



## **An Overview on Influence of Work-family Life Conflict among Female Teachers and their Job Satisfaction in Schools**

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*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Work-related stress or family-related stress heavily influences various aspects of one's career, and work-family conflict is the most important stress in this regard. Due to participation and working on two roles, strains lead to conflicting work life. Job and parental stresses relate positively to family conflicts in the workplace and this conflict can have a serious health effect. Managing conflicts over the work life increases employee engagement. Employees need to handle work and family transitions properly, and define a boundary between them, otherwise the overlap between them can lead to burnout. With the teaching profession becoming more and more attractive to the female younger generations, it is, therefore, crucial to throw more light on the influence of work and family life conflict among female teachers and their Job satisfaction in our schools.

**Keywords:** *Work-life conflict; work-family conflict; job satisfaction; teachers.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term work-family conflict can be defined as the connection in a person's life between the demands of the workplace and that of the household. It happens as, on the one hand, people try to juggle their role in the workplace, and, on the other, their family and personal roles. It has been found that dealing with family roles and work roles creates conflicts between roles [1]. Such inter-role conflict occurs when the burden from one domain's roles has a negative effect on the fulfillment of roles in the other domain. In a work-family conflict the strain from roles in the domain of work hinders the successful performance of roles in the domain of the family. Work-family conflict is assumed to occur when the performance of a person's position in family life is limited by the performance of his / her role in the workplace [2,3,4].

Our females have traditionally served as caretakers whilst the males played the role of breadwinner within the family. For many years domestic service remained the largest single female occupation. But in recent times, the issue of women trying to strike a balance between their role in the workplace and family role appears to be a global phenomenon as women are not absolved of their household chores and responsibilities. The wife is expected to make a good cup of tea and serve the husband, and later prepare a family dinner, even if they all come back at the same time from the job. In addition, they have to leave their children at home and report early in the morning to their workplaces, making them unable to give their children and their families the proper time and care.

Teaching is widely believed to be a traditional profession mostly occupied by females [5]. Afful-Broni [6] claimed that educational services are similar to household chores that are primarily given by parents, hence the need to allow female teachers to play such maternal care at school level for the students. More often than not, teachers experiencing high-level difficulties in the work-family are more likely to miss working days, which could potentially cause the curriculum program to fall behind. It has been found that working with school children is quite draining, that one lacks energy to be both a good mother and also a good teacher [7,8]. Researchers have suggested an international recognition of the teaching profession as one of the most demanding professions [9,10]. In furtherance, it

was argued that teachers experiencing high rates of work-family conflict end up with extended periods of stress, become disconnected from their duties and tasks and have poor job satisfaction [11].

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF WORK-FAMILY LIFE CONFLICT

For many years now, different forms of explanation have been given to work-life conflict as a concept by different authors but all in the name of communicating the effect of the incompatibility of work and family life for employees. Ofori [12] described the work-life definition as the relation between an individual's work and his personal domains. In effect, the work-family includes all activities that may impact and affect an individual's work or personal life as a result of engaging in other-side activities. This covers education, social life, long working hours, travel needs and so on. In a study by Bedu-Addo [13] on work-family interference among Ghanaian women in higher positions, work-life is seen as being "what an employer does to create a more flexible, supportive work environment, so employees will be able to focus on the job while they're on the job". This implies that employers seek employee welfare also by reducing the impact of work on the family life of individuals. The term Work-family conflict therefore arises in situations where there are incompatible demands between an individual's work and family roles which make participation in both roles more difficult. Therefore, work-family conflict is the tension felt in trying to meet all responsibilities in work and family life [1].

It is a form of inter-role conflict where the role pressures from the domains of work and family are mutually incompatible. Work-life conflict can be expressed as "inter-role conflict in which responsibilities from the work and family domains are not compatible" [12]. This suggests that work-to-life conflicts occur when performing roles and engaging in the workplace makes it difficult to perform family responsibilities or roles effectively and satisfactorily. On the other hand, life-to-work conflict arises when family demands are such that the work-related duties of the individual are jeopardized. Consequently, it is assumed that having a job that interferes with your family life is term as a conflict between work and life [14]. It is a problem common to workers. According to Nicole [15], work-family conflict has a negative effect on some other areas within and outside the family and is perceived as an

undesirable situation, which may lead to an increase in chronic exhaustion, a high level of absenteeism at work, poor health, at times broken homes, etc. Thus the concept was seen as interfering with your career and your ability to get ahead at work. This suggests that work-family conflict occurs when expectations related to a specific role fail to fulfill the requirements of the other role preventing the effective performance of that role.

Conflicts between work and life are frequent and consequential for employees, their families and the entire work organizations. It is best to understand the concept of work-life conflict by looking at the multiple roles of the parent workers' lives. An employee takes on two important positions at home and in the workplace. Thus an individual is respectively a parent and as a worker. This has led to a series of questions running in stakeholders' minds that can improve workplaces to reduce conflicts between work and life? It is important to note that the various positions can exist in two separate locations in an attempt to answer that and many of these questions. An attempt at the workplace to initiate move to mitigate the issue is having a positive effect on the work-family interface, primarily by increasing schedule control for employees.

In many cases, disputes between work and family can result in dissatisfaction, anxiety, stress, and effect on emotional and physical health, resulting in decreased institutional job performance, reduced teacher productivity, disillusionment, and some extreme cases of individual dismissal [16]. The early recognition and management of how successfully one can balance the role expectations of work and life are topical issues within the working population and organizations due to its negativity, as this inevitably affects working people. Many factors in both the workplace and at home will hinder the ability of someone to fulfill the duties demands of work and home efficiently and effectively, creating conflict between those two realms. This can adversely affect both families and employers, thereby impacting the health of society as a whole. Over the years, work and family conflicts have been associated with negative work attitudes, absenteeism, and early leave of work, turnover intentions and other negative work behaviors [17]. In addition, an increasing number of single mothers working and a growing need to provide elderly care for aging family members as well as the limited time and

energy of individuals combine to ensure that work and family roles are performed is likely to conflict in the future for some time.

However, Ofori [12] suggested that one might experience enrichment of work-life when one benefits from multiple-role engagement. That is possible because a person can transfer the learned knowledge and skills from one domain to another. An example is a worker who applies the communication skills learned at work to help improve interactions and communications with the family. Also, as a boss the expertise and experience involved in managing the workplace may be beneficial to your children's upbringing. Your family can most often provide emotional support when you encounter workplace problems. Additionally, one's professional network can help find an internship or job opportunity for your children or relatives.

Anku-Tsedde and Adjadogo [18] argued that depending on the five factors identified, the extent to which one feels conflict or enrichment between work and life management. The first of these is the quality of the roles the individual is engaged in. That can be identified in the satisfaction of one's job or the quality of one's relationship with partner and children. The assumption is that if the individual is highly satisfied with his/her job and family roles, an employee is more likely to cope with the demands of their responsibilities. The next factor is the demand for the roles. This looks at the job and household responsibilities of workload demand. Again, it looks at workplace and home emotional demands. An employee's workload has a direct bearing on conflicting and enriching work-family issues. Opoku-Addai [19] is of the opinion that the higher the role's demand, the more challenging it may be for the individual to deal with the pressure of responsibility.

The next factor is the control that one has over the work-family conflict or enrichment roles. This focuses on the individual's ability and strength to manage job and household responsibilities. Thus, an individual has control and flexibility over their schedule of work to enable such a person to fit into other commitments such as childcare, relieving or reducing the burden and pressure on him / her. A personality trait is the next relevant factor for enriching or opposing the work-family. For example, being efficient and confident are some of the qualities that are needed to help manage conflicts between work and life. Such characteristics affect the efficiency and

effectiveness of a person to perform a job with. The ability of the individual to cope with the different roles is the final factor which affects the enrichment or conflict of work-life. This aspect therefore refers to the strategies that individuals use to manage the demands of their roles, this includes the ability to separate work and non-work, to be assertive and to take action to reduce stress levels.

### 3. THE CULTURE OF WORK AND FAMILY

Most countries in the world are driven by culture, in which women are reserved for household chores and child care. According to Grzywacz & Marks [20], women in many societies worldwide including Africa are responsible for the care of children and household chores. Kenyatta [21] claimed that girls growing up to become women are socialized to know how to cook, wash clothes and perform other household routine tasks, while boys growing up to be men are socialized to take care of outside household tasks, including farming in all types.

Therefore, the work-life conflict was not a significant issue for many years ago [22], but this is not the case these days [23]. Ombati [24] stated more emphasis was placed on boy education than on girls' education. Thus preceding generation women were not as well educated as the current generation. The emphasis on girl education in recent years has been excellent [25]; in fact, there is a slogan said by Dr. Kwagyr Aggrey from Ghana which is used by government to promote the girls' education: "If you educate a man you educate one person, but if you educate a woman you educate the whole nation". Currently, a considerable number of women are in employment in the formal sector, particularly in the service sector. This is because girls tend to pursue courses based on art and management, and shy away from courses that include rigorous calculations such as engineering and mathematics with the perception that those courses are too challenging.

These formal sector organisations, unlike those in the informal sector, set clear boundaries between home and work environment. Muasya [26] suggested that women in the formal sector work away from home, are subject to set hours of work (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), and are forced to delegate responsibilities for housework and childcare to others. However, due to the high cost of living, which makes it expensive to live in towns with extended families, women working in

the formal sector often find it difficult to find someone who can care for their children while they are at work. Families have increasingly often opted to employ domestic workers to help with housework and childcare, indicating that dependence on the extended family is declining over time [23].

The informal sector generally consists of those entrepreneurs who use simple skills and sell their merchandise on the streets, such as vegetables and second-hand clothes. Nonetheless, women working in the informal sector can in most cases combine family and work responsibilities because they are in charge of their work. A research by Wangui [27] confirmed that, given the participation of women in work outside the home, they still bear a disproportionate burden of caring for children and doing household chores - unlike their male counterparts.

### 4. FACTORS AFFECTING WORK-FAMILY LIFE CONFLICT IN SCHOOLS

In cases where job requirements and expectations are too intense for an employee to manage, the employee will be in both negative psychological and physical states, which in turn will exacerbate life stress causing tension, exhaustion and anxiety. Research has suggested that the work-family interface researchers have established family demands as a crucial stressor [28]. The family demands thus include the time spent, level of commitment to, and duties associated with the fulfillment of family-related commitments like housekeeping and child care tasks. For example, Frone [29] indicated that family expectations, such as parental workload, have an impact on the anxiety of employees. Moreover, most of these family responsibilities, including childcare and elderly care, are predominantly women's duty and thus affect working life for female teachers.

Some of the factors affecting work-life conflict among female teachers are excessive workload, ambiguity of role, culture of organisation, and work environment. Excessive workload has become a problem for dual-career families because the high demand for longer working hours has become a norm. Excessive workload occurs when multiple demands exceed the available resources, both qualitatively and quantitatively [30]. In the current scenario, it is hard for people nowadays to achieve desired work-life because they work longer hours and harder than before. Safaria, Othman and Wahab

[31] suggested that excessive workload can cause many employees to feel under pressure to work long hours in order to complete their tasks and keep their jobs. This will also lead to reduced time for employees to spend with family and friends [32]. Stress can arise from the working environment when one has to meet deadlines or work overtime. Occasionally, workers are faced with heavy workload because they like to delay their job until the due date and thus face tension to settle. Employees facing heavy work demands are believed to result in higher stress levels, which will have a negative impact on their physical and psychological health [33].

Role ambiguity arises when the expectations of roles are vague and the employees are uncertain and confused in knowing what is expected of them in their assigned roles or tasks. Bell, Rajendran & Theiler [34] suggested that role ambiguity arises when an individual is uncertain about the expectations of the role and has no idea how the role should be implemented. In addition, higher role ambiguity in teaching exists due to the lack of clarification on how to handle various teaching, study, and professional services learning activities that are required to perform the teaching role effectively. School teachers who have not received regular feedback tend to experience significant uncertainty regarding their job performance [35].

Culture of the organization is a set of values, beliefs, standards, assumptions and thoughts that accept all members of the organisation. Those elements are transferred to the new members who are taught in the organization how to perceive, think and feel. In the view of Darcy, McCarthy, Hill & Grady [35] organizational culture reveals how things are being done within the company. Research has shown that old employees will always pass acceptable habits and behaviors on to newcomers, thus persisting the organizational culture and serving as a tool of social control to help shape the organization's employee assumptions and perceptions [33]. A new employee in the new company, for example, will follow the behaviors of a colleague by observation and begin to act like them to fit in with the company, even without explicit instruction to do so. If a colleague stays in the office late, then he or she assumes that this is the right way to do so. In order to fulfill a cultural expectation such as working longer hours, the person will believe that he or she will work late. It means that workers successfully complete their assignments by maintaining a high completion

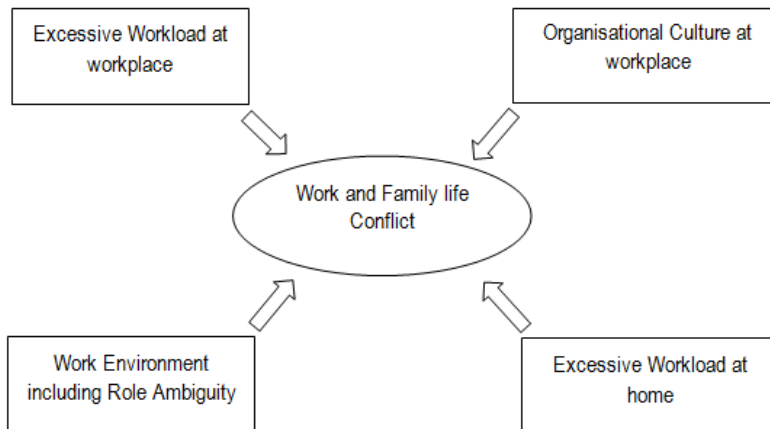
value in order to have time for their personal tasks.

A good working environment indicates a healthy workplace in which the environment takes care of the physical and mental health of the employees and cares for their general well-being and creates an environment in which employees can grow professionally while preserving their roles in work and personal / family life. Furthermore, a good working environment also ensures that employees do not experience excessive stress when performing their work. The issue of workplace environment in the teaching fraternity involves the space and facilities or equipment required to do their job effectively. This indicates that poor working environment will affect the performance and productivity of an employee because it is a place for academics to work together in commands to achieve the organization's objective. Several female teachers have shown a rise in absenteeism, and especially young teachers who are in childbearing age, and this may have been due to the high demands of working life.

## **5. WORK AND FAMILY OF WOMEN TEACHERS**

There is a strong link between family and career lives of a female teacher. Over the years, teaching has always been perceived as an attractive occupation for women who want to work but strive to give their family roles the maximum time and energy. Many believe their career advancement aspirations are also limited due to the limited time spent among women teachers [36,37]. This was supported by a study by Casey and Apple [38] describing how women teachers were described as having low employment commitment and little aspiration for career progress. Previously, some prominent organizational sociologists characterized teaching and other female-dominated occupations as "semi-professions" [39], implying that teachers exhibit little unique professional knowledge and are not very committed to their work [40]. The assumption was that at that time teaching was seen as a particularly suitable profession for women because they were not expected to invest heavily in employment and could probably balance professional and family roles with a minimum of conflict.

To date, many still hold the hypothesis that, teaching is a profession with many attributes that



**Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for Work-family life conflict among female teachers**

are particularly considerate of family needs and constraints. The notion of teaching involves, but not limited to, a relatively short workday at the school premises, no work on school holidays, and no job most of the summer and decreased workload for mothers with small children. Many believe that these conditions of employment allow women teachers to fulfill their work obligations without major family interruptions while maintaining a home that functions smoothly without significant disruptions due to their demands for work. These perceived features of the teaching profession make it an ideal job for the majority of women with limited career commitment or aspirations who want to devote a significant portion of their time to their family.

However, not much support has been given to assuming that women teachers have minimal commitment to work. Other research is believed to have shown that women teachers were committed to their work, that they attached great importance to it, and that the role of teacher in their identity was prominent [7,8]. For example, in an interview with eight female teachers at two primary schools in England, it was found that they were all very committed to their work to the extent that schoolwork was often in their minds, even during their “free” time at home or on vacations [41]. Interestingly, the early days of a study by Lortie [37] and Thomas & O'Brien [8] revealed that young women were motivated to enter teaching for professional reasons rather than being compatible with family demands. It found that female teachers educating students rated “working with children” as a much stronger motivation to enter teaching than extrinsic factors

related to the ease of teaching as a mother's occupation [42].

The teachers clearly expressed their thinking in Acker's [41] study that the combination of being a teacher and a mother was in no way convenient. It is demanding and complicated to manage those multiple responsibilities, far from what people think. Elbaz-Lubisch [43] research showed that many teachers are incapable of effectively separating their professional roles from family roles. So they recounted being forced into “triple-shifts” of work including teaching, housework, and childcare. It has been reported that teachers of young children simultaneously revealed very stressful aspects of filling family and professional roles, particularly the draining nature of working with schoolchildren, and the chronic lack of energy needed to care for one's children and to be a good teacher [44]. The literature on the roles of women teachers in work-life suggests that many female teachers attribute importance to their role in the workplace as well as to their role in the family, and share specific issues of conflict between work-life and other female professionals.

## **6. THE FEMALE TEACHER AND WORK-LIFE CONFLICT IN OUR SCHOOLS**

A study by Shernoff et al. [45] found that teaching in primary and secondary schools is generally regarded everywhere as a high stress profession. In addition, this can contribute to high conflict of inter-roles within the teaching environment. Some stressors are commonly found in the teaching profession, such as

excessive workload, teacher involvement with student misconduct, lack of essential resources and personnel, accountability policies, and other stressors including role overload.

On excessive workload, teachers are thought to often have to carry out their duties such as marking and grading into the evening and weekends beyond the regular working hours [45]. Gunter [46] found that a significant proportion of teachers left the workforce after three years because of the heavy workload in teaching, with many of them citing high work overload as the problem. This stressor is generally true as a teacher would expect to mark and rate between 50 and 80 students in one class on one subject within a day. Clunies-Ross, Little & Kienhuis [47] suggested teachers spend much of their time in school managing student behavior. Shernoff et al. [45] therefore expressed that teachers felt ineffective and overwhelmed in enforcing compliance with school rules, as it tends to interfere with teaching and concentration of students. Another primary responsibility besides teaching is teacher interaction with student misbehavior.

The females of these days work longer hours while retaining primary family responsibility as the number of dual-earner couple's increases. For example, combining work with marital status is like living two lifetimes in one. In this era the demands of the work environment have exerted undeniable pressure on females working career. They have to adapt to essentially two full-time jobs-one at work and the other at home with their personal responsibilities somewhere in the middle. Role theory suggested that women are likely to experience strain as they try to fulfill their traditionally assigned role as a home caretaker and their modern role as employee. Role theory further suggests that groups usually form norms that members are required to comply with, and members usually comply with these norms because of the respective rewards and punishments attached to conformity and non-compliance [48]. In addition, the gender role theory suggests that certain roles are allocated to each gender with the social identity of females being more closely linked to their family roles [49]. Under this pattern, individuals have to face and adapt to the conflict between roles [50]. A study by Mauno et al., [51] reported that both males and females are vulnerable to work-family conflict, whereas females experience more role overload, more work-to-family interference, and more family-to-work interference.

Shernoff et al. [45] argued that the lack of essential resources, such as books and equipment, and the lack of staff (such as content specialists, a nurse, and security guards) were stressors for teachers in many schools. This lack of resources and staff as a stressor could be more prevalent in that there are many deprived communities throughout the country. With the existence of Free Compulsory Basic Education and the introduction of free secondary education in many countries, this has resulted in increased demand for education, which is not matched by resource growth. In several countries, many parents turn to blame teachers for their wards or children's poor performance. Moreover, due to this, teachers often feel accountable for student performance even when students fail to meet the national assessment tests 'required mean grade. Therefore, educational directors, head teachers, and school management turn to put pressure on teachers to excel for students, and teachers need to pull up grades for students. This phenomenon is common when the results of national exams are released in each year.

## **7. COPING MECHANISMS FOR WORK-LIFE CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS**

With high levels of productivity anticipated among organisations, many have stressed the importance of flexible work arrangements such as flexibility in job schedules. A research by Dartey-Baah [52] indicated that several studies have shown that flexibility in the adoption of work schedule is linked to the lesser conflict between work and family. For instance, Frone, Yardley & Markel [17] suggested that the number of hours devoted to work was positively related to the level of work and family conflict, while it was shown that flexible working hours and managerial support reduced the conflict between work and family.

Within this study there are two forms of flexibility that are especially important. These are the ability to change one's work schedule to satisfy personal or family obligations, and the ability to interrupt one's working day in order to deal with personal or family issues and then return to work. Other ways of flexibility that are vital for mitigating these types of work and family conflict include the ability to take holidays when the need arises, the ability to be home on time to prepare meals for the family and the ability to take paid time off work to deal with childcare or elder care issues. This is understandably so against the

backdrop of frequently changing schedules for staff forcing them to work late into the evening.

In addition to the flexibility schedules, there are some potential avenues to be applied to mitigate work and personal / family conflicts by both female teachers and their employers. There are several forms of family / personal and work-friendly policies, including: flex-time, virtual work, on-site dependent care centres, strong supervisory support, etc. According to Duxbury (2003) cited in the work by Anku-Tsede and Adjadogo [18], the following recommendations were postulated to reduce role overload and work interferences with employee families. Firstly, a set amount of paid personal days off work may be provided to workers to deal with family issues. Next is to grant the time off for employees to attend work-related training sessions, courses and conferences. Another recommendation identified is the introduction of new performance measures focusing on goals, results and output. A rise in the number of supportive managers within the organization can also help to reduce conflicts between work and family. A study by Anku-Tsede and Adjadogo [18] argued that organizations could increase the number of supportive managers by providing managers at all levels with the skills necessary to manage the "people" as part of their job, as well as the tools necessary to manage people.

Additionally, Opoku-Addai [19] made a number of recommendations and the recommendation suggested an increase in the number of managers within the organization that consistently display the following behaviors: make work expectations clear, plan the work to be done effectively, provide constructive feedback when performance standards are not met, ask for input from the employee before making decisions, have realistic expectations regarding the amount of work that can be done in a given amount of time, don't expect employees to spend long hours just because they are doing it and change the organization's culture.

House [53] however identified four types of support: information, assessment, instrumental, and emotional. According to Kessler, Price, & Wortman [54], this support comes in the form of interpersonal relationships and social interactions which are at an individual's disposal for managing stressful events. An employee provides instrumental support if he/she receives direct support or advice on how to handle family responsibilities, according to Eby, Casper,

Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley [55]; for example, they may define the work-friendly policies for the employee. Frone, Yardley & Markel [17] shared in a similar vein that emotional support arises when managers or supervisors become empathetic and show concern about some of the challenges that the employee may encounter.

## 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Conflict in work and life exists in various forms. It involves pressure-based conflict (strain-based conflict), time-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict (conflict based on conduct). The strain-based conflict occurs when the strain sustained in one domain (such as the domain of work) has a negative effect on the fulfillment of one position in the other domain (such as family domain). Behavior-based conflict arises when certain actions may be acceptable in one domain (for instance, the domain of the family) and not in another (for instance, the domain of work). The time-based conflict arises when one spends time in a position from one domain (for instance, family domain), leaving the person with little or no time to spend performing roles in the other domain (for instance, work domain).

However, role overload is similar in terms of time-based conflict and strain-based conflict and in such cases of role overload, the functions are either not being performed at all or not being fulfilled sufficiently. It therefore suggests that research into conflicts between work and family life is relevant to organizations and individuals because it is linked to negative consequences.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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