



## **EFFECT OF CHILD ATTENTION ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN KENYAN BANKS.**

**Juliana M. Mutinda,**

**Tecla Cecilia Kirwa,**

**Dishon Wanjere.**

### ***Abstract***

*The purpose of this paper was to establish the effect of child attention on career advancement of women employees in Kenyan banks. Objectives were the effect of child care and effect of child bearing on career advancement of women employees. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study population comprised married and single mothers and a sample of 149 respondents was selected. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interviews and data analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Data was presented by use of frequency tables, pie and bar charts. Findings showed that a significant relationship existed between child attention and career advancement of women employees. This means that mothers working in banks have a challenge balancing the role of a worker and a mother. Banks could therefore formulate and implement measures that take care of working mothers for this would help them balance the two roles.*

**Keywords:** *Career advancement, child attention.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Traditionally, a woman's role was in the home, taking care of children and husband. However, more and more women have entered the work place and years later the

number of working women has been continuously increasing. Women have thus made remarkable progress in terms of their increased participation in higher education and the labor market where they hold seats on corporate boards, run companies and feature on covers of business magazines as prominent leaders. This presents an evidence of considerable changes in women's role and as a result this has created a conflict between the two roles as many fail to reconcile ambitious career aspirations with taking care of children.

### **Problem statement**

Researchers have identified a number of factors that function as barriers to women's career advancement among them work and family conflict (Hewlett, 2002). Despite their academic qualifications, women continue to be underrepresented especially in senior management positions. Most working women are of childbearing age and have both preschool and school-age children. Work- life integration for professional mothers seems difficult due to increased pressures of confronting meaning in work and family where they not only need to create meaning in their work-family life by themselves but they also need support at work place by the employer (Grady & McCarthy,2008).

The demands of modern careers have made women to become breadwinners and in pursuit of successful careers, many have found it difficult to balance between their office work and having time to raise their children. In the fast growing city of Nairobi and with the high cost of living in Kenya, women often combine the roles of mother and worker in trying to achieve better standards of living. (Lakati, Binns & Stevenson, 2009).

More literature on women's career advancement in other sectors like in the hospitality and manufacturing industries has been documented (Hewlett, 2002, Oriedo, 2010). This paper sought to establish the effect of child attention on career advancement of women employees.

### **Objectives**

Generally, this paper sought to investigate the effect of child attention on career advancement of women employees in selected banks in Kenya.

Specifically, the objectives of the study in this paper were to:

- (i) Determine the effect of child care on career advancement of women employees. (ii) Assess the effect of child bearing on career advancement of women employees.

### **Research hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses guided the paper:

H01 There is no significant effect of child care on career advancement of women employees. H02 There is no significant effect of child bearing on career advancement of women employees. **Significance of the study**

This research is significant as it provides contemporary information and an opportunity to policy makers to make and implement relevant policies pertaining to working mothers.

Findings in this study may also have a broad implication for the body of human resource management research on employee retention.

Banks will benefit from the findings of this study for they will be able to identify factors that they should put in place to attract and retain talented women employees especially working mothers.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study was informed by the role conflict theory which suggests that demands emanating from multiple roles make it difficult to carry out these roles effectively (Katz & Kahn 1978). Role conflict is bidirectional and is thought to have several dimensions that have potential implications for healthy behaviours. For example, conflict may exist between the demands of the work role and participating in healthy behaviours. Basically, role conflict occurs when we find ourselves pulled in various directions as we try to respond to the many statuses. The most commonly noted role conflict is that between work and family as explained in this paper

### **Literature Review**

In this section, the main objective is addressed where literature on child attention and women's career advancement is reviewed.

### **Child attention**

One of the most critical constraints for women working all over the world is how to manage childcare while on the job (Corell, 2000). In most countries, child care is a family affair, with relatives caring for the children in lieu of formal services offered by private companies or the public sector. But this pattern is breaking down as families become mobile and, particularly, as women employees are transferred away from home regions (Grady & McCarthy, 2008).

The increased proportion of women in labor force creates bigger challenges for women in the incorporation of roles and responsibilities and managing time accompanied with child bearing and child rearing years (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). These challenges have stimulated scientists to create a link between work and family (Valimaki, Lamsa & Hiillos, 2009). As a result, pressure on organizations to respond towards employees' family responsibilities has also been increasing (Goodstein, 1994). Work intensification and long hours, coupled with child rearing demands result in stress and turn over (Jones & McKenna, 2002).

Research conducted by Van, Annelies, & Fischer, (2002) showed that the effects of family responsibilities were cited as one explanation for glass ceiling. Focus group results from a 1994 study on glass ceiling showed that child rearing responsibility, especially as it relates to young children, typically falls to women and this was seen as a career advancement factor that placed women at a disadvantage for promotion consideration (Naff, 1994).

Research has also associated child bearing/pregnancy with career advancement of women (Corell, 2000). A research carried out in the UK showed that despite progressive employment legislation, 39% of women interviewed said they were finding it "difficult" or "very difficult" to return to work after taking time off while 31% said their relationship with their boss had deteriorated since they had become pregnant (Corell, 2000). Pregnancy related discrimination and dismissal of women remains rooted in the developing world despite recent attempts by global and national workers' movements to stop it, a new ILO report indicates (ILO, 2009). With nearly sixty per cent of the world's

women of child-bearing age in the labor force, the report says many female workers are continually being pushed outside legal and social protection systems exposing them to loss of jobs.

A study carried out by the African Population and Health Research Centre in Lome, Togo, Dakar and Senegal showed a negative relationship existed between career progression and motherhood in that the number of promotions a woman gets at work seem to be inversely proportional to the number of children she gives birth to. The research also established that a conflict existed between professional demands and maternal responsibilities in that studying, attending long training programmes and taking up internship, conflicted with mothering roles, which require unlimited attention (Oriedo, 2010).

In Kenya, a survey carried out by Strathmore University Business School involving top manufacturing companies found out that most companies lacked the appropriate policies that allow employees to manage work and family roles.

### **Career Advancement of women**

With the view of a woman's role in the workforce having undergone a significant change throughout time, debates over the matter of women's progression in their careers has been on the rise (Wahome, 2009). Historically, society believed a woman's place was in her home, caring for her husband and children, as opposed to the workplace where valued feminine traits such as meek nature and submissiveness were feared to be lost if women entered the workforce (Astin, 2012).

1984). With time however, more women have entered in the business world who hold senior executive positions and sit on corporate boards, and with the introduction of various forms of legislation protecting women's rights, for example pay protection, maternity leave and employment rights, the future looks promising for senior women executives. The question to ask however is, how many of these women actually hold positions of power in top management, and the reality is very few (Heffernan, 2002).

The situation is particularly true for the banking industry where the number of women professionals in senior executive management positions (for example CEO's, company board members, heads of divisions) is minimal compared to that of men. According to Financial Women International (FWI), a nonprofit organization that tracks the

number of women who work in the finance industry, sixteen percent of executive positions at the 100 largest national banks in the world were held by women in 2002. That was up from thirteen percent in 1999 and by 2007, women held just sixteen point one percent of the executive positions at national banks (Glasser, 2008).

The reasons for this difference are varied in nature and with an increasing percentage of women in the workforce in all professions, different barriers to progress have gone up (Cooper Jackson,

2001). Historically, male-dominated society has always viewed women as unequal and relegated women to secondary career positions. This is still being reflected in the modern skill-based job market by assigning women more and more to routine and mundane jobs that hardly carry decision-making authority (Heffernan, 2002). Even within new Human Resource Management processes, many processes for recruitment, interviews and aptitude tests, are sometimes centered on men rather than women. While entry-level jobs such as teaching, healthcare and accounting among others are open to everyone, the dominant male population, which already occupies these jobs, leaves less room for women to enter and make a mark (Astin, 1984). Of late, the balance may be found to be shifting in favor of women, but the very nature of jobs in this category is such that women's upward mobility is far from being significant because of the glass ceiling. Other areas of concern, such as maternity leave, are also hindering women's progression.

The gender aspect seems to have influenced the advancement of women careers due the socially constructed roles that women have. An article published in one of the newspapers -the 'star' (Poulter, 2002) highlighted how many women are sacrificing marriage and a family for financial independence. It suggests that women are marrying later, putting off having children and more likely to get divorced as they concentrate on their careers. Another article published in the same 'star' (Halliwal, 2002), focuses on how women are giving up their careers to raise their families and thus more career breaks are likely to occur in these situations. Hewlett (2002) wrote that in order to change the world, women need to face and deal with many challenges, for example choosing a career that will give you the gift of time and choosing a company that will help you achieve work- life balance. Facing them has proved extremely difficult for women to achieve especially for

those pursuing senior office positions that do not respect personal time whilst trying to raise a family and giving priority to one's partner

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

A descriptive research design was adopted in this study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), descriptive research is a process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. It determines and reports the way things are. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data. Descriptive studies report summary data such as measures of central tendency including the mean, median, mode, deviance from the mean, variation, percentage, and correlation between variables.

### **Study population, Sampling design and sample size**

The study population comprised married and single mothers working in Kenyan banks from which five banks were selected which had a total population of 245 mothers. Purposive sampling was employed to select five banks based on their establishment in terms of the period they have been in the market since licensing and number of branches. Stratified random sampling technique was then used to select respondents in all levels of management (stratas) in the five banks where a random sample from each stratum was taken, in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population and the subsets of the strata were then pooled to form a random sample. A total sample size of 149 respondents was selected where a sample determination table used in social science research was adopted. As per the table, a total population of 245 is equivalent to a sample size of 149.

### **Data Collection procedure**

Both questionnaires and interview guide were used in this study where the questionnaire was employed as the main instrument for data collection while interview guide was used to enhance quality of data collected through questionnaires.

## **Data analysis**

Data generated from the questionnaires and interviews was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data was then described in percentages, presented in the form of frequency tables, pie, bar charts and interpreted by drawing inferences from the computed frequencies, percentages and correlations. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version software was employed in computing data for this study. Data was analysed at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

### **Demographic characteristics**

Results obtained from the study regarding age showed that 8.5 percent were 25 years and below, 31.5 percent were 25- 30 years, 45.9 percent were between 30 to 40 years while the remaining 14.1 percent were 40 years and above. This is an indication that most respondents, 77.4 percent, were in their biological productive age which ranges between 25-40 years of age and they were likely to have young children who require close attention. A majority of the respondents, 86 percent had at least a bachelors degree. Regarding age(s) of children, results showed that children between the ages of 2 to 5 years had the highest frequency, 43.6 percent followed by age 2 and below, 32.1 percent. Majority of the respondents, 75.7 percent therefore had children below five years of age who require close attention. Those who were married had the highest percentage, 66.7 followed by singles, 29.5 percent and widowed 3.8 percent. Results also indicated that 23.1 percent had worked in their stations for 5 years and below, 71.8 percent for a period of 5 to 20 years and only 3.8 percent had worked for over 20 years. Majority of the respondents, 75.6 percent had thus worked in their stations for over five years with their period of work and experience facilitating career advancement. However, their representation in top management was low, 9 percent, middle management, 28, percent with the highest, 64 percent being concentrated at lower management.

Results also indicated that few respondents, 34.6 percent had been sponsored for training by the banks they were working for. This could mean that banks have not put enough effort in developing their human resource especially working mothers.



**Table 1.1 Effect of child care on career advancement**

**Effect of child care on career advancement**

<b>Child care requires time and this affects my career</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	Strongly agree	9	11.5
	Agree	52	66.7
	Neutral	10	12.8
	Disagree	5	6.4
	Total	76	97.4
Missing	99	2	2.6
Total		78	100.0

Source: Researcher (2012)

Regarding the effect of child care on career advancement, table 1.1 above shows that 61 (78.2)percent agreed while 5 (6.4) percent disagreed. The chi-square test statistic value ( $X^2 = 32.892, p= 0.000$ ) showed that a high significant relationship existed between child attention and career advancement. Null hypothesis was therefore rejected that there is no significant relationship between child care and career advancement of women employees.

**Table 1.2 Effect of child bearing on career advancement**

**Effect of child bearing on career advancement**

<b>Child bearing affects my career advancement</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	Strongly agree	18	23.1
	Agree	24	30.8
	Neutral	3	3.8
	Disagree	25	32
	Strongly disagree	6	7.7
	Total	76	97.4
Missing	99	2	2.6
Total		78	100.0

Source: Researcher(2012)

As per table 1.2 above regarding the effect of child bearing on career advancement, 42 (53.9) percent agreed while 31 (39.7) percent disagreed. Chi-square test statistic showed that a significant relationship existed between child bearing and career advancement ( $X^2 = 25.357, p =$

0.020). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Women in the labour force face challenges in balancing work and family roles and responsibilities associated with child bearing and rearing. In this paper, majority of the respondents, 78.2 percent felt that child care negatively affected their career advancement and most of the respondents, 53.9 percent also felt that child bearing negatively affected their career development.

Results in this study therefore indicated that working mothers in Kenyan banks combine the dual role of being a worker and a mother which affects negatively their career advancement especially where the right measures have not been put in place to help them balance the two roles. The findings were thus summarized to mean that there is a significant relationship between child attention and career advancement of women employees.

The study concluded that working mothers in Kenyan banks strain to balance roles associated with child attention and work due to the conflict between the two roles, thereby adversely affecting their career advancement. Furthermore, banks are yet to adopt supportive policies for work-family life balance. As a matter of fact, some banks have their women employees sign a contract with them that they will not get pregnant for a period of five years or more. This is an indication of failure in banks to implement formulated measures such as equity in employment practice, affirmative action and maternity leave among others. Banks thus need to understand the work and family roles women have to juggle with and need to be aware of what their employees, in particular working mothers, prefer in terms of family friendly policies and other supportive practices to assist with work- family life balance.

### **Recommendations**

Most policies that have been formulated by government to assist women employees especially working mothers have not been implemented in banks and therefore measures should be put in place to ensure that these policies are implemented.

Banks need to introduce family-friendly policies that will enhance women's career advancement such as flexibility in the job role, on-site child care facilities among others.

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