Wives**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
16	My spouse complains of the abandonment of my responsibilities.	42 (15.6%)	93 (34.4%)	102 (37.8%)	33 (12.2%)	270
17	My spouse is not happy with the employment of domestic servants in our home.	59 (21.9)	100 (37.0%)	78 (28.9%)	33 (12.2%)	270
18	Domestic servants come with manners different from what exist in my home.	62 (23%)	105 (38.9%)	83 (30.7%)	20 (7.4%)	270
19	My spouse assists in some domestic's chores when I am not around.	56 (20.7%)	114 (42.2%)	72 (26.7%)	28 (10.4%)	

N = 270

Table 4.2 shows the extent husbands of the educated working wives/mothers are affected by their wives job/office and home responsibilities. Husbands are most times not happy with the employment of their wives because it makes them employ house helps in their homes and these house helps come in with manners different from what is already existing in the homes. In their responses, 50%, 58.9% and 61.9% of the working mothers confirmed positively that homes are left in the hands of house

helps for management and day to day activities and 38.1% of the respondents disagreed that husbands are not affected in anyway by their wives job interference with their home duties. In most circumstances the husbands combine his own roles with home responsibilities such as monitoring the association the children keep, cleaning and washing the children's wears, shopping for the house and overseeing the day to day running of the home.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

Conflicts experienced by women on their jobs and at home has been a serious issue that have affected their families, homes and jobs.

Based on the research work, the following conclusions were drawn.

- That stress-induced illnesses are inevitable as working mothers continue to experience role conflicts in their jobs and at home.
- The study concluded that as long as the educated working mothers are over stretched by their job demands they will continue to exhibit aggressive tendencies.
- That if their work continues to make high demands on them their husbands will continue to cover up for them.
- That most of the families will continue to experience instability as long as they continue to hire house helps.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made.

- (1). That the employers of the educated working mothers should not over use them by giving them responsibilities outside their job schedule.
- (2). Both parents should always reach an agreement on how to take care of home/family responsibilities and children upbringing because they are complementary partners.
- (3) Fewer children are recommended.

## **References**

- Eboh, S (2004). The changing role of women and their career choice. *A paper presented at the University of Uyo.*
- Haralambos, M. & Heald, R.M (1980). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives. Oxford; university press.*
- Hornby, A.S (2006). *Advanced learners dictionary (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)* London, Oxford University Press.
- Ike Mark-Odu, E (1994). *Women on the move.* Lagos, Princess communications.
- Macionis, J.J. (1999). *Sociology.* New Jersey, Prentice Hall.
- Marshall, g. (1998). *Dictionary of Sociology.* New York, Oxford University Press.



*Impact of Career and Family Roles Conflict among Educated Women in Taraba State, Nigeria*

---

- Nworgu, E.G. (2006). *Educational Research: Basic issues and methodology*, Ibadan, Wisdom publishers, limited.
- Orden, S.R. & Bradburn, N.M. (1968) Working wives and marriage happiness. *Journal of sociology* 14 (150-155).
- Salau, B. (2008, May 5). Dilemma of feminism. *The Tide*. 18 (25), 9.
- Tucker, W (2006). Contemporary Issues in Nigeria: The Status of Women <http://www.women>. Retrieved on the 29th April, 2008.
- Uchendu, P.K. (1995). *The role of Nigeria women in politics*. Enugu. Fourth dimension publishing co. Ltd.
- Wikipedia. The free encyclopedia <http://www.questia>. *Functionalism (sociology)*. Retrieved 11 November, 2008.
- Zuofa, C.C (2006) *Issues in women education in Nigeria*: Port Harcourt: Harey Publishers.