

# Institutional Response to Challenges Faced by Workers in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities in a Zimbabwean University

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## Abstract

The aim of the paper was to establish the University's responsiveness to challenges workers faced in trying to balance work and family responsibilities. A sample of fifty (50) non-teaching members of staff was selected from a population of 487. Interviews, questionnaires and review of secondary sources were used to gather data. The research established that the institution was attending to some of the major welfare issues such as health through medical aid and the drug facility, car loans and housing loans and selling of farm produce on credit at subsidised rates. However, there was need to consider empowerment in terms of knowledge to both junior staff and their supervisors to reduce issues of unnecessary overtime that adversely affected family time. Employees had a number of coping strategies they employed to balance work and family life and this included feigning illness so that they could use sick leave days to attend to family issues and this increased absenteeism. The institution was in the process of establishing a child care centre which had been in the pipeline for over a year. It was recommended that the organization was to speed up the establishment of a child care centre as it was pertinent to employees and also formalise flexible work arrangements for the benefit of all employees. Workers' representatives were also to play a role in helping workers integrate work and family life by educating them on the implications of their actions which in most cases led to unnecessary overtime and thus affecting their family life.

**Keywords:** family responsibilities, work-life balance, flexible work arrangement, reproductive work, productive work

## 1. Introduction and Background

The twenty first century has witnessed a rise in female participation in the labour market and also an increase in single parent families particularly female and child headed families. This has forced both men and women to be active in both, the productive and reproductive spheres. More and more men are becoming active in the reproductive sphere because of the rise of single parent families (as a result of loss of spouse due to various reasons among them the HIV/AIDS pandemic) and general changes in reproductive roles. In such situations the male whose spouse has passed on is forced to take over the role of the mother including taking care of the sick children, preparing meals and so forth. A growing number of men are also getting involved in care work as they visit pre and ante-natal clinics with their wives. Traditionally men, particularly blacks, were not really involved in reproductive work, particularly child rearing. Women had the support of other women when it came to looking after the baby in most cases the mother, mother-in-law and other female members of the family. That is why a pregnant woman who is about give birth to her first child, is taken back to her family, so that she can get assistance and support from her mother just before and after giving birth. The main contribution made by men when it com came to child rearing was the financial support through the payment of ante-natal fees and clothing for the baby etc.

Integrating work and family life challenges are part of the everyday reality for the majority of working families. (Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001) Family responsibilities affect the participation of females in the labour market. According to Lenner (1986) and Friedl (1990) cited in Henskin (1998) the childbirth and social experiences theory points to the social consequences of the biology of human reproduction. Failure to participate fully in the productive sphere is one of the social consequences of the biology of human reproduction. Henskin further cites Huber (1990) who is of the opinion that in early history life was short and to reproduce the human group many children were to be born. Women were thus limited to reproductive activities for a considerable part of their lives because they would fall pregnant, give birth, nurse the child and thus assumed tasks associated with the home and

child care and men took over tasks that required absence from home like hunting. As a result men gained prestige and little prestige was given to the women's activities which were taken for granted. Eventually according to the theory men took over society and women became second class citizen.

Today women are concentrated in the informal sector activities and in unpaid family labour and inferior forms of employment. (Masika & Joeques, 1996) The main reason being the fact that up to the 1960s when the second wave of feminism began, women viewed work as something temporary which they could do to fill time after completing school whilst waiting to get married. (Charfetz, 1990, cited in Henskin,1998) Family responsibilities were thus their main activity.

Family responsibilities include and are not limited to child care, house work, caring for sick and the elderly, attending to family activities like funerals of both the nuclear and extended families. It is thus the researchers' view that such responsibilities may prevent workers from participating fully in the world of work. To increase the participation rate of workers who had family responsibilities the ILO Convention 156 on The Workers with Family Responsibilities recommends that measures should be taken to develop services such as child care and family services facilities and that, family responsibilities should not be a reason to lose one's job. One of the Convention's aims is to improve the opportunities of women at work to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in employment. The State must make it an aim of national policy to enable workers with family responsibilities to engage in employment without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.

In Zimbabwe the local authorities have day care centres where mothers can leave their young ones during the day. These programs are run under the Ministry of Education and are referred to as Early Childhood Education and Care centres, they cater for children between four and five with the aim of preparing them for primary education. This creates a gap where the 0-4 year olds are not catered for, the gap has been filled by private day care centres, which are very expensive and not affordable to the majority of the working class. This has then forced at least one spouse to remain at home to cater for this responsibility

According to Schaeffer (2006), "The rise of single parent families, increased job opportunities for women, and the need for additional family income have all propelled an increasing number of mothers of young children into paid labour. In 2002, in America 55% of women who had given birth the previous year, were back in the labour force and this is also happening in Zimbabwe. The big question is "who will take care of children during the absence of the mothers?" This brings about the need for day care centres for babies, pre-school going and in some cases primary school children.

Day care centres have become the equivalent of the nuclear family, performing some of the nurturing and socialization functions previously handled by family members. It is important to note that some States like Venezuela and Sweden have taken a leading role to address the issue of child care through the provision of excellent pre-school/day care centres at little cost to parents. In Sweden high taxes make it possible for the State to provide such facilities. (Schaeffer, 2006) However, most developing countries including Zimbabwe do not have the economic base to provide subsidised child care facilities and this affects women in most cases as they carry the burden of child care. Provision of such facilities will lead to engagement of employees. Engagement is a positive, two-way relationship between an employee and his organization, in which the two parties are aware of their own and others' needs, and support each other to fulfill the needs. The parties will go the extra mile for each other because they see the mutual benefit of investing in their relationship. (Chiumento (2004) in Armstrong, 2006)

Before independence women had to resign once they fell pregnant and they could even be fired for falling pregnant on the basis of a supervening impossibility to perform. Today the Zimbabwean government through Section 18 of the Labour Act provides for 98 days paid maternity leave. On return to work, the nursing mother is allowed two thirty minutes breaks to breastfeed the baby for six months. The Act in S14B(f) also provides for special leave which can be taken "on any justifiable compassionate grounds"

However, there is a challenge with the breastfeeding provision as it is difficult for most women to take the two half an hour breaks because of the cost and distance to travel between the workplace and home. As a result nursing mothers are forced to either start work an hour late or knock off an hour earlier to cater for the feeding breaks defeating the purpose of the breaks. Having child care facilities at or near workplaces would help deal with the problem of distance so that nursing mothers would be able to nurse their children as per the Labour Act provision.

This creates the need to establish work-life balance practices employed in the organization under study. Work-life balance is about employees achieving an acceptable equilibrium between work and non-work activities like parental responsibilities and wider caring duties as well as other activities and interests (Work foundation, 2003b in Armstrong, 2006) An imbalance would lead to disengagement of employees, thus the institution would lose out on productivity and an opportunity to become an employer of choice. One of the strategies for becoming an

employer of choice is getting great mileage out of low cost perquisites like subsidized on-site day care which may reduce absenteeism and tardiness (Anderberg & Froeschle, 2006) and even flexible work arrangements. The other benefits of introducing work life balance policies are improved productivity and quality of work, improved commitment and moral, lower levels of staff turnover and reduced casual absence. (DTI survey in Armstrong, 2006)

To achieve work life balance most organizations have engaged in flexible work arrangements. According to IRS (2004d) cited in Armstrong some of the flexible working patterns are, part-time working, where one may work less hours than the standard full time hours; job sharing which is splitting contractual hours between two employees; time-off in lieu where a worker will work additional hours which can then be taken later on as time off; flexi-time where start and finishing times are flexible and the deficit or excess is carried over to the next period. In addition there is shift swapping an option where employees can exchange shift on the understanding that full cover will be provided; staggered hours, self rostering and additional leave entitlement.

Before deciding on the options of flexible working patterns that can be employed an organization should first analyse the various options, roles and tasks to establish the flexible work arrangements that would be applicable. They should consider issues of staff resourcing, supervision that would be required, costs associated with the arrangements, and complexity of task.

## 2. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were first, to find out the challenges that employees faced in trying to balance work and family responsibilities. The second objective was to find out how the Institution handled workers' problems associated with balancing work and family responsibilities. The third objective was to find out how the employees viewed the organization when it came to balancing work and family responsibilities. Lastly the study wanted to establish possible strategies that could be adopted by the institution to assist workers with family responsibilities

## 3. Conceptual Framework

According to Baylin et. al. (2001) there is need for a holistic approach to the challenge of integrating work and family life. They came up with a model which is illustrated in the following diagram:

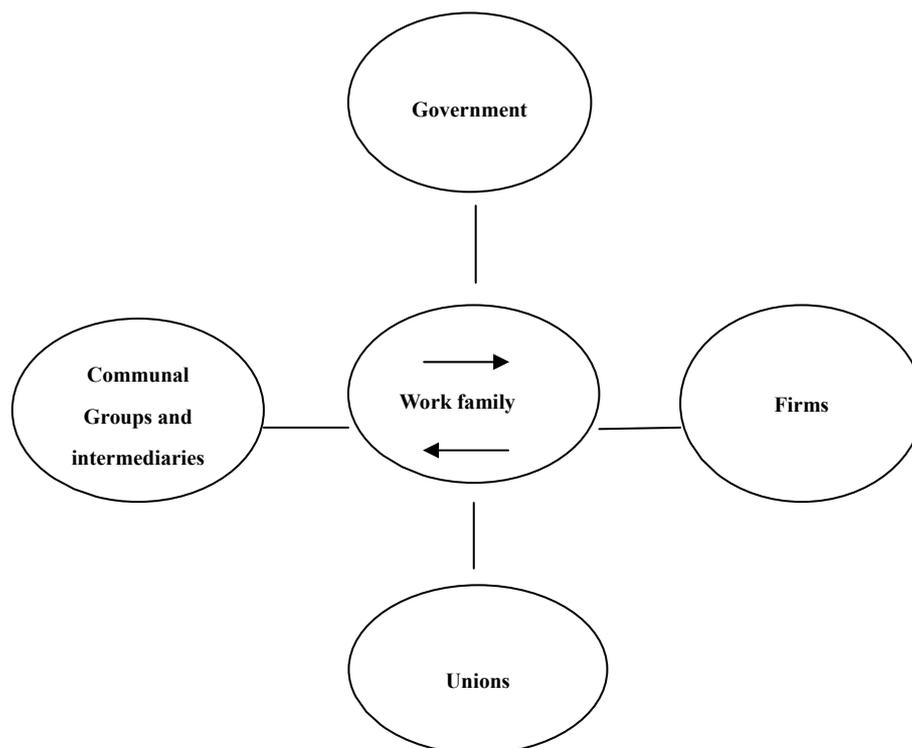


Figure 1. A Systematic Approach to Work and Family Responsibilities

Baylin et al. (2001) insinuate that integrating work and family life requires a well-informed collaborative effort on the part of all the key actors that share interests and responsibility for these issues. All the players indicated above namely employers, trade unions, government and communities have a role to play in the integration of work and family life. None of the players can deal with the problem alone. This means that the players have an interest in ensuring that workers are able to balance work and family responsibilities. These players must reconsider the belief that a perfect worker is one whose primary concern is work and other elements of life come second. Talent is underutilized because it does not fit the ideal worker model that is built into organizational policies and reinforced by workplace cultures. Family friendly policies are not enough to deal with this problem. (Bailyn et al, 2001) The study was interested in establishing the strategies that had been put in place to help workers integrate work and family life.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The research was qualitative and a case study design was used. The case study was Midlands State University. The population was the non-teaching members of staff from the senior assistant registrar to the general hands. Convenient sampling was used as respondents were selected depending on their availability during tea and lunch breaks. Some were approached after knocking off from work. Purposive sampling was done for managerial employees and workers committee members. For managerial employees the researcher targeted those responsible for policy formulation and/or implementation and for workers committee it was two male and two female representatives.

Primary and secondary sources of data were used. For primary sources, interviews and questionnaires were used. The researchers collected data from a sample size of 50 non-teaching staff from a population of 487. Thirty five questionnaires were distributed to secretaries, general hands and security personnel. Fifteen interviews were targeted at management, administrators, supervisors and workers' Committee members. Twenty questionnaires were distributed to females and fifteen to males. Secondary sources used were records from social responsibility committee.

#### **5. Research Findings**

##### *5.1 Response Rate*

Of the thirty-five questionnaires administered, only thirty were returned (19 females and 12 males) giving a response rate of 67%. The majority of respondents were young parents who were 35 and below of age. Ten of the respondents had children below five years, twelve had children in primary school, six had children in secondary school and 2 had children who had completed their secondary education. Only one respondent was above 55 and it was a female who had grand children. Of the fifteen targeted interviews only eleven interviews were carried out with two Workers Committee representatives, one member of senior management, one Human Resource officer, two Administrators, two supervisors and two general hands and one security guard.

#### **6. Economic and Social Background**

The economy of Zimbabwe had been sliding down from 2000 and unemployment was above 80%. Hyperinflation was the major problem and in 2009 the country suspended its currency. The study was carried out in 2009 when the multiple currency system had been introduced. Salaries were low and most low income earners like house maids went to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Botswana where they believed they had better prospects of earning more while doing the same menial tasks. It was thus difficult for one to get a maid in Zimbabwe let alone afford one as they were seeking greener pastures.

The University had seven faculties, an enrolment of seven thousand full-time students and over three thousand part-time students and the staff compliment stood at 810 comprised of 462 and 348 non-teaching and teaching staff respectively. The institution had just started charging fees in United States dollars. With the introduction of the multi-currency system, organizations and individuals had a zero bank balance and had to find money from scratch to cover their expenses. This had a negative impact on the university as most parents and guardians could not afford to raise money to pay fees for their dependants thus affecting the University's financial base. The source of finance for the university is student fees, so the inability of parents to raise tuition fees made it very difficult for the university to honour obligations such as infrastructure development, wage and salary bills.

## 7. Challenges Faced by Workers in Balancing Work/Family Responsibilities and Coping Strategies Employed

### 7.1 Child Care

The majority of respondents faced the challenge of child care. They could not afford to employ maids to take care of the children during their absence. One female respondent indicated that she lived with five grandchildren aged between six and twelve years and they were all in primary school. The parents of the four grandchildren were deceased and the mother of the fifth one had gone to look for employment in South Africa. The children knocked off from school between 1200 noon and 1500 hours and would play within the compound until she knocked off from work. She worried about their safety but she could not do anything about it as she could not afford a maid.

Five female respondents indicated that they would leave their children alone and they would prepare meals for their children before going to work. The fifth indicated that her husband, who worked for the Local authority within their area of residence, would go home during his lunch hour to prepare lunch for their children who were all below five.

A female security guard, who lived about 30 kilometers out of the city, indicated that her husband, who was also a security guard would look after the children on the days he was on night duty and the children would be alone when he was on day shift. She revealed there were times when the children would spend the night alone when she did not have money for transport. She would spend the night at her sister's place in one of the residential areas within the city as the institution provided transport for employees to and from their residential places.

A male respondent revealed that he was living alone with his three children aged three, five and eight. His wife was in Botswana as a maid. He usually left the children under the care of neighbours and if they were not available the children would be left unattended. At one time the youngest child wandered off and the respondent only discovered it when he came back from work. He indicated that he worried about the safety of his children even when they were being watched over by neighbours but he could not do anything about it as he had to fend for the family and could not afford a maid. Both his parents and his wife's parents were deceased and no relatives were willing to take care of his children.

Five respondents lived with relatives that would take care of the children whilst they were at work and only four employed maids. The other respondents indicated that their children went to school so they prepared meals for the children before going to work and would lock the houses and leave keys with neighbours for the children when they came back from school. The evening meals would be prepared when they knocked off meaning that they had their meals late as they would have to use fire because of electricity loadshedding in Zimbabwe which usually occurred in the evening.

### 7.2 Time-off to Attend to Family Responsibilities

The respondents from security department and cleaning services indicated that it was generally difficult to get leave approval to attend to personal issues. They stated that the supervisors did not give them the support they required when they faced family challenges. Twelve respondents stated that they would feign illness, get a doctor's certificate which they would then use to apply for leave in order to attend to family matters. One respondent from the security department indicated that when her mother passed away she had to apply for annual leave to attend her funeral. A security officer indicated that she ended up applying for annual leave after being denied sick leave, though other respondents were not in agreement citing that they could get sick leaves if they were not well.

The majority of male respondents interviewed believed that child care was the responsibility of females and that they could only assist where possible. A senior member of the academic staff who overheard one of the interviews commented that: *'men have better things to look at like feeding the family, power and politics. Issues to do with child care are for women and if you women do not make noise about it, do not ever think that one day we will talk about it. You think I can fail to come to work because there is no maid to look after the kids, no ways.'*

### 7.3 Response from Workers' Committee Members

On their role as workers representative one workers committee member explained that some of their duties included representing workers during collective bargaining on issues of remuneration; representing staff on welfare committees, for example the housing, car and computer loan committees; representing employees in labour disputes and being the voice of the constituency. They also highlighted that during some of the meetings they discussed issues of punctuality so as to reduce backlogs that resulted in people working overtime. Management also indicated that overtime was a result of people coming to work late and had sent out a circular to all employees reminding them of working hours.

The workers committee members stated that they had received complaints from female employees particularly cleaners and security guards who indicated that they were expected to work overtime to the extent that they had very little time with their families. The cleaners stated that management had assured them that overtime was expected from employees in isolated cases. These workers had requested management to reduce the lunch period to one hour from one and a quarter hours so that they could dismiss fifteen minutes earlier at 1630 hours instead of 1645 hours. This request was approved by management.

The workers committee members also stated that workers could use vacation leave, maternity leave and compassionate leave to attend to family responsibilities. They had however noted that in some cases employees feigned illness in order to attend to family responsibilities. The reason for this was that some supervisors would deny their subordinates leave and in some cases some employees would be trying to avoid using their vacation leave days so that they could get cash in lieu of the leave days. Management indicated that there had been cases of abuse of compassionate leave hence the need to be strict when it came to the granting of leave days.

The workers committee also highlighted that employees had complained about being forced to work overtime without being paid for the time or being allowed to take time off. In some cases they would work during public holidays and weekends and this would deprive them of time with their families. However, most of the complaints were informal and the workers committee members indicated that they only dealt with documented cases of dissatisfaction to reduce chances of spite and malice. They believed that overtime arose because of the fact that salaries were low which forced people to do a lot of moonlighting thus affecting their work output. Offices were converted to mini shops where employees sold foodstuff and clothing to supplement their income.

### **8. Strategies Put in Place to Deal with Challenges of Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities**

Employees from the security department indicated that they were allowed to have other colleagues standing in for them when they had urgent family issues to attend to. At times they would work double shifts where they wanted a day off duty for any reason. They could also apply for leave like compassionate leave and ordinary leave to attend to family issues though leave would not be granted in certain circumstances like when the semester was in full swing and during graduation periods.

The workers' representatives believed that flexi-time was not possible because of the nature of work for most employees that required one's physical presence at the work station. They proposed that the institution was to establish a day care centre as it would go a long way in alleviating problems of workers with young children.

A representative from management indicated that the institution was guided by its vision of being a caring institution and was doing everything possible to ensure that the welfare of employees was taken care of. He also indicated that the institution was planning to establish a day care centre to cater for the employees' children. A committee had been put in place to identify a place for the centre and to work on the logistics surrounding the operations of the day care centre. The centre would cater for babies up to children of school going age especially those in kindergarten. The committee had noted that some employees would come to work with their children for various reasons and this brought about the need for the facility. However this issue had been on the agenda for over a year without being finalized.

The University had put in place a number of schemes related to welfare of employees namely, housing, car and computer loan schemes, funeral fund and the salary advance facility. The funeral fund covered funeral for the member and the immediate family. The latest innovation was the drug fund where staff could access drugs through the Institution's clinic, which was initially meant for students only, at subsidized rates.

Management highlighted that it was difficult for the institution to have a hardship fund as it did not have the capacity and financial autonomy. In cases of hardships the institution had a salary in advance facility and all employees could apply. The advance amount would be recovered in full at the end of the month. However they did assist employees by selling foodstuffs, for example, chickens, milk and clothing to members of staff on credit at subsidized rates.

In addition members of staff were encouraged to participate in sporting activities for relaxation and distressing. The University has assisted sportspersons with transport traveling to other universities within Zimbabwe and beyond the borders to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Botswana for sporting activities. The management representative also pointed out that the welfare incentives that the University had put in place were ineffective because of the hyper-inflationary environment. He expressed hope that the multi-currency system would inject some life into these schemes for the benefit of the employees. The harsh economic environment forced both management and workers to concentrate more on "bread and butter" issues relegating welfare issues such as child care facilities to the periphery.

In response to concerns raised by employees pertaining to overtime especially during the weekends and public holidays, he indicated that the issue was being blown out of proportion. Employees were only required to work beyond normal working hours in isolated cases, for example, during registration time, examination results processing and the case where cleaners and general hands had to work additional hours for clean-ups following the 2008 strike which had left the grounds neglected during the rainy season. He explained that there was need for people to clean up the place to ensure that core business took place in clean environment leading to a lot of overtime. He further indicated that the institution did not pay overtime; instead employees accrued leave in lieu of overtime according to the overtime policy available on the website. Normal procedures when applying for leave would also apply in such cases i.e. it was subject to approval.

He further insinuated that some people did not apply themselves fully at work and thus created artificial needs for overtime work. However, it was to be noted that in 2008 people failed to apply themselves fully to work as a result of the harsh economic environment where people came to work on empty stomachs. It was thus difficult for people to perform especially those who did manual work and that created the need for overtime when teaching resumed in 2009.

On flexible working patterns he indicated that the institution was not in a position to introduce flexi-time for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was not possible in some areas because of the nature of jobs that required the physical presence of the incumbent e.g. during registration time. There was need for the people in the Bursar's department, Admissions and Registry to deal personally with students who were coming in for registration. Secondly, he believed flexi-time was meant for job sharing and part-time workers who are paid on an hourly basis as is the case in the United Kingdom and other advanced states. Thirdly, the institution was not advanced technologically to the extent of introducing virtual offices and also serving its stakeholders on line.

## **9. Discussion**

Female respondents were more willing to participate than males and volunteered more information than males. One male did not respond to some questions stating that these were issues for women. This is in line with the view of Henskin cited in Huber (1990) who indicated that women were limited to child care for a considerable part of their lives because they gave birth, nursed babies and took care of the family while men did most of the work away from home making their activities more prestigious than women's activities. This way of socialization is still affecting the way men view family responsibilities. They still believe it is the duty of women to take care of the family, and they are not worried about issues related to care of children whilst they are at work.

### *9.1 The Economic and Social Background*

The introduction of the US dollar to Zimbabwe made it difficult for organizations to finance their business operations. This made it difficult to pay salaries and thus affect the activities of employees. As a result employees concentrated mainly on bread and butter issues as shown by the respondent. This is in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs where people are more concerned with satisfying their lower level needs than higher level needs and hence relegate welfare issues to the periphery. Employees, particularly those in lower grades, were concerned with a roof over their heads, food on the table and believed that once their salaries were reviewed upwards, all their problems would be solved. They were not aware of the concept of a total reward package where both the pecuniary and non-pecuniary aspects of employment matter. Their idea of a perfect workplace was one which paid more in nominal wages though it was not much in terms of real value. This is in line with what Gwisai (2007) said was obtaining in Zimbabwe during the colonial times, where employees were worried about securing their jobs and would go an extra mile to retain their jobs. This made life easier for employers who did not have to worry about issue of workers balancing work and family responsibilities.

## **10. Challenges Faced in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities and Coping Strategies Employed**

The challenge that most employees faced was that of child care as shown by the responses from the majority of respondents employees in the security and cleaning services departments. The ILO Convention 156 states that family responsibilities may force people out of employment and in this case it is the children who are suffering as their parents have chosen to leave them unattended as they participate in productive work. This however will have a negative impact on productivity and morale (Armstrong :2006) and the introducing of child care facilities would help mediate the challenges (Schaefer :2006) as the family is not there to help nurture and take care of the children though the community was helping out whenever possible (Baylin et. al :nd)

Two thirds of the respondents stated that they had at one time used sick leave to attend to their family needs. Evidence shows that indeed organizations behave as if workers do not have family responsibilities and thus the culture does not consider the need to strike a balance between work and family life. (Baylin et. al. nd) It was, thus,

imperative for the organization to pay attention to the issue of the integration of work and family life and ensure that supervisors understand that failure to balance work and family life will lead to a disengaged workforce. (Armstrong, 2006).

Providing a child care centre would reduce the problem as the workers would have somebody taking care of their children whilst they were at work. It was indeed encouraging to note that the University was considering coming up with such a facility to help integrate work and family life (Baylin et.al. nd) despite the distressed economic environment, yet in developed nations such facilities are run by the State. (Shaeffer : 2006) This is a good move on the employer as addressing welfare issues of employees ensures that the employer derives tangible and intangible benefits from the workforce as it would reduce absenteeism and tardiness (Anderberg and Froschle : 2006) and increase productivity and quality of work, increase commitment and morale resulting in an engaged workforce. (Armstrong : 2006). The community was also assisting as neighbours would attend to children when the parents were at work, though half-heartedly therefore supporting Baylin et. al.'s view that all stakeholders should work together to deal with the integration of work and family responsibilities.

### **11. Strategies Put in Place to Deal with Challenges Faced in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities**

Management highlighted that workers were mainly concerned with bread and butter issues. In response to that the institution had introduced financial schemes like salary advances, housing and car loans and the drug facility which had been mentioned by employees. In addition, the produce from the agriculture department like, poultry, beef, vegetables and milk among others, were sold to employees on credit at subsidized rates. Management also indicated that there was no way they could introduce flexi time especially for non-teaching staff because of the nature of their work which demanded their presence during working hours. The organization was in the process of coming up with a child care facility so that children would be catered for when their parents were at work. The minutes of the social responsibility committee also confirmed this. This confirms the notion put forward by Baylin et.al. (nd) that employers have to play a leading role in helping workers integrate work and family life as failure to do so leads to underutilization of talent. This also shows that the ILO Convention 156 and its provisions are applicable to Zimbabwe as the institution was in the process considering the establishment of a child care centre.

A number of schemes had been put in place like, housing and car loan schemes, salary in advance, the drug facility and buying food stuff on credit from the agriculture department. The drug facility is a first as it is a benefit which is not normally included in employee benefit schemes even in developed countries. This show how considerate the employer was about the well-being of its workforce and this will contribute to the commitment of employees. (Armstrong, 2006)

It was also encouraging to note that some males were actually participating in taking care of the children as demonstrated by the case of a husband who would return home during lunch to prepare meals for the children. The other one was living with the children and taking care of them while the wife had gone to look for employment outside the country which is a shift from Huber's view cited in Henskin (1990), that men were not active in the reproductive sphere.

Management and workers' representatives indicated that it was not possible to introduce flexi-time. From the information gathered from the employees' it was evident that there were some elements of flexi-time being practiced in the organization. Workers could work double shifts, or could ask someone to stand in for them and this is an element of flexible work arrangement. (IRIS in Armstrong : 2006)

### **12. Conclusion**

Despite the harsh economic climate, it is commendable to note that the institution was committed to its vision of being a caring University as evidenced by efforts to establish a child care centre. There was a lot of unnecessary overtime because of employees who were not fully engaged in their work. This must be reduced through proper supervision. Whilst this piece of work was targeted at members of the non-teaching staff, a comparative study of both teaching and non-teaching staff would be appropriate to establish the challenges being faced by the teaching staff as a result of family responsibilities. It was also encouraging to note that some males were also taking part in family responsibilities as evidenced by some who would go home to cook food for the children during lunch. However, the human resource function was not giving enough support to employees by failing to educate line managers on the importance of ensuring that employees were given time to attend to family matters by not making it difficult to access leave.

The organization did not formerly have flexi time but practically it was there as employees could make arrangements to cover for each other when they had pressing issues to attend to. Supervisors were however making

it difficult for employees to take leave hence at times workers resorted to using sick leave and there was need to address that.

### 13. Recommendations

There is need to speed up the process since this project has been in the pipeline for a long time. In addition workers' representatives need to also pay attention to the issue of integrating work and family responsibilities. The organization is taking time on the establishment of a child care centre because there is no push from workers themselves. They are paying more attention to extrinsic motivators i.e. salaries and are not worried about balancing between work and family responsibilities.

Paying attention to engagement and the psychological contract is also important as the organisation is losing out on productive time because employees are not committed to their work. There is also need to educate supervisors on the importance of helping employees balance work and family responsibilities so that the organization can benefit through commitment, engagement, reduced absenteeism and reduced tardiness.

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