

Extraversion, Multiple Role Strains and Social Support as Correlates of Coping in Widowhood

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KEY WORDS Extraversion; social support; multiple role strain; widowhood.

ABSTRACT The study investigated the psychosocial correlates of coping with bidirectional strains imposed by work and family role conflicts among the widowed. Six hypotheses were tested using data generated from an 82-item questionnaire administered to 70 widowed subjects. They were selected from 13 different occupations and reside at Lagos, Calabar and Ibadan, some major cities in Nigeria. The results showed that employee family friendly policies, like supervisor support and flexible work schedules are germane to coping with Multiple Role Strains. Specifically, high levels of supervisor support are instrumental to lower levels of work-family conflict, but low supervisor support did not increase intention to quit. The use of religious coping strategies showed strong potentials for promoting better coping and adjustment for the widowed. However, contrary to past research evidence, Catholics used more religious coping strategies and consequently coped better than non-Catholics. The utility of personality variables particularly, extraversion did not predict better coping like social support, which showed a consistently high beta weight when assessed independently, and co-jointly, with other variables like extraversion and multiple role strain. However, the three variables significantly predicted coping co-jointly.

Much as generalization may be constrained by the sample size and inadequate representation of other religious groups like Buddhist, Moslems, etc. and people of other ethnic origin, findings of this research has implication for Human Resources practice, therapy and religious counseling. Further research can focus on the types of social support and the different forms of religious coping strategies that are more effective in promoting coping and adjustment in widowhood.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, panoply of articles and research works by scholars has focused on the traditional widowhood practices in Nigeria. The authors' contributions revolve round the excruciating pains that the widowed undergo due to culturally prescribed norms in order to establish claims of assumed culpability. Most Nigerian societies are patriarchal and marriage for a woman is fundamental to the attainment of social status. In

fact, it is highly revered as the crowning glory of one's life and personal achievements (Balogun, 1995). For the Hausas in Northern Nigeria, a woman is not "truly woman" nor does she "feel fulfilled" until she is married (Osakue, Madunagu, Usman & Osagie, 1995). There exists a widely held belief that the strength of a woman's social status firstly lies on her marital status, followed by her child rearing ability and further determined by her economic power.

Unfortunately, this sense of material and psychological fulfillment bestowed by marriage is aborted by the death of her spouse. In the traditional African society, like other societies, marriage to kin is almost inevitable; they usually influence the choice of spouse, method of selection and legitimacy of the bond. Hitherto, they subject the widow to different forms of barbaric and pernicious exercises to verify her innocence when her husband dies. If not satisfied with the outcome, they engage in mysterious and diabolical practices to avenge the death of a kinsman. There is documented evidence of some startling culturally prescribed rituals like the drinking of water used in bathing the corpse of a widow's late husband. Other shameful practices are shaving of the widow's pubic hair in public by other people and the compulsion to wail, like her counterpart in Korea (Myung, 1998), an evidence that she really misses her late husband (Nwankwo, 1995). Azuatalam (1998) and Osakue et al. (1995) affirmed that among the Binis in Edo State, Mid-West Nigeria, there is a popular axiom that a man never dies unless his wife kills him. For the Efiks, Yakurs and Ibos (Nwoga, 1989) the widow is usually made to shave her hair and wear rags for some time. The Esans go as far as forcing her to run naked round the farm or house of the deceased in broad daylight. Gory tales are told by widows during interviews a bout how as many as 10 priests of a particular deity must sexually

abuse them in the guise of performing the rites of cleansing or severing of ties with the dead (Adamu, 1993).

Notable Psychologists like Worden (1991), Leahy (1993), Robinson (1995), have observed that loss of a significant other, especially a spouse presents a broad range of psychosomatic and distressing reactions on the widowed. Such reactions like depression, feeling of desolation, low self-worth and diminished health have been associated with bereavement, especially when the widow has strong emotional attachment with the dead person and if the deceased husband played a very vital role in her life while alive. Aderinto (1999) also identified hardship, loneliness, and the burden of children upkeep, residence, sexual need, etc. as prevalent among widows in south-western Nigeria.

Kin of the deceased deprive many widows in Nigeria of their rights of inheritance, some are forced to marry a relation of the deceased. Although, Aderinto (1999) found that some inheritors condemn the practice of wife inheritance and contended that they were forced by tradition. The situation is worse if she has no child, preferably a male child, she will be discarded like an old rag. Although recent pronouncements by the Supreme Court in Nigeria have endorsed the decision by a lower court which postulated that "discrimination on ownership of property against a widow without a male issue is unacceptable" (Asein, 1997). Furthermore, the decision of the family head to alienate the property of a deceased person in the lifetime of his widow is considered barbaric and unacceptable because it is repugnant and violates equity and good conscience. How effective such pronouncements are enforced is better imagined. As a strategy for surviving the myriad of problems, some widows engage in street trading, their children are withdrawn to hawk or they do other odd jobs in a bid to be financially independent or self sustaining. Those that work already have the problem of family responsibilities interfering with work roles. The situation is worsened by the extended family system, which requires that we become our "brother's keeper", i.e. catering for a relation or two. Multiple role strains become inevitable for the widowed who now has to shoulder additional family responsibilities. She must combine work

and family roles all alone.

The severity of the work and family role strains are also aggravated by the apparent denial of social responsibilities by significant others in work environment or outside the work environment. In addition, the eroded self worth and indignity caused by the stigma of assumed culpability makes them suffer an identity phobia and consequently find it difficult to overcome the seeming psychological trauma of bereavement. They withdraw from social contacts with potential social support donors, some widows have to become very religious with the expectation of finding solace and comfort in serving God.

This research among other things specifically sought to verify the importance of personality resources and social support from significant others in cushioning the debilitating condition of the widowed. It also identified the role of religious beliefs and activities in facilitating the adjustment process and psychological well-being of the widowed in Nigeria drawing inferences from documented researches in western societies.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

A sample of 116 widowed participants were interviewed and administered questionnaires in this study. They were drawn from the general population of self-employed, employed and unemployed people in Ibadan, Calabar and Lagos, some major cities in Nigeria. 70 questionnaires were used in the final analysis. The 46 foiled questionnaires were rejected on the basis that respondents were selective of some sensitive questions, so they deliberately omitted some items in the scales, which are relevant in this study. 14 subjects refused to return their questionnaires as at the time of the analysis. Their blunt behaviour is attributable to their traumatic state.

Sampling Procedure

The clustered sampling technique was adopted, especially for widows in organized groups. Snowballing technique was used for others, i.e. the subjects were identified and used in the research based on information about their states. The services of resource persons and

facilitators among whom were church leaders and NGO organized group coordinators were employed to interpret the questions in Pidgin English or the indigenous Nigerian languages for illiterate subjects. The researcher allowed some subjects to take home their questionnaires where necessary. 10 answered questionnaires from an NGO organized group were returned by post.

Research Design

The study is a survey research. The researcher adopted the *expost'-facto* design because subjects were already undergoing the state of widowhood.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Supervisor Support and Work-Family Strains

The first hypothesis verified in this study stated that widowed employees with low supervisor support would report high work-family strains than widowed employees with high supervisor support will. T-test measures arrived at to check the difference in both groups confirmed the hypothesis. This implies that supervisor support is highly essential in moderating work-family conflicts among widowed employees. Of importance also is the result which in this research revealed that supervisor support has a significant negative relationship with multiple role strain ($r = -.26$; $df = 58$; $P < .05$). Which implies that the lower the supervisor support, the higher the multiple role strains experienced by widowed employees and vice versa. Even findings on other categories of employees corroborated this result.

Shinn, Wong, Simko & Ortiz-Torres (1989) found that perceived flexibility in the form of flex time, contributed to lower levels of work-family conflict. A model proposed by Thomas and Ganster (1995) suggests that supportive policies and supervisors have indirect effects on strain by directly affecting employee control and work-family. Thomas and Ganster examined Health Care professionals in 84 facilities with over 20 beds in the State of Nebraska. Their analysis showed that among other family supportive constructs only supervisor support had a significant direct effect on job satisfaction but also had indirect effects on work family conflict (.08) and through control and work family conflict (.04) was .12.

Staines & Pleck (1983) found that supportive supervisors, who empathize with their subordinate's desire to seek balance between work and family responsibilities, by accommodating the employee's flexible schedule or grant time to trade or tolerate personal problems; contributes considerably in reducing work and family related strains.

Family supportive supervisors and family supportive employee policies as evident in this findings on widowed employees is fundamental to their psychological well being. These policies could also determine the level of productivity of the widowed employee.

Kossek & Ozeki (1998) reiterated that policies like childcare, elder care, flexitime, information on job alternatives, referral services, parenting seminars and services capable of easing daily management of specific family responsibilities relieve the burden of work family strains. When the demands of work interfere with family roles, they present negative consequences like reduced life satisfaction, burnout, increased chances of depression and lower quality of life. Adams, King & King (1996), found a negative relationship between work-family conflicts and job satisfaction. After an analysis of their result, they had a Beta weight of $\beta = .31$, $t(142) = 3.84$, $P < .01$, and Life Satisfaction, $\beta = .15$, $t(141) = -1.76$, $P < .05$.

Judge, Boudreau & Bretz (1994) also found a negative correlation of $-.18$ between job satisfaction and work-family conflict. However, they had a much stronger correlation of $.28$ between extensiveness of work-family policies and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a contentment one derives from a job when such a job is capable of satisfying the person's psychological and physical needs. Therefore a policy is viewed as supportive if it has an underlying capacity for satisfying or actually providing the employee with enough control of salient aspects of the job or home life.

A negative correlation coefficient of $-.34$ between supervisor support and work-family conflicts is a strong indication that a supportive work environment exemplified by empathy communicated by the supervisor is an antidote for coping with strains of work-family conflicts. This assertion is confirmed by a significant positive correlation value of $.31$ between supervisor support

and coping also obtained in this research.

Finally, the results are supported by a plethora of anecdotal accounts, which suggest that employee family friendly policies, including the understanding and benevolence exhibited by supervisors go a long way to alleviating the grave burdens imposed by work-family strains (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

It therefore becomes imperative for Human Resources practitioners to advocate such policies. Where they do not exist, the employees, especially the widowed should not hesitate to explore the benefits of a collaborative approach to problem solving. Through this effort they can be assured of balancing the pressures of work-family responsibilities while coping with the traumatic experiences of widowhood.

Use of Religious Coping strategies and Coping

This hypothesis stated that the use of Religious Coping Strategies would have a significant positive relationship with coping among the widowed. The outcome of the analysis showed a significant positive relationship between both variables, meaning that the hypothesis is accepted. A further confirmation with the t-test indicated that there is a significant difference in coping between subjects who adopted high religious coping strategies and those who adopted low religious coping strategies. The high use of religious coping strategies was instrumental to better coping. On a comparison, more subjects adopted religious coping strategies than general coping strategies.

This result is supported by the findings of Tix and Frazier (1998). Their study was conducted to examine the relationship between Religious Coping and Better Psychological adjustment among patients and significant others coping with stressful life events like kidney transplant surgery. The result of a regression analysis suggested an overall positive relationship between religious coping and psychological adjustment. Kidney transplant surgery could be psychologically traumatic like bereavement because of the antecedent material and psychological commitment.

Furthermore, the growing number of evidence suggesting a link between Religions Coping and adjustment to stressful life events in the works

of Jenkins & Pargament 1995; Pargament, 1997; Beason & Koenig, 1990; Ferraro & Albrecht-Jensen, 1991, strongly substantiate findings of this research.

In addition, Park & Folkman (1997) conducted a research to determine rates of pre-bereavement and post bereavement resources change in HIV+ and HIV- victims, care givers and non-caregivers. Religious beliefs and activities were considered among other resources like perceived and received social support, optimism, dyadic adjustment and positive aspects of care giving. Results after test showed that religious beliefs demonstrated stability as a dispositional resource. The effect of partner's death indicated some main effects on the religious belief of caregivers. Religious activities were higher in HIV+ caregivers than HIV- caregivers. This shows that religious belief exhibited significant changes in rates of change associated with bereavement status.

The contention by Karl Marx that religion is the sob of oppressed' may not leave anyone in doubt taking these findings into consideration. Religious belief and practices provide succour for the traumatized, especially the bereaved. In this research 55.7 per cent of subjects highly adopted religious coping strategies.

In Nigeria, religion is highly recognized and practices are encouraged. Although statutorily, Nigeria is a secular state, issues concerning religion are treated as highly sensitive, while the institution has become one of the most lucrative in recent times. Organized religious activities like prayer session, conferences and seminars abound for all categories of people including business men, employees, employers, singles, married, widowed etc. to address personal and spiritual problems. In some organizations, prayer sessions have become part of work ethics (examples Owena Bank Plc) where employees observe prayers before business opens to customers. For others it is a recognized sub culture to devote at least one hour or a day of fasting and prayer for the prosperity of the organization. The expectation of miracles and "breakthrough" or divine intervention, in most cases is the magnetic force that pulls people towards different religions practices. So the battered widow, who suffers the brutality and neglect of family members or friends will naturally be attracted to where

she can find solace and support in order to cater for the needs of the family and restore confidence in herself.

From these findings, we can infer that seeking strength and comfort from God, with religious leaders, brethren, belief in miracles, attending religious activities and the use of other forms of cognitive and behavioural strategies of adjustments prescribed by religious doctrines, can be related to better adjustment and coping for the widow. Religious Coping Strategies serves as a platform for social rediscovery, problem solving and provides emotional management skill for the psychologically down trodden like the widowed.

Use of Religious Coping strategies among Catholics and non-Catholics

This hypothesis assumed that non-Catholics will adopt more Religious Coping Strategies and will cope better was rejected. Religious coping; $t = 1.06$; $df = 68$; $P = > .05$ and coping; $t = 0.93$; $df = 68$; $P = > .05$.

From the results there was a significant positive difference in the adoption of religious Coping between Catholics and non-Catholics. Catholics adopted more religious Coping Strategies and coped better. These findings strongly contradict the work of Tix and Frazier (1998) who found that the use of religious coping was more effective in promoting adjustments for Protestants than for Catholics.

Tix and Frazier's study examined the potential moderation effects of religious affiliation on adjustment among patients who received renal transplants and their significant others.

The result of this current study also contradicts findings made by Park, Colin & Herb (1990) that Protestants who are more intrinsically religious reported less distress relative to Catholics after being subjected to uncontrollable stresses. In addition, the researchers opined that Catholics who use more religious coping evidenced less distress relative to Protestants after controllable stresses.

The Nigerian Cultural Setting is different. The Catholics Church is the largest single Christian denomination and most populous in Africa. It also enjoys the highest membership among Christian denominations in Nigeria. Result may have emanated from the assurance, hope and optimism

evident in majority of the Catholic subjects interviewed in this study, particularly those of St. Mary Catholic Parish Widows Ministry.

Although Morgan (1984) after conducting a survey of 656 widows aged over 50 years to verify changes in working attributable to widowhood resolved that work is not a universally appropriate adaptive strategy for the widowed. Job opportunities provided by the parish widows' ministry, gave the widows a good sense of psychosocial well-being especially as it provided chances for learning how to cope with peculiar family and work related problems through group discussions and widows could use the channel to personally consult the parish priest. Despite the proliferation of Pentecostal churches, only few of these non-Catholic churches had well organized fora to specially address the material and psychological needs of the widowed. Their usual practice is that at the end of the year, clothes and foodstuff or stipends are usually shared. What happens to them all year round is food for thought. In the same view, only a few NGOs have taken the burden of teaching skills in the form of weaving and bead making in order to make widowed self-sustaining.

The strength of the result of this study is that it debunks the assertion by Park et al. (1990) that Catholics may be more likely to focus on religious activities that promote guilt reduction. They upheld that in the face of controllable stressors, such religious activities might be more likely to facilitate adjustments. Tix and Frazier (1998) also supported the hypothesis that Protestants (non-Catholics) used more religious coping than Catholics. Due to the intrinsic religiosity of non-Catholics, the open and practical exhibition of religious beliefs or faith compared with Catholics, one would have been poised to assume that under conditions of stress associated with widowhood, they will be more inclined to the adoption of religious coping strategies. However, evidence in this research has disproved this notion.

In this study, Catholics were 24, i.e. 34.3 per cent of the total number of subjects as against non-Catholics who were 46, i.e. 65.7 per cent. None of the subjects was an Atheist, Buddhist or Moslem. All of them were Christians but of all these numbers Catholics had high mean score value of 42.75 per cent and 81.62 respectively for

both use of Religion Coping and coping. This is against the mean score values recorded by non Catholics subjects, which were 41.09 and 78.07 for use of religious coping strategies and coping respectively. The implication of this result is that most religious organizations have not been able to address the material and psychological needs of the widowed in our society.

Further to the findings of hypothesis 2 and 3, the significant positive relationship ($r = 0.54$; $df = 48$; $P < .01$) between religion coping and supervisor support lays credence to why religion coping facilitates coping among widowed employees especially those who had high supervisor support. It therefore follows that more organizations should endeavour to accommodate the spiritual needs of the widowed. Especially as it has become apparent that when problems like role strains or assumed culpability cast tremendous psychological burden on them, putting their trust in God gives most of them comfort and helps them to adjust better.

Differences between Extraverts and Introverts on Coping

The hypothesis stated that widowed Extraverts would cope better than widowed introverts. Results after analysis revealed that the hypothesis is not valid. Extraverts were about 61.43 per cent while Introverts were 38.57 per cent of the subjects in study. Extraverts had a high mean score of 82.09 as against introverts who had 74.81. Using the result of the difference in t-test, the value of -1.99 showed that there was no significant difference in their levels of coping.

Extraversion has been implicated as a resourceful personality dimension and "hidden personality factor in coping among traumatized people by several researches including Bunce, Larsen & Peterson (1995), and Amirkhan, Risinger & Swickert (1995). In this study extraversion was able to prove the consistency of this claim judging from the mean score difference between Extraverts and introvert. But the insignificant t-score values brings to focus the fact that in widowhood, extraversion may not necessarily be a moderating variable or resource for coping with the attendant problems of multiple Role Strain or other psychological problems. In their study, Bunce et al. (1995) sought to find the difference

between traumatized and non-traumatized individuals, using different personality scales. The measure of those who experienced trauma was low in the extraversion scale. Extraversion in this study also showed a significant positive relationship with religious coping when the variables were inter-correlated. This outcome is supported by Amirkhan et al. (1995) who agree that although knowledge of personality permits estimation of responses with reasonable degree of accuracy, person bound factors still exert an influence on the choice of coping strategy equal to if not greater than that of situational characteristics. They suggested that while personality dispositions may be linked to some form of coping, other strategies may be primarily under situational control.

A precarious situation like widowhood is bound to spur the reliance on other coping strategies in introverts. Coping would have resulted from a contribution of the social network; which most of the subjects were drawn from. Another argument is that, unlike other studies on extraversion that were done in simulated laboratory settings or other real life situations that are not directly related to widowhood, these findings can be relied on. Using the social learning theory, coping for the introvert may have been learnt through constant social interaction with other widowed persons.

Relationship between Supervisor Support and Intention to Quit

The fifth hypothesis stated that widowed employees with low supervisor support would have higher intention to quit their job than widowed employees that have high supervisor support will. This hypothesis was rejected. The current research findings negate the popular notion held by some researchers like Frone et al., 1992; Netemeyer et al., 1996; and the New Man, 1990 and Man of the 90s magazines. According to them, a substantial percentage of employees in their studies indicated their intention to leave their jobs if their roles at work conflict with their family responsibilities.

It is a fact that supervisor support is an essential ingredient for mediating role strains brought about by work-family role conflicts. By extension, when this happens, the work is

perceived as psychologically distressful, thereby increasing the desire to leave the job. In other words decrease in supervisor support precipitates decrease in coping with the strains of work and family roles as well as intensifying the need to leave employment.

Thomas and Ganster (1995) added that supervisor behaviour that is seen as supportive on non-work demand of the employee, e.g. family care showed a consistent positive effect on job and health outcomes. All these positions notwithstanding, a persons social motives for control and a sense of mastery often governs his life and create great need for achievement (Lefton, 1979).

In essence, the employed widows may not be satisfied with the nonresponsive behaviour of the supervisor to their family needs but instead of quitting will decide to reduce the commitment and time put into the work (the extent of intervention caused by these variables was not measured within study).

We should also not lost sight of the fact that social phenomena are psychologically important to individuals depending on contingent and situational influence such as unemployment and poverty. Unemployment and poverty are very serious problems that we are left to grapple with in Nigeria unlike in Western countries, where most of past researches were conducted. In addition research on work family role conflicts and supervisor support were not done with widowed subjects. Exogenous variables like need for self-sustenance number of children or dependents to cater for, status of the employee (position held) or some intrinsic and extrinsic benefits derived from the job may moderate the widowed employees' intention to quit.

Steers (1977) found that intention to stay in an organization was related to organizational commitment. While, Gom & Kanungo (1980) found that Managers with salient extrinsic needs experienced greater job satisfaction and consequently more job involvement than other managers with intrinsic needs. The job for the widowed may be a reliable source of satisfying salient extrinsic needs, which may be the pay package for settling bills or getting away from the hassles of family problems. Similarly, the widowed employee may have cognitively established new priorities in spite of the non-supportive tendencies of the

supervisor, by so doing can afford to manage to cope with the demands of their jobs. For instance, out of the 60 widowed employees used for this analysis, 15 were vehement that they were successful and 31 said they were managing, only one indicated business/employment was bad, while 2 subjects did not give any answer.

As Steward (1991) summed it, from a moral perspective, any employee can be seen to have a stake in the organization. Some employees may see it as a small stake and others as a major one. All employees have an economic stake and some will also have a social one. How important their economic stake is to them will depend on whether they are wholly dependent on the job for their income and how easily it is for them to get a satisfactory alternative. Their social stake will vary with how long they worked there, how far they make their friends at work and on whether, and if so, how much, they identify with the organization. The overall result is explicit about the social and economic stakes, which the widowed employees have in their various organizations. The importance attached to their stakes can be attributed to why employed widows with low supervisor support would rather wish to manage their current employment than quit.

Relationship between Family-Work Conflict and Family Social Support

The sixth hypothesis which stated there will be a significant positive relationship between Family-Work Conflict and Family Social Support was rejected. The researcher's assumption was based on the premise that under normal circumstances, when family members undertake domestic chores, on behalf of the employee and give relevant information or suggestions about the job; and share boring moments together, their actions will go a long way to ameliorate the instances of conflicts arising from family roles interfering with work related responsibilities.

Frone et. al., (1992) documented increased family-work conflicts relating to incidents of clinical depression and distress on the job for a large community-based sample of working adults. Kaufmann and Beehr (1989), identified the strong and significant relationship between emotional support and strain reactions as against instrumental support from family members. Numerous researchers like

Adam, King & King, 1996; Kahn & Byosiore, 1991; House & French, 1980 and Caplan, 1976, are vehement on the position that social support from family members outside the work environment have the capacity to alleviate the strains imposed by interference of family roles on work related responsibilities.

Although Beehr (1995) confirmed that social support from work related sources probably figures more importantly in occupational stress than does support from non-work related sources, the t values ($t = -.26$; $df = 48$; $P = >.05$), obtained in this study, indicates that Family work conflicts experienced by widowed employees with high supervisor support is not significantly different from widowed employees with low supervisor support. Supervisor support (work related support) did not significantly moderate family-work conflict in this study.

Beehr & McGrath (1995) further identified family involvement as pivotal to the receipt of family social support. They opined that when one is involved with other family members, it attracts and motivates them to give support when necessary. They also cautioned that stressful conditions have the underlying tendency to compel people to withdraw from potential donors and consequently discourage them from helping.

Perhaps this explains the condition of the Nigerian widowed employee. Generally speaking, the Nigerian widows suffer conditions of absolute neglect, deprivation from rights of inheritance and the barbaric stigma of assumed culpability traceable to family members. These have implication for stress. The widows compelled by this situation are bound to withdraw from social contacts with most family members who may have been the potential givers of family social support. It is therefore not surprising that findings in this research contradict the widely held notion that family work conflict will have a significant positive relationship with family social support. As a matter of fact, majority of widowed employees interviewed by the researcher confirmed that they do not receive family social support. So the presence or absence of it has little or no impact on the strains they experience (Family-Work strains).

Finally, of note is another finding in this study that family social support has a significant posi-

tive relationship with coping ($r = .23$; $df = 57$; $P = <.05$). This implies that family social support is still very important for the psychosocial adjustment of widowed employees. Those who receive higher family social support will cope better with strains associated with family work role conflicts during widowhood. Another negative relationship between family social support and multiple role strain ($r = -.06$; $df = 57$; $P = >.05$), suggests that increase in family social support received will bring about decreased multiple role strains experienced. However, the relationship in this study is not significant.

Independent and Co-joint interaction of Extraversion, Multiple Role Strain and Social Support on Coping

This hypothesis stated that Extraversion, Multiple Role Strain and Social Support will have a significant positive independent and co-joint prediction on coping among widowed employees.

Results after analysis showed that only social support could significantly predict coping with a better weight of .29 and .30 when the three predictor variables were used in the equation both independently and co-jointly. This is followed by Extraversion. Multiple Role Strain had the least beta weight when the levels are analyzed both at independent levels and co-jointly. Multiple role strain represents the bidirectional strains brought about by work and family role conflicts. Although, the F -value of $F(3,56) = 2.77$; $P <.05$ shows that all the three variables predicted coping positively and significantly when all the predictor variables were assessed in the equation. In the same vain, an F -value of $F(2,57) = 3.94$; $P <.05$ indicate that when Extraversion and social support are in the equation both variable significantly and positively predicted coping. The low better weight contribution of multiple role strain to coping is an indication of the apparent effect that work and family role conflicts could have on the psychological well-being of widowed employees. It should be noted that both Work-Family and Family-Work conflicts had significant positive relationship with multiple role strain. (WFC: $r = .92$; $df = 58$; $P <.01$, FWC: $r = .82$; $df = .58$; $P <.01$). So the assertion that work and family role strains have bidirectional effects

on the psychological well-being of employees is strongly upheld. The findings on extraversion and social support are consistent with numerous research evidence which have linked Extraversion with Social Support seeking behaviour and coping as well as linking social support with coping and psychological well-being if individuals undergoing stressful life events.

Amirkhan et al (1995) stated, after examining the influence of personality on the use of social support and other coping strategies in a sample of undergraduate students, that Extraversion was related to social support seeking, and it predicted the choice of social support. The first remark of these reputable researchers is evidenced in this study. Beta weights for Extraversion was .19 or 19 per cent and that of social support was .25 or 25 per cent, when both variables are in the equation in predicting coping. However, Multiple Role Strain, which was partialled out as an excluded variable in this context, contributed .09 or 9 per cent to coping.

Other facets of Extraversion in research evidence show that Extraverts tend to report lower problems in their lives. (Arnold & Jensen, 1984) and lower levels of psychological strain (Dickitt & Broll, 1982; McCrae & Costa, 1986; Parkes, 1986; Rim, 1987).

Findings in this study, which showed that Extraversion contributed Beta weights of .18 and .19 (18 per cent and 19 per cent) when paired with other 2 predictor variables (Multiple Role Strain and Social Support) and when if paired with social support to predict coping have been supported by Amirkhan et al. (1995). They posited that extraverts have a more direct and problem focussed modes of coping. The resourcefulness of extraverts in determining choice of coping strategies is evident in inter-correlation results obtain in this current research, which showed a significant positive relationship between extraversion and use of religious coping.

O'Brien (1987) agrees that Social Support stimulates development of coping strategies and promotes mastery. However, she stated categorically that there is no evidence of direct effect of social support on well being of bereaved. She made this remark after examining the indirect effects of social support and discovering that parameter estimates were consistent with the

premise that social support enhances coping behaviour, which in turn fosters well being.

There have been several contentions about the direct effect of social support on coping or buffering. These deductions can better explain why social support contributed a Beta weight of 29 per cent (co-jointly) and 30 per cent (independently) to coping after the exclusion of other variables from the equation. Bankoff (1983) argued after examining the effects of social support on the psychological well being of 245 widows that the role of social support is important but complex. She stated further that social support is helpful but depends on such factors as where widows are in the adjustment process and the type of support given. For Pearlin & Turner (1987) social support entails interactive process that depends on the donor and the recipient. To this end, because behaviour is usually supportive only to the extent that it is subjectively perceived as such, discrepancies between what is given and what is wanted can lead one to feel abandoned and desolate, feelings that only create or add to conflicts and problems. Strough et al. (1996) identified one of such discrepancies as gender. They affirmed that females might evidence more social than solitary appraisals as inter-personal goals for everyday problems. Socialization behaviour and social appraisals are more salient in female than in males.

Wilcox (1981) provided another evidence that substantiated the role of social support in buffering. In this report, the interaction of social support with life events adds up to 12 per cent of the variance. In another twist, House et al. (1982), in defence of their publication, argued that test measures on social support, which accounted for up to 5 and 15 per cent of the variance in research, were beyond chance level as criticized by Schaefer (1982).

Due to inconsistencies on the actual contribution of social support to coping, Pearlin & Turner (1987) concluded that even given the sometimes ad hoc measures of social support so far used; the evidence from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies is good enough to claim with reasonable confidence that social support can influence the severity of stressors and the psychological experience of individuals. What we are ignorant about is which aspects of support

work best for whom. For a condition like widowhood, this may form the basis for further research.

LIMITATIONS

Before generalization can be made with the outcome of this research, it is important to be cautious of certain limitations and situational impediments. Among other factors, this study is specifically constrained by the size of the sample. The reluctance of some of the respondents to participate in the research, culminated by non-completion of some section of the questionnaire contributed a great deal to forestalling the research. However, one may be compelled by reason to insinuate that their traumatic condition may have been provoked by some sensitive questions. Ignorance about the importance of research of this nature also added to the shortcomings of the respondents. The duration of bereavement is another salient factor that may have moderated their responses. This issue was not considered in this research. The non-Catholics were not adequately represented, especially Moslems, Buddhists, people of other religious sect and the nonreligious did not participate in this research. Similarly, other ethnic groups were very few neither did the sample cover all occupation.

In spite of these drawbacks, this study provides very valuable information about the psychological correlates of coping among the widowed in Nigeria.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This study has been able to explain the concepts, work and family as very important aspects of life. Using different theoretical foundations, it has been established that psychological strains arising from the roles, which people play both at home and at work depend on the social and economic stakes that they have. This stakes also determine the decision they make. For the widowed employee, it becomes more gruesome because of inevitable additional responsibilities imposed by psychological and sociocultural factors associated with bereavement.

Results obtained in this research have brought to bare the fact that for the widowed employee to achieve a balanced work and family life, personality resources should be maximized.

Of importance also are the use of transactional dialogue within social networks and negotiation or flexible work schedules, strategies that could be enacted at home and work place.

To facilitate the adaptation process, the use of religious coping and other forms of cognitive and behavioural strategies of coping have proved to be very rewarding.

RECOMMENDATION

Using the parameters of the researcher's experience in the study, it is recommended that further research should embrace the participation of subjects from more ethnic groups and religious/non-religious denominations. The type of social support that is more effective can be investigated.

Contemporary life is very dependent on research and scientific outcomes. Primitive practices like widowhood rites exist in Nigeria because of ignorance, illiteracy and lack of financial support for research. It is the researcher's opinion that government and private organizations should show more commitment to research whereas, more seminars, workshops and enlightenment campaigns can be carried out to educate people on the need to be responsive to scientific inquiry.

Employers of labour, family members, social network and friends should show more concern for the plight of the widowed in our society by enacting family supportive policies. This will in turn have positive effect on the psychological well being of the employee. Development programmes should be organized to educate supervisors on the need to recognize and appreciate work-family strains, and to know that they are inexpensive to implement.

The widowed should be given a sense of belonging in the family, among their religious groups and at work place. Showing concern about the welfare of their families and helping them to identify new potentials in them will go a long way in facilitating the adaptation process.

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