

LEARNING TOWARDS ENABLING WORK-FAMILY LIFE BALANCE FOR FEMALE PROFESSIONALS IN GHANAIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Majoreen Aryeetey
University of Ghana Business School, Ghana

Frank Yaw Yeboah
KNAK Design Partnership, Ghana

Mohammed-Aminu Sanda
Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges inhibiting professional female employees from maintaining good work-life balances, and also to develop a framework that organizations can use to understand such gender-oriented challenges towards the design of alternative work arrangements to enhance the retention of professional female employees. An exploratory approach was used with data collected through a survey. The study revealed that conflicts between work and non-work obligations, such as family responsibilities, are sources of stress which could motivate professional female employees to quit their jobs. Flextime, compressed workweeks and telecommuting were also identified as the most preferred types of alternative work arrangements. It is concluded that many professional female employees in Ghana have knowledge of work flexibility initiatives, such as alternative work arrangements, but these are not practiced effectively in their organizations. It is recommended that organizations adopt appropriate alternative work arrangements as a motivational tool to help retain their professional female employees, not only to improve the quality of their work-life balance, but also to enhance their productivity in their organizations.

Keywords: Alternative work arrangements, work-family life balance, employee retention, Ghanaian female professionals.

Introduction

In an era in which a strong economy demands a productive and engaged workforce, an increase in family and job-related responsibilities, especially among professional women in developing economies, has made it difficult for them to respond to the demands of their personal responsibilities. This difficulty is derived from their continued engagement with organizations whose workplace designs are quite inflexible from the perspectives of their tight employees' work schedule. Workplace flexibility offers a means of achieving this outcome while benefiting both employers and employees (Workplace Flexibility, 2010). Employees of all ages, professions, and income levels need workplace flexibility to meet the often competing demands of work and personal life. According to Workplace Flexibility (2010), a significant number of workers have reported that they do not have the flexibility they need to succeed at work, and also be able to fulfill their personal obligations. These personal obligations come in diverse forms such as, care-giving obligations for a child, spouse or partner, or parent; volunteering in the community; attending religious services; or obtaining advanced training (Workplace Flexibility, 2010). In the traditional sense, work schedules for professionals have been defined as a 40-hour workweek, Monday through Friday, typically between 8:30am to 5:00pm (Kropf, 1999). Women, in general, continued to assume the primary responsibility for child care and other household tasks, even in dual-earner couples (Presser, 1994; Drobic et al., 1999).

In the Ghanaian sociocultural environment, most married women who work as professionals in organizations are mostly confronted with the challenges of trying to draw a fit between their professional personal-selves and their established sociocultural norms (Sackey and Sanda, 2009). Sackey and Sanda (2010) also noted that societal roles of most professional women as wives are clearly defined and this has evolved the perceived notion by most Ghanaian women that they have no alternative but to endure the impact of marriage as a cultural artifact on their professional career development. In Ghana, women are traditionally the homemakers and are the ones affected most when organisations lack work-life balance initiatives. According to Sackey and Sanda (2009), pressures at work, coupled with demands of family,

have increased the occupational stressors of managerial women, and thereby increasing their chances of developing psychological ailments. This is because more and more women are joining the work force and having to cope with the demands of being a wage earner, wife and mother (Sackey and Sanda, 2009). These non-work life responsibilities impinge on their choice of occupations, their time spent in paid employment, their work commitment, and their allocation of effort to household and workplace activities (Drobnic et al., 1999). In Ghana, women bear the extra stress of worrying about domestic factors – work and home conflict are associated with high stress in employed women and such stress takes its toll on a woman's physical and mental health (Sackey and Sanda, 2009).

Motivation for the study

A research finding by Sackey and Sanda (2010) has shown that the stress of carrying out two full-time jobs (in the labor force and at home) is wearing many women out. Yet, most Ghanaian organisations do not have flexible work arrangements for their female employees. These organizations are challenged in their ability to retain valuable professional female employees due to the lack of alternative work arrangements that could aid such professionals attain work-life balance, and as a consequence help improve the quality of their work-life. This study was thus aimed at providing an understanding of the work balance challenges of professional women in a developing economy, with a focus on the work situation in Ghana. The purpose was to determine the forms of alternative work arrangements that could be used by organizations in developing economies, such as Ghana, to overcome female-oriented challenges to work-life balance towards improved retention of professional female employees. In this approach, the problem of maintaining a good work-life balance by professional female employees in Ghanaian organisations, and the issue of whether such organisations have adequate knowledge of and practice alternative work arrangements are examined. In the examination, light is shed on how organisations can engender the highest levels of employee and organizational performance while simultaneously enabling employees to achieve a good balance between their work and family lives. In this regard, answers to the following questions were sought: (i) Does the difficulty in maintaining work-life balance affect the retention of professional female employees in Ghana? (ii) Will alternative work arrangements of any form assist in the retention of professional female employees by organizations in the Ghanaian setting?

Literature Review

Occupational stress, work-family balance and alternative work arrangements

There is a growing body of research into work-life balance and the built environment professions. Becker and Huselid (1998) characterized work-life conflict as the lack of fit between employees and their life responsibilities, on the one side, and the goals of their organization on the other side. This understanding of work-related issues paved the way for the acceptance in discipline of human resource management the notion that, if an organization wants to retain its valuable staff, it needs to improve morale, commitment, satisfaction, reduce stress and work related problems (Cappelli, 2000, Wilkinson, 2008). Interest in cross-cultural studies, Gelfand et al. (2008) observed, has shown remarkable growth importance since the reliance on organizational behaviour theories originating in Western countries was questioned by Barrett and Bass (1976). A measure of such interest is indicated by the numerous research initiatives in recent years that tested research models originated from the West (e.g., Joplin et al., 2003; Lu, et al., 2003; Spector et al., 2005) across non-western settings. Research on work-family balance within the realm of organizational behavior research was initially included as a component of occupational stress theories. The rationale for this, as Brough and Kalliath (2009) noted, was due primarily to the recognition that psychological health at work could be influenced by non-work, personal demands (Cooper and Marshall, 1976; O'Driscoll, 1996). But the past three decades has seen the growth and virtual explosion of research on work-family balance, which event Brough and Kalliath (2009) argued has made work-family balance investigation become a driving force in itself. The ability to generalize Western theories of work-life balance across cultures has received recent attention. For example, Spector et al. (2007) identified that the relationships between work-family conflict, job satisfaction and turnover intentions are stronger among workers in Anglo countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and the US) than for those in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Brough and Kalliath (2009) viewed the facilitation of such cross cultural generalization to imply that the display of dissatisfaction and employment turnover is generally considered to be culturally acceptable within individualistic societies. Brough and Kalliath (2009) argued that loyalty to an employer is also a strong

cultural norm irrespective of individual levels of dissatisfaction within collectivist cultures. Alternative work arrangements are initiatives aimed at creating flexible work environments and improved quality of work life. The initiative empowers employees to negotiate adjustments to their work schedules so that they maintain a healthy work-life balance. Such negotiated adjustment to work schedule is related to when, where and how work is done (Bernadin and Russell, 1998; Kropf, 1999). Alternative work arrangements is the employee's individually negotiated conditions of employment which, according to Catalyst (1997), involves adjustments to the timing, scope, and/or place of work. Bernadin and Russell (1998) identified the types as flexible working arrangements which comprise (flextime and flexplace or telecommuting), permanent part-time, job sharing and compressed work weeks.

Alternative work arrangements have also been referred to as non-traditional employment relations (Ferber and Waldfoegel, 1998), flexible staffing arrangements (Abraham 1988; Houseman 1997), flexible working practices (Brewster et al., 1997), atypical employment (Cordova, 1986; Delsen, 1995; De Grip et al., 1997), vagrant or peripheral employment (Summers 1997), and contingent work (Polivka and Nardone, 1989; Belous, 1989). Kalleberg (2000) viewed these labels to indicate the shift from standard work arrangements with the expectation that employees will work full-time in an indefinite continuous manner at the employer's place of business under the employer's direction. But recent advances in technology have, for example, resulted in an almost seamless interface between work and family. In the light of these developments, Brough and Kalliath (2009) argued for the need to re-examine existing organizational behaviour theories and to incorporate influences of work-family conflict at the interface of work and family.

Organizational behavior and work-family conflict

McShane and Von Glinow (2007) identified three main non-work stressors at the workplace. These are the time-based, strain-based and role-based stressors. Time-based conflict arises out of the challenge of balancing the time demanded by work with family and other non-work activities. This stressor is particularly noticeable in employees who hold strong family values. Time-based conflict largely explains why stress increases with the number of hours of paid employment and the amount of business travel or commuting time. Inflexible work schedules take a heavy toll because they prevent employees from effectively juggling work and non-work (Calson and Kacmar, 2000). Time-based conflict is more acute for women than for men because housework and childcare represent a "second shift" for many women in dual-career families (Nelson and Burke, 2000). McShane and Glinow (2007) noted that Strain-based conflict occurs when stress from one domain spills over to the other. New responsibilities such as marriage and birth of a child are stressful to most people. Stress at work also spills over to an employee's personal life and often becomes the foundation of stressful relations with family and friends. According to McShane and Von Glinow (2007), role based conflict occurs when people are expected to enact different work and non-work roles. People who act logically and impersonally at work have difficulty switching to a more compassionate behavioral style in their personal lives. Sociological analysis of the structural organization of individuals' lives identifies the negative emotional impact of conflict between roles (Barnett and Marshall, 1991; Menaghan 1994; Pearlin et al., 1981). For many people, inter-role conflict reflects the chronic conditions within the organization of daily obligations and expectations (Menaghan, 1994). As more women engage in full-time work, home and work roles often compete for both men's and women's time and resources, thus raising the potential for spill over-related stress (Bielby and Bielby, 1989; Googins, 1991; Glass and Estes, 1997; Silver, 2000). Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1987) noted that carry-over stress entails the extent to which individuals perceive their home domain as creating interfering-demands that spill over into their work domain.

Method

Sample and sampling procedure

The survey approach was used in this study to obtain data on the alternative work arrangements attributes being studied. Since this study was organization-oriented, convenience sampling was used to select the study participants. In organization studies, as Mohammad et al. (2010) noted, the use of convenience sampling in selecting study participants is a better alternative than statistically-based probability sampling (Bryman, 1989), since it allows for the theoretical generalization of the findings (Calder et al., 1981).

Study participants

The study participants were a sample of professional women with varying professional qualifications in a cosmopolitan city in Ghana. The selection of the participants was characterized by a sense of snowballing (Patton, 1990; Sanda, 2010) derived from the researchers' criteria that persons to be selected for the study (i.e. data sources) must be a willing participant with a relatively high role perception and ability. As a result, 100 white collar professional female employees were selected. The cosmopolitan city was chosen as the primary setting for this study due to its high concentration of major and key organizations and institutions which engage highly skilled women in Ghana, and also due to its cosmopolitan atmosphere. The age range of the women is 24-58 years, with a mean age of 37.84 years and a standard deviation of 7.66.

Data collection

In this study, self-report assessment questionnaire survey was used as the data collection tool. The questions were developed based on previous research (Ellison, 2003, Wilkinson, 2008) and reflected issues important and relevant to work-family life balance for female professionals in Ghanaian organizations, and wider issues of work-life balance found in the literature. The questionnaire survey consisted of two different sections (i.e. Sections A and B). Section A consisted of questions on two aspects of respondents' demography. These are their marital status and profession classification. Section B consisted of measures that impact on work-life balance and alternative work arrangement. These measures included knowledge of alternative work arrangement types, the number of job changes, departure time from home to the workplace and return time to home from the workplace. For each question in the questionnaire, response options were provided to which the respondents selected the option applicable to them. For example, for the question "what time of the day do you return home from the workplace", the following four response options were provided: "4-6 pm, 6-8 pm, 8-10 pm, running shift". Also for the question "how many times have you changed jobs", the following six response options were provided: "None, once, 2 times, 3 times, four times, five times, and more than 5 times).

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to 100 selected participants. The questionnaires were handed to each respondent by the researchers. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 80 were returned. This constituted a response rate of eighty percent and all the 80 questionnaires returned were usable.

Results and Analysis

The survey investigated the availability of flexible working hours (flexitime), job sharing, part time working, compressed workweeks, telecommuting options and, career breaks as specific forms of alternative work arrangement. The respondents' scores from the questionnaire survey were computed by averaging across responses to the items for each answer option. The data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Software.

Characteristics of study participants

The respondents were comprised of both married women and single women. As it is highlighted in figure 1 below, 54 % of the respondents were married professional women while 24 % identified themselves as single women. The career distribution of the respondents spanned ten professional areas, as it is shown in figure 2 below. The profession areas include accounting, administration, architecture, engineering, health, banking, judiciary, marketing, human resources management (HR), information technology (IT), and Others (i.e. customer care, lecturer, research assistant, administrative assistant, procurement officer).

Figure 1: Summary of respondents' marital status

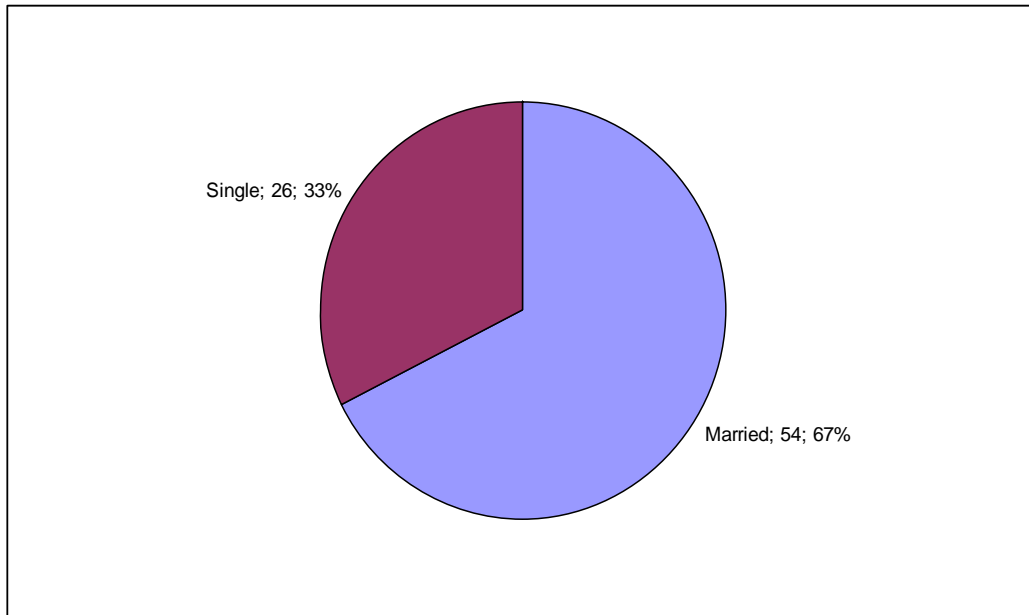
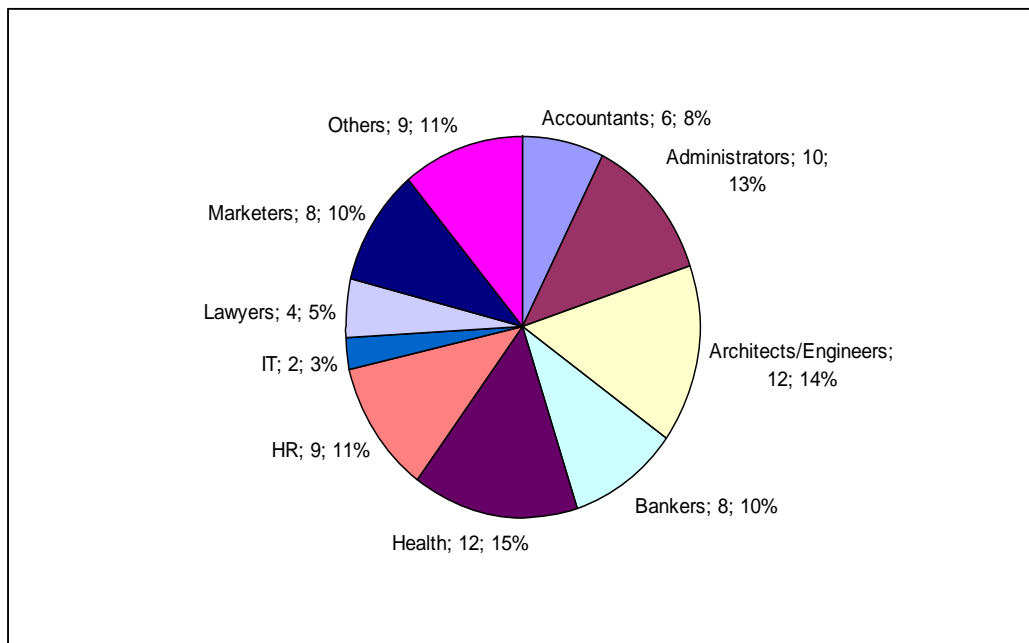


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents' profession



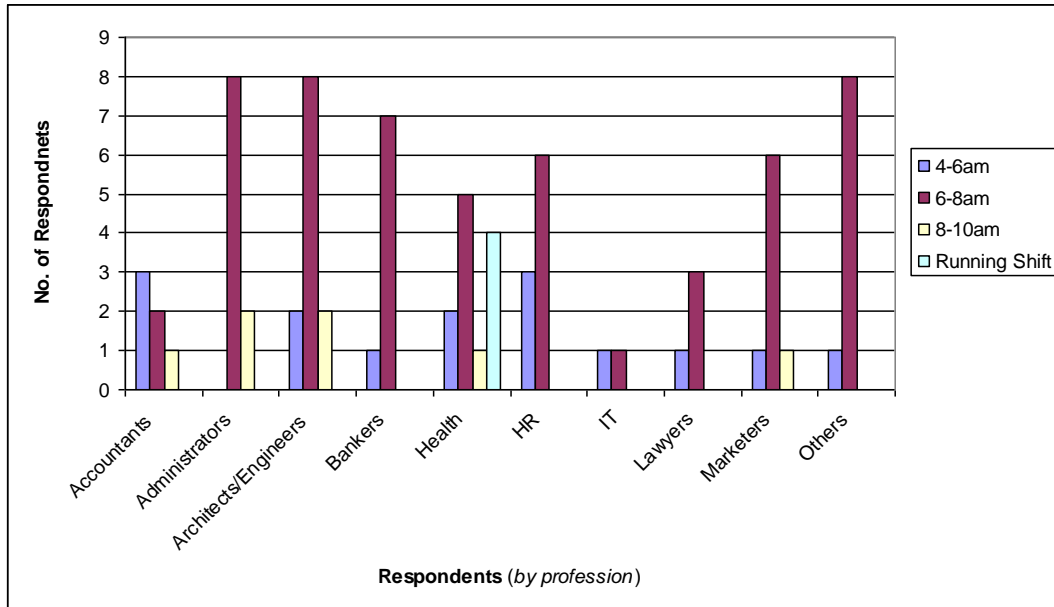
The women work in seven organization types. These include academic institutions, financial institutions, consulting firms, health institutions, non-governmental organisations, public organisations, and other private sector types of organizations.

Impact of working time and stress on work-life balance and job changes

On the issue of work-life balancing, 51% of the respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with their work-life balance. Though 25% considered their work-life balance as good, 11% viewed it as poor. According to the Act 651 of the Ghana Labour Law (2003), the starting and closing time of employees' work shall be fixed by the rules of the work to be undertaken, and the duration of work should be a maximum of 8 hours a day or forty hours a week. Act 651 of the Ghana Labour Law (2003) also provides that employees may work in shifts, with the average number of work-hours not exceeding 8 hours a day

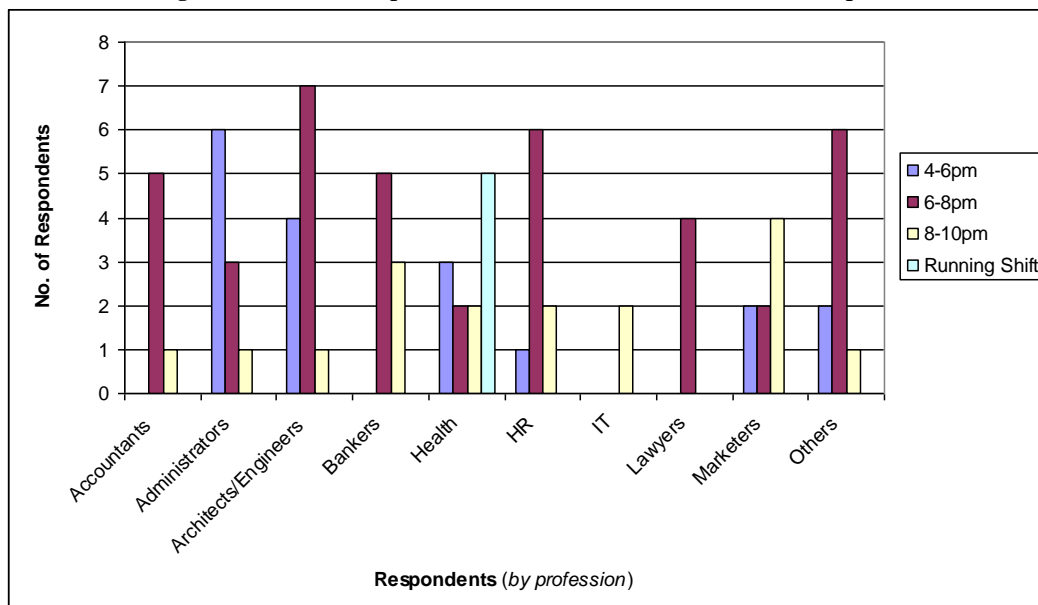
or forty hours a week over a period of 4 weeks or less if there is an established time-table for the shifts. The times that the professional women leave their homes in the mornings to go to their workplaces is shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Times respondents leave home to the workplace



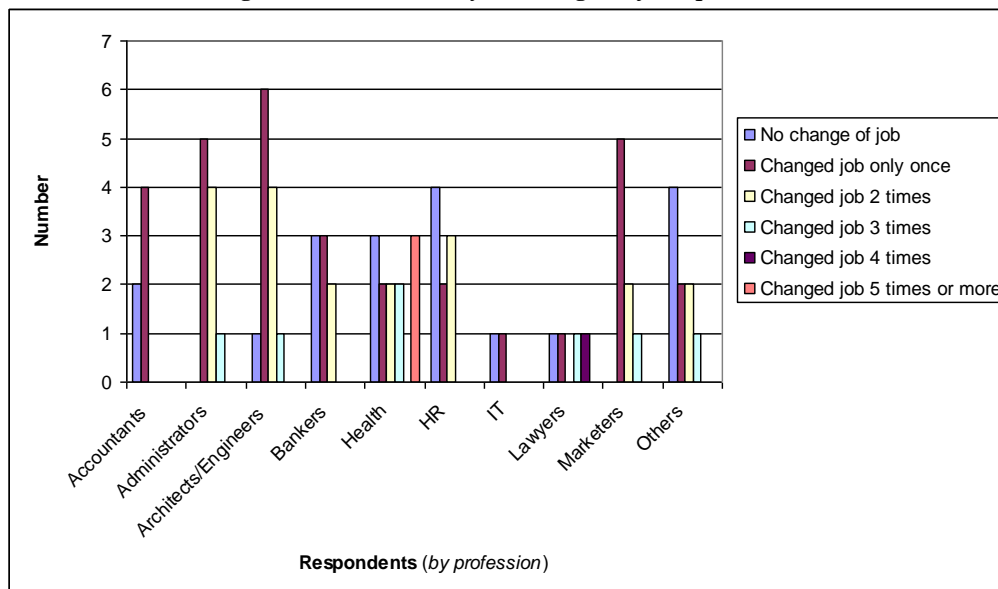
It is indicative from figure 3 above that 86% of the respondents leave home for work between 6:00am and 8:00am in the morning and return home after 6:00pm in the evening due to overtime work. The impact of such long working hours is acknowledged by 76% of the respondents who felt stressed as a result of this work-life imbalance. This is because most organisations in Ghana have an eight and half hours' work regime which starts at 8.30 o'clock in the morning and ends at 5.00 o'clock in the evening. The times that the professional women return to their homes from their workplaces in the evenings are shown in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Times respondents return home from the workplace



It is estimated from figure 4 above that 20% of the respondents reflecting all the professional categories return home from the workplace after 8 o'clock in the evening. This implies that such professionals have stressful work schedules that extend beyond the eight hours daily work-time, and hence work overtime. According to the Act 651 of the Ghana Labour Law (2003), in the event of an employee working beyond the hours of work fixed by the rules for that undertaking, the additional hours done becomes overtime work. In this respect, a significant number of the respondents (i.e. 78%) viewed their attempts to maintain a healthy work life balance as difficult and stressful. These respondents perceive such difficulty and stress as motivational factors for them to consider moving from their organisations to others that offer more flexibility. A total of 76 percent of the professional employees either agreed or strongly agreed that the difficulty in maintaining a favorable work life balance would motivate them to leave their current organization for another perceived to offer more flexibility. While 3.75 percent were not sure, 20.25 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. These responses give credence to the information obtained from the literature review (Glass & Yates, 1997; Boles et al., 1997; Catalyst, 1998; McShane & Von Glinow, 2003; Karapete, 2006) suggesting that professional female employees may leave their organizations because of difficulties in maintaining a good work life balance. A follow-up assessment of the frequency of job changes among the respondents showed that more than 72% of them had changed jobs at least once, as it is highlighted in figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Number of job changes by respondents

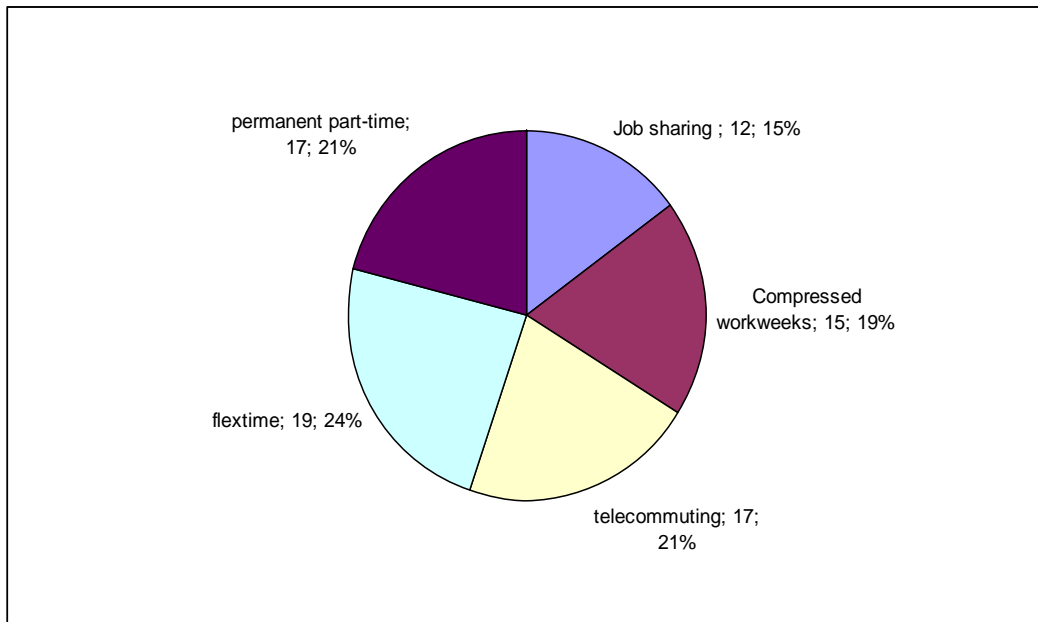


Thirty-nine percent had changed jobs only once, 24% had changed jobs only twice, and less than 4% had changed more than six times. However, 24% had never changed jobs, probably, due to the fact that most of them were in the first years of their employments. All the Marketers and Administrators had at least changed jobs once. Most changes occurred among participants in the Health profession with 25% of them changing jobs as many as six times. Over 20% percent of lawyers had changed jobs as many as four times. The rate of job changes among Bankers and HR professionals appeared to be moderate, with 56% of the HR professionals and 62% of the Bankers changing their jobs, at least twice.

Employee knowledge of flexible work options

Fifty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they knew about alternative work arrangements while 46% of them knew nothing about such work arrangements. For those respondents who knew about the alternative work arrangements, their familiarities with the various types (i.e. job sharing, compressed workweeks, flextime, telecommuting, and permanent part-time) differed, as it is shown in figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Distribution of respondents' knowledge of alternative work arrangement types



Majority of the respondents (24%) indicated their familiarity with the flextime type of alternative work arrangements. A significant number of the respondents also indicated their familiarities with the other types, such as telecommuting (21%), permanent part-time (21%), compressed workweeks (19%) and job sharing (15%). It is indicative from figure 6 above that the professional female employee is knowledgeable about one or more forms of alternative work arrangements. Generally, each of the five types of alternative work arrangements could assist retention to a certain extent. Flextime appeared to be the most effective. Telecommuting and compressed workweeks have very good prospects. Job sharing and permanent part-time, however, were considered unfavorable for the majority of professional female employees in Ghana. Another objective was to examine the practice of these flexible options. Results showed that, a majority of the professional females, in spite of their familiarity with the options are yet to benefit. Less than 18 percent worked with organizations that offered some form of flexible options and less than 35 percent knew of other organizations in Ghana that offered any option.

Discussion

The results analyzed in the previous section are discussed here from the perspectives of the following two themes: (i) work-life imbalance and employee retention challenges, (ii) employee knowledge of flexible work options

Work-life imbalance and employee retention challenges

One of the research questions for this study was to ascertain whether the difficulty in maintaining a good work-life balance affects retention of professional female employees in Ghana. Analysis of the results has shown that the professional female employees spend significant amount of time working in their organizations, and hence worked overtime. This overtime work was characterized by stressful work schedules in their organizations that extended beyond the eight hours daily work-time stipulated by Act 651 of the Ghana Labour Law (2003). By taking into account the fact that these female professionals are traditionally the homemakers, who bear the extra stress of worrying about domestic factors, their ability to create a balance between their stressful work schedules both at the workplace and at home is a key challenging issue. As it was shown in the analysis, the female professionals were highly stressed as a result of the work-life imbalance that they have to contend with. Arguing along the line of Jamal (1984), exposure to such high stress levels could impair the ability of the female professionals to make effective decisions and take appropriate action. Thus the Ghanaian female professionals perceived their work-life imbalance and its accompanying stress as motivational factors for them to consider moving from their organisations to others that offer more flexibility. The rationale behind such turnover consideration might be due the realization by the female professionals that by staying on with their organizations and

allowing the stress emanating from their work-life imbalance to develop into a distress, they might stand the risk of losing focus at the workplace which could result in poor performances. Judging from a related explanation provided by Yavas et al. (2008), the wish of some of the Ghanaian female professionals to leave their organizations might be due to the difficulty they foresee in their ability to balance the demands of their multiple roles which could enable them overcome work-related stress. This observation is indicative of the significantly positive relationship that exists between the stress levels of Ghanaian women professionals and their mental health (Sackey and Sanda, 2009). The consequence of such work-related stress on employees' mental health is enormous since it has the tendency to influence their thinking towards leaving their organizations. Inferring from Boles et al. (1997), Babakus et al. (1999) and Karatepe (2006), the thought of leaving the organization due to work-related stress reflects Ghanaian female professional employees as individuals who are emotionally exhausted by their work-life imbalances. The cost of such employee "turnover-thought" to the organization is that it leaves in its wake an induced reduction in employee commitment, and in Halpern's (2005) view, a further reduction in employee productivity prior to quitting.

The implication drawn from this discussion is that, professional female employees in Ghanaian organizations are emotionally exhausted as a result of the work and non-work conflicts that arose between their professional work and family. Even though a definite amount of stress can be helpful to both the Ghanaian professional woman and the organization by stimulating them to creativity and action (Sackey and Sanda, 2009), the consequences of too many job stressors can lead to harmful outcomes which can have grave implications for the health and safety of the working woman. Since emotional exhaustion is linked with reported intentions to leave jobs (Burke et al., 1984; Jackson and Maslach, 1982), then the emotional exhaustion of the professional female employees can result in their increased turnover in Ghanaian organizations. Arguing along the lines of Posig and Kickul (2004), managers of Ghanaian organizations employing female professionals should be the key role players in helping such employees achieve work-family balance, especially, as the pressure to balance work and family becomes more prevalent in today's business environment. As Taylor et al. (2009) argued, work-family balance depicted by low levels of conflict and high levels of facilitation are associated with perceived organizational fairness derived from organizational family-friendly policies.

Employee knowledge of flexible work options

The second research question was to examine whether Ghanaian female professional employees are knowledgeable about alternative work arrangements and the types that they want to see instituted in their organizations. This is to create an employee-input-platform that organizations can use to identify the work-life determinants for retaining female professional employees. The discussion in the previous section projected the Ghanaian female professional employee as an emotionally exhausted individual as a result of the inflexibility and high level of stress involved in managing the demands of their work in organizations and at home. Such emotional exhaustion, as discussed earlier, results in job dissatisfaction and consequently, the employee's wish to leave the organization. For example, Schermerhorn et al. (2010) have indicated that employees who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance are more likely to quit their jobs. Moorhead and Griffen (1998) have also noted that employees may consider leaving their organizations, if their work-life balance inflexibility makes it difficult for the employees to manage family and other personal matters. In similar vein, it is likely for an organization to retain its employees if it provides sufficient flexibility to make it easier to balance work and non-work obligations. Based on these perspectives, the understanding gained from the analysis is that three of the five types of alternative work arrangements that were assessed have the potential of creating the requisite work-life balance to facilitate the retention of Ghanaian female professionals in their organizations. Of the three potential alternative work arrangements, the women perceived "flextime" to be the most preferred. They also viewed "compressed workweeks" and "telecommuting" as very good approaches. "Job sharing" and "permanent part-time" were, however, considered unfavorable by the professional female employees. Most Ghanaian female professionals believed flextime will enable them have a good balanced life and enable them accomplish much more since they are involved in the decision as to when they report and leave. With regard to permanent part time, some believed they cannot utilize their time well since there will be too much. Arguing alongside Armstrong (2007), this assessment provides understanding on the kinds of alternative work arrangements that the Ghanaian female professionals want to see introduced in their organizations. In this context, flextime, compressed workweeks and telecommuting are good alternative work arrangements that could be used by organizations as strategic work-life balance

creation tools to attain the following; (i) reduce the stress levels of the Ghanaian female professional employee, (ii) enhance her job and family satisfaction and, (iii) facilitate her retention. The implication here is that organisations should introduce alternative work arrangements and other work life balance programs at places of work to help professional female employees cope with work-life balance challenges and also put in place mechanisms to manage them. One of such mechanism, proposed by Mathis and Jackson (2010) is for the organization to empower their professional female employees by negotiating with them the length of overtime work and remuneration. For example, a cap on the hours of paid overtime work for professional female employees could also be introduced. This could result in the professional female employee experiencing low conflict and high facilitation between work and family roles. This experience was observed by van Steenbergen and Ellemers (2009) to make employees objectively healthier, less absent and better performers.

Conclusion

This study has shown that despite the increasing prominence of Ghanaian female professional employees at the workplace, their traditional family roles have not waned and as such they continue to bear the pressures of balancing work and family roles. As it was highlighted in the discussion above, organisations are challenged per their roles in designing work environments to help their female employees create a good work-life balance and avoid carry-over stress. This is because many professional female employees find it difficult to respond to the demands of their work and family responsibilities within the framework of the traditional work schedule. As it was discussed earlier, such inter-role conflicts are sources of stress to the employee which motivates turnovers in organisations. Therefore, based on the findings made in this study the following four conclusions are drawn: (i) professional female employees in Ghana have knowledge of work flexibility initiatives, such as alternative work arrangements, but which are not practiced effectively in their organisations, (ii) not all types of alternative work arrangements would be suitable for the Ghanaian work environment. Permanent part-time and job sharing are generally unsuitable for professional female employees in Ghana. Flexitime, compressed workweeks and telecommuting will be suitable when the organisations seek to manage the challenges of work-life balance towards the retention of professional female employees, (iii) organizations can help professional female employees improve the quality of their work lives by using the three alternative work arrangements (i.e. flexitime, compressed workweeks and telecommuting) identified in this study to help them create a good balance between work and family roles. These would enable the organizations to stem employee turnover by being able to retain talented female employees who might be motivated to leave if such work flexibility arrangements for achieving the work-life balance are not in place.

Implications

The study has shown that organisations could adopt appropriate alternative work arrangements as a motivational tool to help retain their professional female employees. This would help improve the quality of their work-life balance, and by implication, their productivity in their organizations. Flexitime, compressed workweeks and telecommuting, which were identified as the most preferred and suitable types of alternative work arrangements by the female professionals could be of relevance to organizations, not only in Ghana, but in countries faced with the challenges of work-life balance and the retention of female professionals.

References

- Abraham, K. G. (1988), "Flexible staffing arrangements and employer's short-term adjustment strategies", in Hart, R. A. (Ed.), *Employment, Unemployment and Labor Utilization*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, pp. 288-311.
- Armstrong, M. (2007), *Human Resource Management Practice*, Kogan Page, London.
- Babakus, E., Cravens, D. W., Johnston, M. W., and Moncrief, W. C. (1999), "The role of emotional exhaustion in sales force attitude and behavior relationships", *Journal of the Academy of Market Science*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 58-70.
- Barrett, G. V., and Bass, B. M. (1976), "Cross-cultural issues in industrial and organizational psychology", in Dunnette M. D. (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Rand McNally, Chicago, pp. 1639-1686.

- Barnett, R. C., and Marshall, N. L. (1991), "The relationship between women's work and family roles and subjective well-being and psychological distress", in Frankenhaeuser, M., Lundberg, U., and Chesney, M. (Eds.), *Women, Work and Health*, Plenum Press, New York, pp. 111-136.
- Becker, B., and Huselid, M. (1998), "High performance work systems and firm performance: a synthesis of research and managerial implications", *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, Vol. 16, pp. 53-101.
- Belous, R. (1989), *The Contingent Economy: The Growth of the Temporary, Part-Time and Subcontracted Workforce*, The National Planning Association, Washington D.C.
- Bernadin, J. H., and Russell, J. E. A. (1998), *Human Resource Management*, McGraw Hill, Chicago.
- Bielby, W. T., and Bielby, D. D. (1989), "Family ties: balancing commitments to work and family in dual earner households", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, pp. 776-789.
- Boles, J. S., Johnston, M. W., and Hair, J. F. (1997), "Role stress, work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion: Inter-relationships and effects on some work-related consequences", *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-28.
- Brough, P., and Kalliath, T. (2009), "Work-family balance: theoretical and empirical advancements", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 30, pp. 581-585.
- Brewster, K. L., and Padavic, I. (2000), "Change in gender-ideology, 1977-1996: the contributions of intracohort change and population turnover", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 62, pp. 477-487.
- Bryman, A., (1989), *Research Methods and Organization Studies*, London: Unwin Hyman.
- Burke, R. J. (1988), "Some antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict", *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 287-302.
- Calson, D. S., and Kacmar, K. M. (2000), "Work-family conflict in the organization: Do life role values make a difference?", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 26, No. 5, pp. 1031-1054.
- Calder, B. J., Phillips, L. W. and Tybout, A. M. (1981), "Designing research for application", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 8, pp. 197-207.
- Cappelli, P. (2000), "A market driven approach to retaining talent", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 103-11.
- Catalyst. (1997), *A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation*, Catalyst, New York.
- Cooper, C. L., and Marshall, J. (1976), "Occupational sources of stress: a review of the literature relating to coronary heart disease and mental ill-health", *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 49, pp. 11-28.
- Cordova, E (1986), "From full-time wage employment to atypical employment: a major shift in the evolution of labour relations?", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 125, No. 6, pp. 641-667.
- Delsen, L. (1995), *Atypical Employment: An International Perspective. Causes, Consequences and Policy*, Wolters Noordhoff, Groningen.
- De Grip, A., Hoevenberg, J., and Willems, E. (1997), "Atypical employment in the European Union", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 136, No.4/5, pp.49-71.
- Drobnic, S., Blossfeld, H., and Rohwer, G. (1999), "Dynamics of women's employment patterns over the family life course: a comparison of the United States and Germany", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 133-146.
- Ellison, L. (2003), *Raising the Ratio: Employer Benchmarking Survey*. Retrieved from: www.rics.org/Careerseducationandtraining/RICSRaisingtheRatioCampaign/work_bal_surv2003.htm-21k
- Gelfand, M., Lesllie, L. M., and Fehr, R. (2008), "To prosper, organizational psychology should adopt a global perspective", *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 29, pp. 493-517.
- Ghana Labour Law (2003), *Ghana Labour Act 651, 2003*, Ghana Labour Commission, Accra. Retrieved from: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/SERIAL/66955/63431/F1429852156/GHA66955.pdf>
- Glass, J., and Estes, S. (1997), "The family responsive workplace", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23, pp. 289-313.
- Googins, B. K. (1991), *Work/Family Conflicts: Private Lives-Public Responses*, Auburn House, New York.
- Greenhaus, J. H., and Parasuraman, S. (1999), "Research on work, family, and gender: current status and future directions", in Powell, G. N. (Ed.), *Handbook of Gender and Work*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 391-412.

- Halpern, D. F. (2005), "How time-flexible work policies can reduce stress, improve health, and save money", *Stress & Health*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 157-167.
- Houseman, S. 1997, *Temporary, Part-Time, and Contract Employment in The United States: A Report on the W.E. Upjohn's Employer Survey on Flexible Staffing Policies*, WE Upjohn Institute of Employment Research, Kalamazoo, MI.
- Jackson, S. E., and Maslach, C. (1982), "After-effects of job-related stress: families as victims", *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, Vol. 3, pp. 63-77.
- Jamal, M. (1984), "Job stress and job performance controversy: an empirical assessments", *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. Pages 1-21.
- Joplin, J. W., Shaffer, M. A., Francesco, A. M., and Lau, T. (2003), "The macro-environment and work-family conflict: development of a cross-cultural comparative framework", *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, Vol. 3, pp. 305-328.
- Kalleberg, A. L., (2000), "Nonstandard employment relations: part-time, temporary and contract work", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, pp. 341-365.
- Karatepe, O. M., and Tekinkus, M. (2006), "The effects of work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and intrinsic motivation on job outcomes of front-line employees, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 173-193.
- Kropf, M. B. (1999), "Flexibility Initiatives: current approaches and effective strategies", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 14, pp.177-186.
- Lu, L., Cooper, C. L., Kao, S. F., and Zhou Y. (2003), "Work stress, control beliefs and well-being in greater China: an exploration of sub-cultural differences between the PRC and Taiwan", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 18, pp. 479-509.
- Mathis, R. L., and Jackson J. H. (2010), *Human Resource Management*, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, OH.
- McShane, S. L., and Von Glinow, M. A. (2007), *Organizational Behaviour: Emerging Knowledge and Practice for the Real World*, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, Chicago.
- Menaghan, E. G. (1994), "The daily grind: work stressors, family patterns, and intergenerational outcomes", in Avison, W. R., and Gotlib, I. H. (Eds.), *Stress and Mental Health: Contemporary Issues and Prospects for the Future*, Plenum Press, New York, pp. 115-147.
- Mohammad, J., Habib, F. Q., and Zakaria, S. (2010), "Organizational citizenship behavior and commitment: do age and tenure make any difference?", *Business & Management Quarterly Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 28-49.
- Moorhead, G., and Griffen, R. W. (1998), *Organizational Behaviour*, Houghton Mifflin, USA.
- Nelson, D. L., and Burke, R. J. (2000), "Women executives: health, stress, and success", *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 107-121.
- O'Driscoll, M. (1996), "The interface between job and off-job roles: enhancement and conflict", in Cooper, C. L., and Robertson, I. T. (Eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Wiley, Chichester, pp. 279-306.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- Pearlin, L., Lieberman, M., Menaghan, E., and Mullan, J. (1981), "The stress process", *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 22, pp. 337-356.
- Polivka, A. E., and Nardone, T. (1989), "On the definition of "contingent work"", *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 112, pp. 9-17.
- Posig, M., and Kickul, J. (2004), "Work-role expectations and work family conflict: gender differences in emotional exhaustion", *Women in Management Review*, Vol.19, No.7, pp.373-386.
- Presser, H. B. (1994), "Employment schedules among dual-earner spouses and the division of household labor by gender", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, pp. 348-364.
- Sackey, J., and Sanda, M. A. (2009), "Influence of occupational stress on the mental health of Ghanaian professional women", *International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics*, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 876-887.
- Sanda, M. A., and Sackey, J. (2010), "Unmasking the sociocultural constraints to career growth of married women in Ghanian organizations", *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 22, pp. 1-19.
- Sanda, M. A. (2010), "Impact of value-based transformational leadership in privatizing government institutions in a developing economy: a case study", *Business & Management Quarterly Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 1-13.

- Schermerhorn, J. R., Hunt, J. G., and Osborn, R. N., (2010), *Organizational Behaviour*, Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.
- Silver, C. (2000), "Being there: the time dual-earner couples spend with their children", *Canadian Social Trends*, Vol. 57, No. 11-008, pp. 26-29.
- Spector, P., Allen, T. D., Poelmans, S., Cooper, C. L., Bernin, P., Hart, P., et al. (2005), "An international comparative study of work-family stress", in Poelmans, S. (Ed.), *Work and Family: An International Research Perspective*, LEA, London, pp. 71–84.
- Spector, P. E., Allen, T. D., Poelmans, S., Lapierre, L. M., Cooper, C. L., O'Driscoll, M., et al. (2007), "Crossnational differences in relationships of work demands, job satisfaction and turnover intentions with work-family conflict", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 60, pp. 805–835.
- Summers, C. W. (1997), "Contingent employment in the United States", *Comparative Labor Law Journal*, Vol. 18, pp. 503-522.
- Taylor, B. L., DelCampo, R. G., and Blancero, D. M. (2009), "Work–family conflict/facilitation and the role of workplace supports for U.S. Hispanic professionals", *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 30, pp. 643–664.
- van Steenbergen, E. F., and Ellemers, N. (2009), "Is managing the work–family interface worthwhile? Benefits for employee health and performance", *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 30, pp. 617–642.
- Wilkinson, S. J. (2008), "Work-life balance in the Australian and New Zealand surveying profession", *Structural Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 120-130.
- Workplace Flexibility (2010), *Public policy platform on flexible work arrangements*, Georgetown Law. Retrieved from:
http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/images/uploads/reports/report_1.pdf
- Yavas, U., Babakus, E., and Karatepe, O. M. (2008), "Attitudinal and behavioral consequences of work-family conflict and family-work conflict", Does gender matter? *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 19, No.1, pp.7-31.