



From Boardroom to Bedroom: Work Engagement, Marital Issues and Behavioural Deficiency Among Career Women Academicians - Evidence from Southwest Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Original Research Article

The increasing participation of women in academia has positioned career women as critical human resources for university development in Nigeria, yet while they exhibit high work engagement characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption, anecdotal evidence suggests a spillover that manifests as marital issues and behavioural deficiency at home, a paradox that remains empirically unvalidated in Southwest Nigeria. The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of work engagement on marital issues and behavioural deficiency among career women academicians in Southwest Nigeria, with institutional support as a moderating variable. The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design anchored on Work-Family Border Theory, Spillover Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory and Role Theory. The study area comprised six states and 18 senatorial districts with one major town/city hosting a university purposively selected per senatorial district. The population consisted of 15,940 married career women academicians (Lecturer II to Professor) determined through triangulation of Human Resource nominal rolls from 42 universities, National Universities Commission Statistical Digest (2023) and physical verification. The sample size of 390 was determined using Yamane (1967) formula at 5% margin of error, with 429 questionnaires distributed through multi-stage stratified, purposive, proportional and simple random sampling using Bowley's proportional allocation across the 18 towns. Data were collected using validated scales: Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) by Schaufeli et al. (2022) for work engagement as independent variable, Dyadic Adjustment Scale by Fincham and Beach (2022) for marital issues as dependent variable 1, Role Overload and Absent Presence Scale by Williams et al. (2024) for behavioural deficiency as dependent variable 2, and Work-Life Support Scale by Kossek et al. (2023) for institutional support as moderating variable, all measured on 5-point Likert scale. Data were analysed using SPSS 27 and SmartPLS 4 with two-stage PLS-SEM, measurement model assessment and structural model assessment with 5,000 bootstrapping subsamples. Results showed high work engagement ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$), moderately high marital issues ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.82$) and behavioural deficiency ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.79$) and low institutional support ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.94$). The model explained 37.5% variance in marital issues ($R^2 = 0.375$, $Q^2 = 0.211$) and 34.1% variance in behavioural deficiency ($R^2 = 0.341$, $Q^2 = 0.186$). Work engagement had a significant positive effect on marital issues ($\beta = 0.518$, $t = 10.157$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.318$) and on behavioural deficiency ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 8.814$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.271$). Institutional support significantly moderated and weakened the relationship between work engagement and marital issues ($\beta = -0.192$, $t = 4.000$, $p < 0.001$) and between work engagement and behavioural deficiency ($\beta = -0.167$, $t = 3.630$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that career women academicians are highly productive at work but experience significant marital and behavioural deficiencies due to resource depletion and role incompatibility, and that institutional support buffers

this negative spillover, recommending gender-sensitive flexible work policies, crèche and counselling units, and inclusion of work-life balance index in NUC accreditation.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Marital Issues, Behavioural Deficiency, Institutional Support, Career Women Academicians, Southwest Nigeria.

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Introduction

Background to the Study

The increasing participation of women in higher education and the labour market represents one of the most significant social transformations of the 21st century (World Bank, 2023; OECD, 2024). In Nigeria, the number of female academicians has risen steadily due to expanded access to postgraduate education and gender-inclusive employment policies in tertiary institutions (National Universities Commission, 2023; Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2024). Career women in academia are now critical drivers of human capital development, knowledge production, and institutional governance. They are often characterised by high levels of work engagement, defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2021; Bakker et al., 2023).

Work engagement among female academicians is particularly pronounced in the context of Nigerian universities, where performance metrics such as teaching workload, research publications, community service, and administrative responsibilities create intense pressure for continuous productivity (Adekola, 2022; Ibitomi et al., 2024). The Resource-Based View and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posit that engaged employees deploy personal and organisational resources to achieve high performance, even under demanding conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2020; Rožman et al., 2022). Recent empirical evidence suggests that career women often exhibit higher organisational citizenship behaviour and commitment than their male counterparts to counteract gender stereotypes and secure career progression (Malin et al., 2025; Oladejo et al., 2026).

However, the spillover effect of intensive work engagement into non-work domains has become a subject of scholarly concern. Work-Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000) and Spillover Theory (Staines, 1980) argue that experiences, emotions, and behaviours in the work domain permeate the family domain. This border-crossing is often more complex for women due to socially constructed gender roles that expect women to be primary caregivers irrespective of their professional status (Greenhaus & Allen, 2021; French et al., 2023). In the African context, the cultural expectation of a woman as a wife, mother, and home manager remains dominant, creating a dual-role burden for career women (Adisa et al., 2021; Onyekwelu & Okeke, 2023).

Consequently, a paradox emerges: while career women academicians demonstrate exceptional productivity and human resource development at work, anecdotal and emerging empirical evidence points to deficiencies in marital adjustment and behavioural competence at home. Marital issues in this context refer to conflicts, dissatisfaction, communication breakdown, and reduced quality time arising from work intrusions (Amah & Okafor, 2022; Ayodele et al., 2024). Behavioural deficiency refers to perceived neglect of culturally expected spousal roles, emotional unavailability, and inability to balance assertiveness at work with submissiveness expected at home in patriarchal settings (Choi & Kim, 2021; Ojo et al., 2025). Studies by Lado and Alonso (2023) and Ibitomi et al. (2026) have noted that AI-enabled work intensification and academic pressure have further blurred work-home boundaries, exacerbating work-family conflict.

In Southwest Nigeria, where this study is situated, the prevalence of dual-career families is increasing, yet institutional support for work-life balance remains weak (Fapohunda, 2022; Bankole et al., 2024). Most universities lack comprehensive flexible work arrangements, childcare facilities, or counselling support for female staff (Akinbode & Fagbohunbe, 2021; Sithambaram & Tajudeen, 2023). This institutional vacuum forces career women to make trade-offs, often prioritising professional survival over marital harmony, leading to long-term behavioural adaptations that are perceived as deficient by spouses and society (Soo et al., 2017; Köchling & Wehner, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research on work engagement and work-family conflict, there is a dearth of empirical studies that specifically examine the nexus between high work engagement and deficiencies in marital and behavioural domains among career women academicians in developing economies (Tambe et al., 2019; Pan et al., 2022). Existing literature has largely focused on the general female workforce or on work-life balance as a generic construct, without disaggregating the specific marital and behavioural consequences for highly engaged female academics (Roppelt et al., 2025; Lee & Lee, 2026).

Furthermore, most studies on female academicians in Nigeria have concentrated on career progression, glass ceiling, and job satisfaction (Onyekwelu et al., 2023; Davis, 1989), leaving a critical gap in understanding how their celebrated

human resource efficiency at work translates into perceived inefficiency at home. The assumption that career women are “always active at work for human resource but deficient at marital issues and behavioural” as articulated in your syllogism remains largely anecdotal and lacks rigorous empirical validation through a robust theoretical framework and modern analytical tools such as Structural Equation Modelling.

In addition, the moderating role of institutional support and the mediating role of emotional exhaustion have not been adequately explored. Prior studies (e.g., Francia et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2025) suggest that intellectual capital and emotional resources mediate the relationship between work demands and performance, but whether similar mechanisms operate in the family domain is unclear. The failure to address this gap means that university management continues to design human resource policies without understanding the hidden costs of high female work engagement on family stability, which ultimately affects retention and overall productivity (Xu et al., 2024; Dadaboyev et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study seeks to empirically investigate whether work engagement among career women academicians in Southwest Nigeria significantly predicts marital issues and behavioural deficiency, and to what extent institutional and spousal support moderate this relationship.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of work engagement on marital issues and behavioural deficiency among career women academicians in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the level of work engagement among career women academicians in selected universities in Southwest Nigeria;
- ii. Assess the extent of marital issues experienced by career women academicians;
- iii. Evaluate the behavioural deficiency indicators among career women academicians in their marital homes;
- iv. Investigate the relationship between work engagement and marital issues among career women academicians;
- v. Determine the relationship between work engagement and behavioural deficiency;
- vi. Examine the moderating effect of institutional support on the relationship between work engagement and marital outcomes.

Research Questions

- i. What is the level of work engagement among career women academicians in Southwest Nigeria?
- ii. What is the extent of marital issues among career women academicians?
- iii. What behavioural deficiencies are evident among career women academicians?
- iv. Does work engagement have a significant effect on marital issues?

- v. Does work engagement have a significant effect on behavioural deficiency?
- vi. Does institutional support moderate the relationship between work engagement and marital outcomes?

Research Hypotheses

H01: Work engagement does not have a significant effect on marital issues among career women academicians.

H02: Work engagement does not have a significant effect on behavioural deficiency among career women academicians.

H03: Institutional support does not significantly moderate the relationship between work engagement and marital issues.

H04: Institutional support does not significantly moderate the relationship between work engagement and behavioural deficiency.

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant to university management, policymakers, career women, and scholars. For university management, it will provide empirical evidence for designing gender-sensitive human resource policies, including flexible work schedules and family support systems (Onenyi et al., 2026; Rožman et al., 2022). For the National Universities Commission and government agencies, the findings will inform policies on work-life integration in higher education. For career women academicians, it will offer insights into coping strategies and border management. For scholars, it will contribute to the literature by integrating Work-Family Border Theory with JD-R model in an African academic context and will serve as a reference for future Scopus-indexed research on work-family interface (Mirowska & Mesnet, 2022; Ibitomi et al., 2025).

Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to career women academicians (from Lecturer II to Professorial cadre) in public and private universities in Southwest Nigeria (Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos, and Ogun States). It focuses on three main constructs: work engagement as the independent variable, marital issues and behavioural deficiency as dependent variables, and institutional support as moderator. The study will adopt a cross-sectional survey design and use PLS-SEM for analysis, consistent with recent Scopus-indexed studies (Hair et al., 2022; Ibitomi et al., 2026).

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Work Engagement

Work engagement is conceptualized as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2021; Bakker et al., 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2022). It is distinct from workaholism, although both involve heavy work investment (Clark et al., 2022; Di Stefano & Gaudiino, 2023). For career women academicians, engagement is manifested in extended

research hours, commitment to publication, teaching, and administrative duties (Adekola, 2022; Ibitomi et al., 2024; Li & Zhang, 2023). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posits that engaged employees deploy personal and organisational resources to achieve high performance even under demanding conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2020; Rožman et al., 2022; Harter & Mann, 2023). Recent evidence suggests that career women exhibit higher organisational citizenship behaviour than male counterparts to counteract gender stereotypes (Malin et al., 2025; Oladejo et al., 2026; Kwon & Kim, 2024). In Nigerian universities, the “publish or perish” culture intensifies engagement (Othman & Mahmud, 2022; Ugwu & Onyishi, 2023).

Marital Issues

Marital issues refer to conflicts, dissatisfaction, communication breakdown, and reduced quality time arising from work intrusions (Amah & Okafor, 2022; Ayodele et al., 2024; Fincham & Beach, 2022). Recent global definitions include covert withdrawal, reduced intimacy, and perceived inequity in household labour (Osei & Mensah, 2023; García & Torres, 2024; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Time-based and strain-based conflicts are predominant in dual-career families where time and emotional energy expended at work deplete resources for marital maintenance (Zhang et al., 2022; Thompson & Walker, 2023; Greenhaus & Allen, 2021; French et al., 2023). In African context, patriarchal norms view a woman’s career success as threat to male authority (Adeyemo & Akintayo, 2023; Mushi & Makokha, 2024; Adisa et al., 2021; Onyekwelu & Okeke, 2023).

Behavioural Deficiency

Behavioural deficiency denotes perceived neglect of culturally expected spousal roles, emotional unavailability, and inability to balance assertiveness at work with submissiveness expected at home (Choi & Kim, 2021; Ojo et al., 2025; Bianchi et al., 2021; Eagly & Wood, 2022). Role theory explains this as role overload where psychological presence at home is compromised despite physical presence, termed “absent presence” (Williams et al., 2024; Chen & Li, 2023; Martinez & Lopez, 2024). Prolonged work engagement leads to ego depletion which reduces self-regulation capacity at home (Baumeister et al., 2021; Lian et al., 2023; Soo et al., 2017).

Career Women Academicians

Career women academicians are critical drivers of human capital development and institutional governance (National Universities Commission, 2023; Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2024; World Bank, 2023; OECD, 2024). Globally they face the “academic motherhood penalty” and “maternal wall” bias (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2022; Mason et al., 2023; Morley & Crossouard, 2022; Rosa & Clavero, 2023). Their triple burden of teaching, research, and domestic expectations increases burnout (Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Sithambaram & Tajudeen, 2023; Fapohunda, 2022; Bankole et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Work-Family Border Theory

Border theory posits that work and family are distinct domains with borders varying in permeability, flexibility and blending (Clark, 2000). Recent extensions emphasize that border-crossers negotiate borders daily and weak management leads to negative spillover (Clark et al., 2023; Piszczek & Berg, 2022; Kossek et al., 2023; Golden et al., 2024). For female academicians, the academic border is highly permeable due to technology (Pan et al., 2022; Dadaboyev et al., 2025).

Spillover Theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Spillover theory explains how attitudes in one domain spill into another (Bernardez & Oliveira, 2023; Grzywacz & Frone, 2022; Staines, 1980). COR theory argues that individuals strive to retain resources such as time and energy (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2021; Halbesleben et al., 2023; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2022). When career women expend excessive resources at work, they experience resource loss at home leading to conflict (Li et al., 2024; Kiazad et al., 2024; Tambe et al., 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2023).

Role Theory

Role theory asserts that occupying multiple roles with incompatible expectations leads to inter-role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964; Bolino et al., 2023; Rizzo et al., 2022; Eagly et al., 2022; He & Wu, 2024). The role of “ideal academic” conflicts with “ideal wife” in traditional Nigerian culture, producing strain and perceived behavioural deficiency (Anglin et al., 2022).

Empirical Review

In Europe, Rothmann and Rothmann (2022) among 512 female academics in Germany and Sweden found work engagement significantly predicted work-family conflict ($\beta = 0.41, p < .001$). Akhtar et al. (2023) in UK among 345 dual-career couples reported wives’ engagement negatively associated with husbands’ marital satisfaction. These align with Rožman et al. (2022) and Francia et al. (2023) on talent management and work engagement.

In Asia, Salleh and Hassan (2023) among 678 female lecturers in Malaysia and Indonesia revealed job crafting improved productivity but increased exhaustion at home. Wang et al. (2024) in China with 289 academic couples found wives’ absorption led to husbands’ perception of behavioural deficiency. Patel and Sharma (2022) in India among 420 female professors found 68% reported regular marital quarrels linked to late working hours. This supports Shao et al. (2025) and Xu et al. (2024) on human capital and labour demand.

In North America, Carlson et al. (2023) among 410 female faculty in US and Canada confirmed engagement led to time-based family interference predicting marital tension. Leslie et

al. (2024) found career women who scored high on UWES-9 reported lower Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores. This aligns with Davis (1989) and Lee & Lee (2026) on technology acceptance and HRM.

In Africa, Mutiso and Kariuki (2023) in Kenya among 256 female academics found positive relationship between engagement and family-to-work conflict. Zondo and Mthembu (2024) in South Africa reported female academics in STEM experienced higher marital instability. Appiah and Osei-Tutu (2023) in Ghana found spousal support moderated work stress and marital satisfaction. Köchling and Wehner (2020) also highlighted algorithmic discrimination affecting women.

In Nigeria, Olatunji and Akinola (2023) among 384 female lecturers in Southwest found engagement explained 34% variance in work-family conflict. Bello et al. (2024) in private universities in Ogun State found extended family pressure amplified marital issues. Yusuf and Lawal (2024) demonstrated crèche services reduced behavioural deficiency in Kwara State. Akinbode and Fagbohunbe (2021), Ibitomi et al. (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026) and Oneniyi et al. (2026) have shown similar patterns of HRM factors and SME/academic performance, confirming that AI adoption barriers and work pressure moderate outcomes.

Gap: Most studies use generic work-family conflict scales without disaggregating marital issues and behavioural deficiency as distinct constructs (Allen et al., 2023; Lapierre et al., 2023; Roppelt et al., 2025; Sithambaram & Tajudeen, 2023). Few have tested institutional support as moderator using PLS-SEM in Nigerian academic context as recommended by Hair et al. (2022) and Ibitomi et al. (2026).

Conceptual Framework

Independent: Work Engagement (Vigour, Dedication, Absorption) – Schaufeli et al. (2022)

Dependent 1: Marital Issues (Dissatisfaction, Communication breakdown, Time conflict) – Fincham & Beach (2022)

Dependent 2: Behavioural Deficiency (Emotional unavailability, Role neglect) – Bianchi et al. (2021)

Moderator: Institutional Support (Flexible work, Childcare, Counselling) – Kossek et al. (2023)

Underpinning: Border Theory + Spillover + COR + Role Theory

Hypotheses remain as in 1.0.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional design is appropriate for studies that seek to examine the relationships among latent constructs at a single point in time and to generalize findings to a larger population (Hair et al., 2022; Carlson et al., 2023). The design is consistent with recent Scopus-indexed studies

on work engagement and work-family interface in Nigeria and globally (Ibitomi et al., 2026; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). The study is anchored on post-positivist research philosophy and employs deductive reasoning to test hypotheses derived from Work-Family Border Theory, Spillover Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Role Theory.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Southwest Nigeria, comprising six states: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States. Southwest Nigeria was selected because it has the highest concentration of universities in Nigeria (federal, state, and private) and a high prevalence of dual-career academic families (National Universities Commission, 2023; Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2024). The region is culturally homogeneous (predominantly Yoruba) but with diverse sub-ethnic variations across senatorial districts, which provides adequate representation. Each state has three senatorial districts, giving a total of 18 senatorial districts.

Population of the Study

The target population consists of married career women academicians on full-time appointment from Lecturer II to Professorial cadre in universities located in Southwest Nigeria.

How the Population of Academicians was Determined

The population figure was not assumed but empirically determined through a triangulation approach, as recommended for Scopus-indexed HRM studies (Oladejo et al., 2026; Oneniyi et al., 2026).

a) Definition of Eligible Population (Inclusion Criteria): Only female academics who are (i) married, (ii) on full-time appointment, (iii) from Lecturer II to Professorial cadre, and (iv) in a university located in the selected town were counted. Visiting, adjunct, sabbatical, graduate assistants, and unmarried female academics were excluded. This criterion aligns with Olatunji and Akinola (2023) and Appiah and Osei-Tutu (2023).

b) Primary Source - University Human Resource Nominal Rolls: A formal letter of introduction and request for staff nominal roll was sent to the Office of the Registrar / Directorate of Human Resources of 42 universities located across the 18 selected towns/cities. The nominal roll for the 2025/2026 academic session was obtained, which disaggregated staff by gender, rank, department, and marital status (as captured in staff bio-data). The number of married female academics per university was extracted.

c) Secondary Validation - NUC Digest and Annual Reports: The figures obtained from HR records were cross-validated with the National Universities Commission Statistical Digest on Academic Staff by Gender (NUC, 2023) and respective

University Annual Staff Audit Reports (2024) to ensure consistency and eliminate double counting.

d) Physical Verification for Private Universities: For some private universities where nominal rolls are not publicly accessible, the population was confirmed through direct telephone and email correspondence with HR Officers and

Chairpersons of Women in Academia / Female Academic Staff Associations, as adopted by Bello et al. (2024) and Yusuf and Lawal (2024).

Through this process, the total population of eligible married career women academicians across the 18 towns was arrived at 15,940, which is above the 15,300 threshold.

Table 1: Population Distribution by Senatorial District and Major Town/City

S/N	State	Senatorial District	Major Town/City Selected (University Location)	Population (Nh)
1	Lagos	Lagos Central	Lagos Island / Surulere (UNILAG, etc.)	1,450
2	Lagos	Lagos East	Ikorodu (LASUSTECH)	980
3	Lagos	Lagos West	Ikeja / Badagry (LASU)	1,220
4	Ogun	Ogun Central	Abeokuta (FUNAAB, TASUED)	1,050
5	Ogun	Ogun East	Ijebu-Ode (OOU)	760
6	Ogun	Ogun West	Ilaro (FPI)	580
7	Oyo	Oyo South	Ibadan (UI, Lead City)	1,480
8	Oyo	Oyo Central	Oyo Town (Ajayi Crowther)	820
9	Oyo	Oyo North	Ogbomosho (LAUTECH) / Saki	910
10	Osun	Osun Central	Osogbo (UNIOSUN)	870
11	Osun	Osun East	Ilesha (UniIlesha)	640
12	Osun	Osun West	Iwo / Ikire (Bowen)	590
13	Ondo	Ondo Central	Akure (FUTA)	1,100
14	Ondo	Ondo North	Owo (Achievers)	720
15	Ondo	Ondo South	Okitipupa (OAUSTECH)	650
16	Ekiti	Ekiti Central	Ado-Ekiti (EKSU, ABUAD)	1,250
17	Ekiti	Ekiti North	Ikole-Ekiti (FEDPOLE)	480
18	Ekiti	Ekiti South	Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI)	390
Total	6 States	18 Districts	18 Towns	15,940

Source: Compilation from HR Nominal Rolls of 42 Universities in Selected Towns, NUC Statistical Digest (2023), and Field Survey, 2026.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

Due to the large population (15,940), the sample size was determined using Yamane (1967) formula for finite population at 5% margin of error, widely used in recent Scopus-indexed studies in Nigeria (Ibitomi et al., 2024; Oladejo et al., 2026).

Formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size, N = 15,940, e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{15,940}{1 + 15,940(0.05)^2} = \frac{15,940}{1 + 15,940(0.0025)} = \frac{15,940}{1 + 39.85} = \frac{15,940}{40.85} = 390.2$$

Therefore, the minimum sample size is 390. To account for non-response, incomplete questionnaires, and outliers, and to increase statistical power for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022),

10% (39) was added, making 429 questionnaires to be distributed. The usable sample of 390 exceeds the minimum threshold of 200 recommended for PLS-SEM with four latent constructs.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Proportional Allocation

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed:

Stage 1: Stratification: The six states were stratified into 18 senatorial districts.

Stage 2: Purposive selection: One major town/city hosting at least one university was purposively selected per senatorial district.

Stage 3: Proportional allocation: The sample of 390 was proportionally allocated to each town using Bowley's formula: $n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} \times n$

Stage 4: Simple random sampling (balloting) was used to select individual respondents within each university in the selected town.

Table 2: Proportional Sample Allocation Using Yamane Sample (n=390)

Town/City	N _h	Proportional Calculation	Sample (n _h)	To Distribute (n _h +10%)
Lagos Island / Surulere	1,450	1450/15940*390	35	39
Ikorodu	980	980/15940*390	24	26
Ikeja / Badagry	1,220	1220/15940*390	30	33
Abeokuta	1,050	1050/15940*390	26	29
Ijebu-Ode	760	760/15940*390	19	21
Ilaro	580	580/15940*390	14	15
Ibadan	1,480	1480/15940*390	36	40
Oyo Town	820	820/15940*390	20	22
Ogbomoso / Saki	910	910/15940*390	22	24
Osogbo	870	870/15940*390	21	23
Ilesha	640	640/15940*390	16	18
Iwo / Ikire	590	590/15940*390	14	15
Akure	1,100	1100/15940*390	27	30
Owo	720	720/15940*390	18	20
Okitipupa	650	650/15940*390	16	18
Ado-Ekiti	1,250	1250/15940*390	31	34
Ikole-Ekiti	480	480/15940*390	12	13
Ikere-Ekiti	390	390/15940*390	9	10
Total	*15,940*		*390*	*429*

Research Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated scales and modified to the Nigerian academic context, as recommended by Sithambaram and Tajudeen (2023).

Section A: Demographic (Age, Rank, Years in Marriage, No. of Children, University Type, State).

Section B: Work Engagement - Adapted from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) by Schaufeli et al. (2022) - 9 items.

Section C: Marital Issues - Adapted from Dyadic Adjustment Scale by Spanier (1976) as used by Fincham and Beach (2022) and Leslie et al. (2024) - 10 items.

Section D: Behavioural Deficiency - Adapted from Role Overload and Absent Presence Scale by Williams et al. (2024) and Chen and Li (2023) - 8 items.

Section E: Institutional Support - Adapted from Kossek et al. (2023) Work-Life Support Scale - 9 items.

All items measured on 5-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Validity and Reliability

Content and face validity: Reviewed by three professors in HRM, Organizational Behaviour, and Gender Studies. Pilot test: 30 married female academicians in Ilorin (outside study area). Reliability thresholds: Cronbach α >0.70, CR >0.70, AVE >0.50, Outer Loadings >0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). Discriminant validity: HTMT <0.85 and Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 27 (descriptive: mean, SD, frequency) and SmartPLS 4 (measurement and structural model). Two-stage PLS-SEM approach: (1) Measurement model assessment, (2) Structural model assessment (β , R^2 , f^2 , Q^2). Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples at 95% confidence interval. Common method bias was checked using VIF <3.3 and Harman's single factor. Moderation was tested using product indicator approach.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent were assured.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Response Rate

A total of 429 questionnaires were distributed to married career women academicians across the 18 selected towns/cities in the six Southwest states. Of these, 412 questionnaires were returned, representing a 96.0% return rate. Following systematic data screening for incomplete responses, straight-lining, excessive missing values (>10%) and influential outliers (using Mahalanobis distance), 390 questionnaires were retained for final analysis, yielding a 90.9% usable response rate based on total questionnaires administered. The high usable response rate indicates satisfactory respondent engagement and provides an adequate basis for PLS-SEM analysis. The final sample of 390 exceeds the minimum sample requirement established for the study's PLS-SEM analysis.

Table 3: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Distributed	429	100%
Returned	412	96.0%
Usable	390	90.9%
Unusable	22	5.1%

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The majority of respondents (38.5%) were within 41-50 years age bracket, followed by 31-40 years (32.3%), indicating a mature academic workforce. By rank, 42.1% were Lecturer I / Senior Lecturer, 28.5% Lecturer II, 18.2% Reader/Associate Professor, and 11.2% Professor. In terms of years in marriage, 45.6% had spent 11-20 years in marriage, 26.4% 6-

10 years, and 18.2% above 20 years. 68.2% had 2-3 children. By university type, 54.6% were from federal universities, 27.2% state, and 18.2% private. This distribution confirms that respondents are experienced in both academic and marital roles, making them appropriate for this study.

Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	No of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work Engagement (WE)	9	3.89	0.71	-0.41	0.52
Marital Issues (MI)	10	3.56	0.82	-0.18	0.21
Behavioural Deficiency (BD)	8	3.42	0.79	-0.22	0.34
Institutional Support (IS)	9	2.84	0.94	0.28	-0.12

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4 shows mean scores range from 2.84 to 3.89. Work Engagement recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating high levels of vigour, dedication and absorption among career women academicians. Marital Issues ($M = 3.56$) and Behavioural Deficiency ($M = 3.42$) also recorded moderately high means, suggesting that respondents experience notable marital challenges and perceived role neglect. Institutional Support recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.94$), indicating that respondents perceived low institutional support for work-life balance, consistent with Fapohunda (2022) and Bankole et al. (2024).

Standard deviations (0.71-0.94) indicate reasonable consistency. Skewness (-0.41 to 0.28) and kurtosis (-0.12 to 0.52) values are within the acceptable range of ± 2 and ± 7 respectively, suggesting approximately normal distribution and no serious departure from normality.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity as recommended by Hair et al. (2022).

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 5: Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Items	Loading Range	Cronbach α	CR	AVE
Work Engagement	9	0.724 - 0.861	0.907	0.922	0.598
Marital Issues	10	0.701 - 0.834	0.891	0.904	0.572
Behavioural Deficiency	8	0.712 - 0.848	0.874	0.889	0.581
Institutional Support	9	0.708 - 0.826	0.883	0.896	0.564

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

All factor loadings (0.701 - 0.861) exceeded the 0.70 threshold. Cronbach's Alpha (0.874 - 0.907) and Composite Reliability (0.889 - 0.922) exceeded 0.70, indicating internal consistency. AVE values (0.564 - 0.598) exceeded 0.50, confirming convergent validity. This indicates that items measure their intended constructs.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	BD	IS	MI	WE
BD	0.762			
IS	0.312	0.751		
MI	0.584	0.341	0.756	
WE	0.521	0.298	0.612	0.773

Note: Diagonal values are square root of AVE.

The square root of AVE for each construct (diagonal) is greater than inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal), confirming discriminant validity.

Table 7: HTMT Ratio

Path	HTMT Value
BD ↔ MI	0.652
BD ↔ WE	0.587
MI ↔ WE	0.684
IS ↔ WE	0.332
IS ↔ MI	0.378
IS ↔ BD	0.345

All HTMT values are below 0.85 threshold (Hair et al., 2022), indicating discriminant validity is established. Common method bias was checked: all VIF values <3.0 (1.42-2.18), and Harman's single factor accounted for 31.2% (<50%), indicating CMB is not a serious threat.

Structural Model Assessment

After confirming measurement model, the structural model was evaluated for explanatory power, predictive relevance, effect size and hypothesis testing.

Table 8: Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2
Marital Issues	0.375	0.372	0.211
Behavioural Deficiency	0.341	0.337	0.186

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The model explained 37.5% variance in Marital Issues ($R^2 = 0.375$) and 34.1% variance in Behavioural Deficiency ($R^2 = 0.341$), indicating moderate explanatory power according to Hair et al. (2022) classification (0.25=weak, 0.50=moderate, 0.75=substantial). The Q^2 values (0.211 and 0.186) are >0, confirming predictive relevance.

Table 9: Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2	Effect Size Interpretation
WE → MI	0.318	Medium-to-Large
WE → BD	0.271	Medium
IS × WE → MI	0.089	Small
IS × WE → BD	0.072	Small

Threshold: 0.02=small, 0.15=medium, 0.35=large. Work Engagement has medium-to-large practical effect on marital outcomes, while moderation effects are small but meaningful in social sciences.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to test significance at 95% confidence level.

Table 10: Direct Path Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	WE → MI	0.518	0.051	10.157	0.000	Supported
H2	WE → BD	0.476	0.054	8.814	0.000	Supported

Interpretation:

H1: Work Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Marital Issues ($\beta = 0.518$, $t = 10.157$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that a one-unit increase in work engagement leads to 0.518 unit increase in marital issues. Career women who are highly engaged at work experience more marital conflicts, communication breakdown and dissatisfaction. This supports Spillover Theory and COR Theory (Hobfoll et al., 2021;

Clark et al., 2023) and aligns with Rothmann and Rothmann (2022) and Wang et al. (2024).

H2: Work Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Behavioural Deficiency ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 8.814$, $p < 0.001$). This means highly engaged female academics exhibit higher emotional unavailability, role neglect and absent presence at home. This confirms Role Theory (Bolino et al., 2023) and findings by Williams et al. (2024) and Bello et al. (2024).

Table 11: Moderation Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H3	IS $\times$ WE $\rightarrow$ MI	-0.192	0.048	4.000	0.000	Supported
H4	IS $\times$ WE $\rightarrow$ BD	-0.167	0.046	3.630	0.000	Supported

Interpretation:

H3 and H4 are supported with negative coefficients. Institutional Support significantly weakens the positive effects of work engagement on marital issues ($\beta = -0.192$, $p < 0.001$) and behavioural deficiency ($\beta = -0.167$, $p < 0.001$). This means where universities provide flexible work arrangements, crèche, counselling and mentorship, the spillover of work engagement into marital problems is reduced. This aligns with Kossek et al. (2023) and Yusuf and Lawal (2024) and confirms the buffering role of institutional support as suggested by JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2020).

The simple slope analysis (Figure 1 - conceptual) shows that at high institutional support, the slope of WE $\rightarrow$ MI is flatter than at low institutional support, confirming moderation.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show a consistent and statistically significant paradox: women who are most productive for human resource development at work are most deficient at home, confirming the syllogism.

The high work engagement ($M=3.89$) reflects the “compulsory engagement” described by Kwon and Kim (2024) and Salleh and Hassan (2023). Career women over-engage to counteract glass ceiling effects (Oladejo et al., 2026). However, this comes at a cost: resource depletion (time, energy) spills into family domain, leading to marital issues ($M=3.56$). This is consistent with European findings (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2022) and Asian findings (Salleh & Hassan, 2023; Patel & Sharma, 2022).

The behavioural deficiency finding ($\beta=0.476$) corroborates the “absent presence” phenomenon (Williams et al., 2024) and ego depletion theory (Baumeister et al., 2021). The woman is physically at home but psychologically absorbed in research, grading, or grant proposals.

The moderating role of institutional support is the most important practical finding. Low mean of IS (2.84) indicates that universities in Southwest Nigeria lack family-friendly policies. Yet, where support exists, it buffers negative effects.

This provides empirical justification for policy intervention: universities should invest in flexible scheduling, childcare centres, spousal counselling, and workload redistribution for nursing mothers, as recommended by Onenyi et al. (2026) and Appiah and Osei-Tutu (2023).

This study contributes to literature by: (1) Providing indigenous evidence from 18 towns covering all senatorial districts in Southwest Nigeria with a population above 15,300, (2) Modelling marital issues and behavioural deficiency as two distinct outcomes, (3) Testing institutional support as moderator using PLS-SEM with recent scales, and (4) Integrating four theories (Border, Spillover, COR, Role) into a single framework.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

The study examined the nexus between work engagement, marital issues and behavioural deficiency among career women academicians in Southwest Nigeria, with institutional support as a moderating variable. The study was motivated by the observed paradox that career women are celebrated as highly productive human resources at work but are often perceived as deficient in marital and behavioural roles at home - a phenomenon that has remained largely anecdotal without rigorous empirical validation in the Nigerian academic context.

The study was anchored on four complementary theories: Work-Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000; Clark et al., 2023), Spillover Theory (Staines, 1980; Bernardez & Oliveira, 2023), Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll et al., 2021) and Role Theory (Bolino et al., 2023). These theories collectively explain how high engagement in the work domain depletes resources and creates incompatible role expectations that spill into the family domain.

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The study area was Southwest Nigeria comprising six states (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti) and 18

senatorial districts. One major town/city hosting a university was selected per senatorial district. The population of the study was 15,940 married career women academicians (Lecturer II to Professor) obtained through triangulation of HR nominal rolls from 42 universities and NUC Statistical Digest (2023). The sample size of 390 was determined using Yamane (1967) formula at 5% error margin, with 429 questionnaires distributed using multi-stage (stratified, purposive, proportional, and simple random) sampling technique. The sample was proportionally allocated across the 18 towns using Bowley's formula.

Data were collected using a validated questionnaire adapted from UWES-9 (Schaufeli et al., 2022), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Fincham & Beach, 2022; Leslie et al., 2024), Role Overload/Absent Presence Scale (Williams et al., 2024; Chen & Li, 2023) and Work-Life Support Scale (Kossek et al., 2023). All constructs were measured on 5-point Likert scale. Analysis was done using SPSS 27 and SmartPLS 4 with 5,000 bootstrapping subsamples.

Summary of Major Findings:

- i. The level of work engagement among career women academicians is high ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating high vigour, dedication and absorption.
- ii. The extent of marital issues ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.82$) and behavioural deficiency ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.79$) is moderately high.
- iii. Institutional support is perceived as low ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.94$).
- iv. Work engagement has a significant positive effect on marital issues ($\beta = 0.518$, $t = 10.157$, $p < 0.001$) and behavioural deficiency ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 8.814$, $p < 0.001$).
- v. Institutional support significantly moderates (weakens) the relationship between work engagement and marital issues ($\beta = -0.192$, $p < 0.001$) and between work engagement and behavioural deficiency ($\beta = -0.167$, $p < 0.001$).
- vi. The model explains 37.5% variance in marital issues ($R^2 = 0.375$, $Q^2 = 0.211$) and 34.1% variance in behavioural deficiency ($R^2 = 0.341$, $Q^2 = 0.186$), with predictive relevance and medium-to-large effect sizes ($f^2 = 0.318$ and 0.271).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the strategic value of career women academicians as human resources for university development in Southwest Nigeria comes at a significant hidden cost to their marital and family systems. The findings provide empirical validation for the syllogism that career women are highly active at work for human resource development but deficient at marital issues and behavioural roles at home. This is not due to incompetence but due to resource depletion, permeable work-family borders, and incompatible role expectations amplified by a culture that demands agentic behaviour at work and communal behaviour at home.

The negative spillover is not inevitable. The significant moderating effect of institutional support demonstrates that when universities provide family-friendly policies, the negative effects of high work engagement are significantly buffered. The current low level of institutional support ($M = 2.84$) indicates a policy vacuum that must be addressed if universities intend to retain highly engaged female talent without destroying their family stability, as also noted by Appiah and Osei-Tutu (2023), Yusuf and Lawal (2024) and Kossek et al. (2023).

Thus, the study concludes that work engagement is a double-edged sword: it enhances institutional intellectual capital (as found by Rožman et al., 2022; Shao et al., 2025) but simultaneously erodes marital capital unless institutional support intervenes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

For University Management and Governing Councils

- i. Design Gender-Sensitive Flexible Work Policies: Universities should institutionalize flexible work arrangements such as flexible teaching schedules, work-from-home for research days, and compressed work weeks for married female academics, especially nursing mothers. This aligns with recommendations by Kossek et al. (2023) and Oneniyi et al. (2026).
- ii. Establish Institutional Support Infrastructure: Provision of functional crèche/day-care centres within university campuses (as demonstrated to reduce behavioural deficiency by Yusuf & Lawal, 2024), spousal counselling units, and mentorship programmes for career women should be made mandatory for accreditation.
- iii. Workload Redistribution Policy: The NUC and university senates should review the "publish or perish" workload model to include a Family-Responsibility Adjustment Factor in appraisal, where female academics with young children have reduced administrative load without career penalty, as practiced in European universities (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2022; Morley & Crossouard, 2022).
- iv. Responsible Work Engagement Governance: HR departments should monitor work engagement to prevent "compulsory engagement" (Kwon & Kim, 2024) and burnout through periodic work-family audit.

For Career Women Academicians

- i. Border Management Training: Career women should be trained on border management strategies (Clark et al., 2023) such as temporal segmentation - creating technology-free family time, psychological

detachment from work at home, and negotiated role sharing with spouses.

- ii. Spousal Communication and Role Negotiation: Adopting collaborative spousal communication and explicit role negotiation, as suggested by Fincham and Beach (2022), will reduce perceived behavioural deficiency.

For Government and National Universities Commission

- i. The NUC should include Work-Life Balance Support Index as part of university ranking and accreditation criteria.
- ii. Federal Government should fund research grants specifically targeting work-family integration for female academics, as recommended by World Bank (2023) and OECD (2024).

Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes five significant contributions to knowledge in Scopus-indexed literature:

- i. Theoretical Contribution: The study is one of the first in Africa to integrate four theories (Border, Spillover, COR, Role) into a single model to explain the work-marriage paradox among female academics, extending the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2020) into the marital domain.
- ii. Methodological Contribution: The study demonstrates a novel triangulation method for determining population of career women academicians using HR nominal rolls + NUC digest + physical verification across 18 towns in 6 states, with a population above 15,300 (15,940) and Yamane-based proportional allocation - a methodology not previously documented in Nigerian gender studies.
- iii. Empirical Contribution: Provides large-scale indigenous evidence (N=15,940, n=390) from Southwest Nigeria covering all 18 senatorial districts, confirming global findings from Germany, Malaysia, China, US, Kenya, and Ghana (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2022; Salleh & Hassan, 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Mutiso & Kariuki, 2023) but in a unique patriarchal academic context.
- iv. Conceptual Contribution: Disaggregates family outcomes into two distinct constructs - Marital Issues and Behavioural Deficiency - rather than generic work-family conflict, providing finer granularity for intervention.
- v. Practical/Policy Contribution: Empirically validates institutional support as a significant buffer (moderator) that weakens negative spillover, providing evidence-based justification for family-friendly university policies.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that provide avenues for future research.

- i. The study is cross-sectional, hence causality cannot be fully established. Future studies should adopt longitudinal or dyadic design collecting data from both husband and wife (as done by Wang et al., 2024; Carlson et al., 2023) to assess crossover effects.
- ii. The study focused only on married career women academicians, excluding single, divorced, and widowed female academics who may experience different dynamics. Future studies should include these groups and also male academics for comparative analysis.
- iii. The study was limited to Southwest Nigeria (Yoruba-dominated). Future studies should replicate in Southeast, South-South, and Northern Nigeria to test cultural generalizability, and across Africa (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa) as suggested by Nkosi et al. (2022) and Mushi and Makokha (2024).
- iv. The study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies should incorporate qualitative interviews (mixed-method) as recommended by Roppelt et al. (2025) to capture lived experiences.
- v. Other potential moderators such as spousal support, emotional intelligence, and extended family support (Bello et al., 2024) were not included. Future models should test multiple moderators and mediators such as emotional exhaustion (Li et al., 2024) using advanced PLS-SEM.
- vi. The population determination, while triangulated, depends on availability of HR records which may be incomplete in some private universities. Future research should work with NUC to create a centralized gender-disaggregated academic staff database.

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