

Non-Work Factors and Labour Turnover among Female Employees in Kebbi State Civil service

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of non-work factors on labour turnover among female employees in Kebbi State Civil Service. The hypothesis of the study states that the higher the perception of prevalence of certain non-work related factors, the earlier the decision by female workers to disengage from the civil service. A questionnaire was administered on 172 former female civil servants in Kebbi State.

The major findings of the study are that non-work factors identified in the study are statistically significant determinants of female labour turnover. Secondly, pressures from the matrimonial homes are very strong, standing out as the strongest of all the non-work factors responsible for female labour turnover.

The study recommends that high-quality public childcare should be provided at work places and that the government should also look at ways of making work–environment reflect the culture of the society.

Introduction

The study poses to examine the influence of individual and collective effect of the factors outside the workplace on female labour turnover. In contemporary societies, there is increasing concern about the status of women in the labour force. The concern is particularly in the areas of equal employment opportunity with men in all sectors of the economy. In Nigeria, all the three levels of government have responded to this concern by establishing special ministries and parastatals responsible for women affairs. This movement for the empowerment of women has tremendous impact world over. In Nigeria, there has been increasingly active and direct involvement of women in both public and private sectors. In particular, the Northern states have experienced increasingly active and direct involvement of women though in relatively lower rate than the Southern states.

Female employment in the Nigerian civil service has historically tended to be lower than male. The Federal Office of Statistics publications (1979-1997) show that even in the federal civil service, very few women relative to men secure jobs. Out of these few, a sizeable number of them are temporarily employed. For example, employments in the Federal civil service from 1979 to 1984 indicates that out of a total of 1,512,451 permanent staff, only 185,027 (12 %) were women. Also, over 84 per cent of the positions were occupied by men between 1987 and 1997. Basset (1996) observes that among female employees, those with higher levels of education have higher employment rates than those with lower levels. At the same time, pregnancy and care for the young children impede women's opportunities for employment. Childcare is often a heavy burden on women who work outside the home to support the family. For example, a survey in Japan found that married women with paying jobs spent an average of two hours and twenty six minutes daily on domestic work, while married men spent an average of only seven minutes (Interactive Population Center, 2003).

In Hausa societies of the Northern Nigeria, it is a different story. By the end of the 19th century, Islam had become a part of the cultural identity of the Hausas and women seclusion (Purdah)

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became one of the most visible symbols of Islamic practice (Adamu, 1998). Purdah is an institution practiced by many Muslims. Muhammad (1993) submits that the thoughts of Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo (the founder of Sokoto Caliphate) guided the views of the people in the North-West zone of Nigeria comprising, among others, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara States. He explains that to Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo, any work situation in which women leave their houses to mingle with men is forbidden because of its negative consequences. A survey in the United States confirmed the view of Usmanu Danfodiyo. Adler (1996), reports that a positive correlation was found between women in the workplace and adultery. However, Sheikh Usmanu Danfodiyo in his *Ihya'us Sunnati* (n.d) gave some guidelines where conditions necessitate that a woman must go out and work.

The Hausa society, of which Kebbi State is a part, is patriarchal with a strong male influence on virtually every sphere of life. Women in seclusion are generally believed to be dependent, submissive and dominated by their husbands and their lives assumed to be restrictive and repressive. This is because of the nature of purdah system which places the responsibilities of wives and their children on husbands while the women are expected to remain secluded doing domestic work. It is the men, not the women, who by convention participate in public life, and who monopolize public affairs (Adamu, 1998; Khalid, 2002). According to Khalid (2002), the sole role of the woman in the North-Western part of Nigeria is perceived generally to be in the home, caring for the young and cooking for the family. It is the responsibility of the husband to provide for them and their children just as it is the women's responsibility to do domestic work. Adamu (1998) opines that many secluded women view this relationship in reciprocal and contractual way rather than dependency. Thus, marriage remains the central and important role of a woman. Khalid (2002) explains that the influence of traditional division of labour along gender seems to dictate the form and content of purdah in Hausa society. According to him, this could be observed in the socialisation of children. The most crucial feature of this socialisation for the girls is their training into different household management chores both productive and reproductive and many other activities connected with their future roles as wives and mothers. And unlike boys, girls are expected to assume adult responsibilities much earlier. Adamu (1998) emphasizes that the practice of seclusion in Hausa society restricts women to the private sphere and denies them access to the public.

This explains why in North-Western part of Nigeria and particularly in Muslim dominated areas, female employment rate is lower than the Southern parts. Females are generally not expected to participate as members of public employment due to these cultural and religious restrictions. But as Pindiga (1998) notes Islam is not antagonistic to women employment and participation in public life. Moreover, the widespread reluctance of Hausa men to give women a chance to partake in public life is neither rooted in the Islamic faith nor in the legacies of the founders and reformers of the religion (Khalid, 2002). The result of the reluctance of Hausa men to give women a chance to partake in public life is that female employment opportunities in the civil service are somewhat low.

Background and Statement of the Research Problem

Although women have shown a continued interest in employment in the state civil service, men continue to outnumber them. By population, the potential female labour force in Nigeria is 50 per cent though the actual figure ranges between 31 and 36 per cent in both the public and private sectors of the economy (Salaam, 2003; Africa Action, 2003). At the higher administrative and managerial levels, the figure is even smaller. For example, of the 191, 329 federal civil servants in 1992, only 45,881 (24 %) were females (Nwaochei, 1998). In Kebbi State civil service, female employees constituted only 12% (1,396) of the total employment as at 1999 (Federal Character Commission, Kebbi State Office, 2004). Also, the pattern of labour force in 1991 Census data demonstrates that there are generally more males than females. This may be partly explained by the socio-cultural practices in the country, where the division of labour is unequal between men and women. Women are often responsible for both productive and reproductive roles in the

household. Their contributions are often unpaid for, and yet do not free them for other paid productive work especially in the formal sector.

It is unfortunate to observe, however, that the little opportunity women got in the civil service is, in recent times, being eroded by increasing labour turnover among them. In Eastern Europe, women's economic activity has traditionally been high but has recently dropped in some countries. In Estonia, the female labour force participation rate has decreased from 65% to 52% between 1980 and 2001, and Bulgaria, where it declined from 60% in 1980 to 46% in 2001 (ILO, 2003). The Nigerian data is almost similar with that of Eastern Europe. For example, in Nigeria, statistics show that there was a decrease of female labour force from 27% in 1998 to 24% in 2001 (Civil Service Commission, 2006). Also, in Northern Nigerian of Sokoto and Kebbi states, statistics show that there was a decrease of female labour force from 15% in 1995 to 14% in 1997 (Federal Office of Statistics, 2001).

Females lose a large proportion of their lifetime income by taking time out of the workplace to have children. Throughout the world, females continue to bear primary responsibilities of childcare and housework. Generally, when paid work and housework activities are physically separated, women must decide how much time and effort to allocate to formal job and to domestic responsibilities.

Although the problem of employee turnover has received much attention from researchers in organizational sciences, very few of these studies have focused on women employees in the public service and the state civil service in particular. Moreover, in Nigeria and in particular, in the North-West, female employment in the state service is relatively low compared to their counterparts in other parts of Nigeria.

Based on these considerations, this study examines the relationships that exist between factors outside the workplace on the one hand and female labour turnover on the other.

The study is designed to seek answers to the following question: What is the relationship between non-work factors (to get married, to join husband/parents on transfer, to concentrate on upbringing of children, domestic work, better prospect outside the civil service, other wives of my husband are not working, my husband did not like me working outside the home, my parents did not like me working outside the home, my religion is against women working outside the home etc.) and women labour turnover?

Study Hypotheses

The hypothesis formulated to guide this study is that:

"The higher the perception of prevalence of certain non-work related factors, the earlier the decision by female workers to disengage from the civil service."

1.3 Research Methodology

This is a survey research. It is a cross sectional study which examines the causes of voluntary labour turnover among female employees in Kebbi State civil service from 1992-2004 while excluding the involuntary ones. The data used for this study were from primary sources. Voluntary turnover means voluntary movement of an employee out of an organisation. It reflects employee's decision to terminate the employment relationship while the involuntary type of turnover reflects employer's decision to terminate the employee's employment. Since employees leaving voluntarily are those not dismissed by the employer, they are probably the ones that an employer would like to retain most.

The choice of 1992 is based on the fact that Kebbi State was carved out of former Sokoto State in the late 1991. Official data on the state civil service was not available until the year 1992. Again, the thirteen year period for a social phenomenon is enough for detailed analysis.

Also, only female employees on permanent appointment who had worked in the State Ministries/parastatals were studied. This is because permanent employees are usually considered to represent the workforce than non-permanent ones. The study also covers both the junior and senior staff from the rank and file to the highest executive in order to cover all the categories of female civil servants.

The questionnaire was administered to 172 former female civil servants in the sample. The questionnaire elicited information on two kinds of variables – dependent and independent variables. As a proxy for labour turnover, years of service at the point of resignation was considered to serve as the dependent variable for the study. Nine non-work factors were considered to serve as the independent variables. They include domestic responsibilities, to concentrate on upbringing of the children, religion, to join husband on transfer, husband's or parent's pressure to quit, other wives/wife of my husband are/is not working, better prospect outside the civil service and marriage.

The population of this study is the entire Kebbi State female employees in the state civil service who had left voluntarily through retirement, resignation or by absconding. In order to identify the population for this study, the register of all previous employees who resigned voluntarily from the Kebbi State civil service was obtained from the records of the Establishment Department of Kebbi State. From the register, all males were excluded and the list of females totaling 348 became the population for this study. As for the number of female employees who had left the civil service voluntarily, information from the Federal Character Commission in Kebbi State concurred with the records of the Establishment Department of Kebbi State which revealed that a total of 348 female staff had left the services of the State voluntarily between 1992 and 2004. Thus, this figure became the population for this study.

The sample of respondents was drawn from all the 58 ministries/parastatals/departments of the state civil service. The study initially chose all the elements in the population (all the 348 female ex-civil servants) because it is considered to be small and can be effectively covered. Adamu and Johnson, (1997) opine that it is always statistically better to analyze the whole population especially if it is small. However, on closer examination it became clear that owing to difficulties of reaching them through their respective addresses, this procedure could not be adopted. Instead, the sample used was determined not by any random procedure but by the availability of information. A good number of potential members of the sample could not be traced for a number of reasons – death, change in address resulting from marriage, migration, etc. For these reasons only a total of 172 of them could be contacted and were ready to participate in the study.

Since all members of the population for this study were previous employees, the study resorted to using the information contained in their files at the Establishment office to provide a guide to trace and administer the questionnaire to them. The file information was supplied to existing female staff or their associates, who assisted the research in tracing potential respondents. The resulting snowball method of data collection was all the more necessary owing to the cultural setting of the study area – access to married women is easier through female acquaintances or husbands of potential respondents. Thus, relationship was established with the respondents through either their husbands or their previous female colleagues or acquaintances.

Regression analysis method was adopted for data analysis. For the purpose of hypothesis testing, two test statistics were employed. The t-test was used to measure the individual significance of the parameters estimated. The F-test was used to measure the significance (or adequacy) of the model. The use of regression in the analysis had assisted in identifying the independent variables that best explain the dependent variable of the research.

The following model was used:

$$Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{NONWFAC} + \mu$$

Where:

Y	Dependent variable, measured by the length of service, in years, put in by the respondent before her voluntary withdrawal.
NONWFAC	C21, C22, C23, C27, C28, C35, C36, C37, C38
β_i	Parameters of the model to be estimated, $i=0, 1..9$.
μ	Random disturbance (or error) term

Where:

C21= to get married

C22= to join husband/parents on transfer

C23= to concentrate on upbringing of my child

C27= Domestic work

C28= Better prospect outside the civil service

C35= other wives of my husband are not working

C36= My husband did not like me working outside the home

C37= My parents did not like me working outside the home

C38= My religion is against women working outside the home

Given the above model, the hypothesis was tested using the t-ratio of the relevant parameter estimate. The individual parameter estimates and their corresponding standard errors yielded estimates of t-ratios, which were used to determine whether or not to reject the hypothesis.

1.4 The Results

A total of three hundred and forty eight (348) copies of the questionnaire were sent out to former female civil servants but only one hundred and seventy two (172), or about 49% were fully completed and returned. The figure is statistically significant because it constitutes over 20 per cent of the research population. Maitafsir (2002) is of the opinion that 20 per cent of a research population is reasonable for the conduct of survey research in the social sciences. Thus, the analysis that follows below is based on one hundred and seventy two (172) respondents.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypothesis, given is:

“The higher the perception of prevalence of certain non-work related factors, the longer it takes female civil servants to quit.”

Table 1 Regression Results – Dependent Variable = Length of Service

Independent Variables (non-work factors)	Parameter Estimate	T-ratio
C28	0.704411	4.186***
C35	0.502636	
C21	0.304139	3.127***
C36	0.464539	1.516

C37	-0.265876	2.953***
C23	-1.209603	-4.341***
C38	0.053480	-7.532***
C22	-0.168396	0.304
C27	0.124779	-0.748
		0.891
Constant term	0.795206	0.786
$R^2 = 0.73$ $F=49.19$ ***		

Significant at 5% (**), 1% (***)

In a number of ways, the results given in Table 1 present an ample demonstration of the effects of non-work factors on female labour turnover. The coefficient of determination, R^2 , is high, at 73%, implying that non-work factors account for a significant proportion of female labour turnover. Moreover, given that the F-statistic is high and significant at the 1% level, it is clear that the model is adequate. Turning to the individual effects of the non-work factors, it is clear from the table that two of them have negative effect on turnover (parents' disapproval of work of their daughter (C37) and the wish of mothers to raise their children at home (C32), instead of engaging the service of an au pair.

1.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

In Nigeria and particularly in the North-West, female employment in the state civil service is relatively low compared to their counterparts in other parts of Nigeria. The impact of Islam on the Hausa people was deep and widespread, and it is difficult to separate culture and religion. The day-to-day operation of the civil service such as working period and office arrangements operate against females and adversely affects their ability to enter and to stay longer once they are there. Thus, the study recommends that high quality childcare centres can reduce turnover in state civil service. Lastly, the government should design work environments to reflect the culture of the society. The Nigerian Civil Service is designed in such a way male and female employees intermingle together. This is evident in the system of communication and sharing of office accommodation. This may explain why some husbands or parents feel unsecured for their wives or children who work in the civil service.

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