

Attaining Work-Life Balance and Modeling the Way among Female Teachers in Ghana

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Abstract This study investigates the extent to which female teachers in Ghana are able to balance their careers and social roles, while acting as role models in career progression. Work-life balance (WLB) is a phenomenon gaining much interest in educational administration and management in Ghana. The Ghana Education Service (GES) employs a significant number of female teachers, yet evidence shows practical policy issues when it comes to WLB. Study respondents indicated their perceptions of significant sociocultural challenges in trying to balance domestic roles and teaching. Some support systems were identified, but they were not found to have a significant effect on female teachers' resilience and determination to consolidate their career in GES. The results have several implications for GES policy direction, practices for performance, and recommendations for scaling up WLB research in Ghana.

Keywords: Ghana education; Female teachers; Modeling the way; Work-life balance

Introduction

Contribution/originality

This study highlights the discourse surrounding the dual roles of female teachers in Ghana. It contributes to the growing interest in the work-life balance (WLB) phenomenon and how it affects the career consolidation of female teachers in Ghana. This discussion draws attention to the pressure on female teachers to act as role mod-

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els for girls. The study adds to the significant roles of female teachers that are somehow not given prominent attention in research in Ghana. This study fills in some gaps in Ghanaian scholarship regarding the myriad roles of female teachers. It contributes to the understanding of the WLB phenomenon, the sociodemographic dynamics that call for a support system, and how Ghana Education Service (GES) policy should align with evidence of WLB.

Traditionally, the social roles for Ghanaian women are domestic, including home-making, childbearing, and raising families, as well as supporting their husbands. It is accepted in traditional settings that this is a woman's role in society; women regard it as a privilege to take care of the home. Socioculturally and historically, women in Ghana are hardly expected to pursue careers. Until now, Ghanaian women dominated trading activities to supplement the income-generation activities of the household. Their economic contributions were focused on petty trading and merchandizing; women were not supposed to be fully occupied with a traditional career life outside the home.

Contemporary Ghanaian women entering into careers such as nursing and teaching are still not exempted from fulfilling dual domestic and professional roles. Rather, they have to exemplify both roles perfectly. As they pursue careers, much in the manner of their male counterparts, they also find themselves as homemakers. Globally, the teaching profession tends to be a little flexible for women (Ball & Forzani, 2009), hence many are able to do the work of teaching at either basic or secondary schools (i.e., senior high schools in Ghana) and still maintain the home. In Ghana, however, the expectations from both society and employers are high. The female teacher is expected to be a perfect mother and homemaker and still keep up with the pressures of work. At the secondary school level, the boarding facilities available for students mean there are additional responsibilities that make the work of teaching significantly more challenging. For instance, female teachers not only teach, they also assume additional responsibilities as housemistresses, heads of department, class/form mistresses, and any other duty as assigned by the school head. In an attempt to effectively perform their workplace responsibilities, these women have to consider work-life balance.

The concept of WLB among female teachers in this context means the balancing act of working as a professional teacher while executing the role of a homemaker and/or other social roles as traditionally expected. Work-life balance has been examined by gender in relation to the overlapping roles played by individuals juggling career demands and societal expectations (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Maxwell & McDougall, 2004). In most cases, WLB involves multiple roles. In the literature, however, many are concerned about the lack of a universal definition for WLB (Maxwell & McDougall, 2004). Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, Karen M. Collins, and Jason D. Shaw (2003) define WLB as the "extent to which an individual is equally engaged in — and equally satisfied with — his or her work role and family role" (p. 532). According to Greenhaus et al. (2003), WLB consists of three components: i) time balance, ii) psychological balance, and iii) satisfaction balance in both career and social/other roles. Noor Fatima and Shamim Sahibzada (2012) also mention that WLB involves how individuals struggle to achieve and maintain satisfaction

with the demands placed on them by both work and family. Therefore, they claim that the definition should recognize that there can be “imbalance” in WLB. Even in modern life, and the resulting changes in the workplace, employees are still struggling to define what constitutes proper balance for career women, equal opportunity in the workplace, and best practices when it comes to WLB.

The balancing act of work and lifestyle is causing huge sociodemographic disruptions, changes, and imbalances in both developing and developed societies (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012). There is a growing interest in the phenomenon of WLB and how it affects the career paths of female teachers, especially in present-day Ghana. The study of adulthood and career journeys is gathering much interest in scholarship about global WLB culture. Certain theories relating to adult development are being propounded to explain and expand the phenomenon (Bjorklund & Bee, 2008; Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012; Vaillant, 1993). There is, for example, a growing interest in Erik Erikson’s career consolidation and conditions of achievement and fulfillment (Vaillant, 1993). Career consolidation is synonymous with the career path-goal theory in most leadership literature (Northouse, 2014). Peter Northouse (2014) advocates that a leader must first uncover what motivates an individual and seek to provide the necessary rewards to improve a worker’s performance and satisfaction. This thinking, by definition, creates a nexus between the Eriksonian career consolidation theory and path-goal theory, which assumes that people’s behavior is contingent on a specific situation, and that such behavior provides the best paths to reach intended career goals. Hence, much organizational behavior and many organizational culture studies tend to focus on people’s lifestyles, occupational interests, and motivational needs and incentives, and attempt to find ways to associate them with performance in organizations (Robbins & Judge, 2011; Rummler & Brache, 1995). The teaching career is challenging (Ball & Forzani, 2009), full of accountability (Casalaspì, Hutt, & Schneider, 2018), and demands training to become a primary teacher (Edwards & Dampson, 2018); the Ghana Education Service (GES), as an organization that offers careers in teaching, is therefore responsible for WLB among its employees.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which female teachers in Ghana are able to balance their career lives and social roles, as they remain role models in career progression. The following questions are asked: 1) What are the opinions of female teachers on WLB as professionals? 2) What are the support system(s) available for the WLB of female senior high school (SHS) teachers? 3) How are female teachers modeling the way for other female career aspirants, particularly school children?

The significance of this study lies in practice and policy direction for encouraging female teachers to progress in their careers and still have social responsibilities and family life. First, educational leadership practitioners, such as those at the helm of the GES, ought to appreciate the female teachers’ roles in maintaining family responsibilities while still managing career pursuits. Practically, gender activists must be equipped with such evidence to fight for

the rights of female teachers and to demand policy direction toward equitable support at the workplace. Women's role models have their stories about how WLB affected their career progression—how they coped with work and family demands and still managed to reach the top of their profession as teachers. Yet, it is such studies that consolidate claims and advocacy with stories of WBL that are significant for girls aspiring to be teachers and motivating for the teachers.

Rationale

This study is justified on the basis of opening up a voice for female teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools who are silent on issues pertaining to their struggles with WLB for fear of reprimand and discrimination. In theory, at least, there are several provisions in policy and practice for equal opportunities in the GES, but implementation raises several questions. Ghana's constitution guarantees equal opportunity and services. Yet, there is very little evidence of female teachers voicing their opinions, challenges, and needs in terms of WLB and their career progress.

There are many female teachers in the education service. There are, however, more female teachers in the basic education section. The few who get the chance to teach at the secondary level do not see the same career progression as their male counterparts. The female teacher at the secondary level is faced with many more challenges at work and at home due to personal and social demands. At that level, teachers are supposed to further their education to reach subject teaching, and they are to expected to undertake a certain level of community (school) services to further their quest for promotion.

Conceptual framework

Work-life balance

The use of the term or concept of work-life balance is quite recent. According to P. Delecta (2011), literature started appearing on the concept in the 1970s and 1980s, and it has been given considerable recognition due to sociodemographic and sociological trends: employees' changing perceptions of work, workforce diversity, the changing roles of men and women, and skill shortages (Forster, Ali, Ebrahim, & Ibrahim, 2014). Nick Forster, Aisha Al Ali Ebrahim, and Nadia Alma Ibrahim (2014) reiterate that WLB refers to employment practices that provide a framework for employees to find a balance among their work responsibilities and other interests outside of work. Work-life balance facilitates the reconciliation of the competing claims of work and home in people's lives by meeting their own needs as well as those of their employers at the workplace.

Many studies agree that WLB is about the balancing act involving paid work and other activities, including unpaid work in families and the community, leisure, and personal development (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Forster et al., 2014; Gambles, Lewis, & Rapport, 2006; Maeranre, Pitarelli, & Cangiano, 2013; Madipelli, Sarma, & Chinnappaiah, 2013). However, some of these researchers (Forster et al., 2014; Gambles, Lewis, & Rapport, 2006) express concerns that work-family conflict (WFC) may occur as "situations where people find it difficult to balance the demands encountered in one domain (family) due to their in-

volvement in the other domain (work)” (Forster et al., 2014, p. 367). These conflicting roles may be due to: 1) role or strain overload, 2) work-to-family interference, 3) family-to-work interference, or 4) cultural or gendered assumptions and expectations. According to Gambles et al. (2006), work-to-family interference is when work responsibilities interfere with family life and make it difficult to perform household tasks or spend adequate time with children.

Increasingly, WLB has become a necessity for almost all categories of workers, including those employed in the teaching profession, in which females dominate (Maeranre et al., 2013). A variety of factors challenge WLB for most female teachers (Madipelli et al., 2013). The challenges include redefining social roles and work demands, which currently encapsulate the idea that female teachers are required to exert additional effort to achieve work goals (Demerouti et al., 2001). The demands from both work and social roles can be overwhelming and carry a psychological cost that can lead to ill health.

The work of teaching and WLB

Lisette Burrows (2013) admits that teaching is a demanding, time-consuming, and often thankless job. Some veteran educators advise that “if you think you could be happy in another career, then don’t teach” (p. 55). Linda Griffith said: “Teaching is a type of calling, and those drawn to the profession are committed to the idea of teaching” (cited in Burrows, 2013, p. 55). Deborah Loewenberg Ball and Francesca M. Forzani (2009) see teaching as “unnatural work” (p. 498) and “intricate work” (p. 500) that demands WLB among teachers. In Ghana, the GES is tasked with supporting teachers’ rights at the work place. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana has provisions to foster WLB among female employees. The constitution has among its many provisions: i) Maternity Protection Act 1994, ii) Parental Leave (Amendment) Act 2006, iii) Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001, iv) Carer’s Leave Act 2001, and v) Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004. But there is very little evidence, if any, that these provisions are implemented and, further, whether they are effectively implemented at the GES, even though WLB is important for teachers.

Career consolidation among women

The concept of career consolidation or development is part of a lifelong process filled with experiences that focus on the self and occupational and educational alternatives, yet it is completed by lifestyles and role options (Hansen, 1976). Career development is, therefore, the process in which an individual fashions and progresses his or her own work identity. Career consolidation then becomes the natural process of getting established in the pursuance of a career, such as teaching. This is particularly important for women, who, until the advent of technologies allowing them to work from home, have had to sacrifice or consolidate their career paths by making a choice: work or family. Most women opted to strive for balance by choosing a flexible discipline (WorkLife balance.com, n.d).

Teachers in modeling the way

Teachers are expected to be leaders, with great influence in the classroom and in the

school (Gabriel, 2005; Lieberman & Miller, 2005). By teacher leadership, Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller (2005) assert that teacher influence is high in any learning environment as well as on student achievements. One of the challenges of leadership is being a model for the way things ought to be (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Barry Z. Kouzes and James M. Posner (2012) termed it as “modeling the way” (p. x); most exemplary leaders get extraordinary work done through others. But they have to show the way, believe in a clear vision, and set the example. While educational and school leadership receive much attention in literature, teacher leadership is yet to receive the same. Teachers model the way for young learners, children in class, or young adults in the school environment.

A study conducted among Ghanaian teachers (Edwards & Aboagye, 2015) indicated that Ghanaian teachers have the potential to excel in leadership practices, especially in modeling the way ($M = 48.35$, $SD = 6.98$). The mean score from the leadership practices inventory (LPI) is significantly high. According to the study, there was no significant difference in the gender category for that matter when it comes the LPI scores ($t = -0.93$, $df = 198$, $p = 0.07$). Modeling the way is where the teacher has to set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with the shared values of the school (Edwards & Aboagye, 2015). Second, the teacher is expected to look into the future, envision the future of his/her students and attempt to chart a visionary leadership cause, and pave the way for others (GES School Leadership Manual, 2017).

According to GES School Leadership Manual (2017), teachers are expected to be leaders; they are to motivate students to “act towards achieving a common goal” in learning (p. 2). The teacher is also required to demonstrate leadership for learning (GES Leadership for Learning, 2014) in five practical ways. These five practical ways include 1) maintaining a focus on learning, 2) creating conditions for learning, 3) creating a dialogue for learning, 4) having a shared sense of leadership, and 5) having a shared sense of accountability (GES School Leadership Manual, 2017). These practices highlight the ways teachers are expected to model the way for student learners.

Teachers, male or female, are supposed to be exemplary leaders in schools. Ball and Forzani (2009) give an exposition of the intricacies of being a teacher and affirm the uniqueness of the work of teaching as “unnatural.” The teacher leads in knowledge creation from theory to practice, from following a practical curriculum to evaluating the outcomes of such enterprise. Teachers are to develop leadership in pedagogies, create a constructive learning environment, and praise both motivated and unmotivated learners. As entrepreneurs, teachers show the way by stocking their classrooms with teaching and learning materials (TLMs). Teachers’ influence is felt more by their innovative thinking. Good teachers have identifiable qualities beyond ordinary knowledge (Casalaspì et al., 2018); they exhibit what is termed quadrant intelligence (Qi): social, entrepreneurial, emotional, and strategic intelligences (Edwards & Dampson, 2018).

In summary, a critical point in the literature framing WLB is about the dualistic roles of female teachers who are expected to combine both teaching and family life while consolidating their careers. Career consolidation requires an exemplary teacher leadership, whereby the teacher is able to influence teaching and learning and play

the role of modeling the way. This role is very important for the development of young adults in the secondary school environment. It is expected that the female teacher becomes a mother, a counselor, a supporter, and a disciplinary leader, especially among young girls. This means WLB interacts with modeling the way for students. Teachers must communicate a sense of professional satisfaction with their work and respect for their chosen career life and its possibilities, especially within teaching profession, which is unnaturally complex (Ball & Forzani, 2009).

Method

Design

The research design is a descriptive survey intended to solicit the opinions of female SHS teachers about their WLB and career progression in the midst of a high societal expectation for them to be role models. Such a design is to “gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 180). This design has the advantage of fact finding, providing the ground for discovery, and producing data for assessing the opinions of female SHS teachers in the study area.

The study sample

First, 21 public SHSs in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly were purposively selected based on the gender of the heads of the school (e.g., headmistress and/or assistant headmistress only), then the responsibility level of the headship, (e.g., considering the staff population, and the number of years the headmistress or assistant headmistress had served in that particular school based on GES records). Second, a simple random sampling based on the Yamane’s 1967 formula was employed to select 200 female teachers from among 400. The formula is expressed as

where n = sample size, N = population, and e = level of precision,

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

$$\text{i.e., } n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.05)^2} = 200$$

(where a 95% confidence level and $p = .5$ [level of significance]).

(cited in Israel, 1992, p. 4)

The response rate was 97.5 percent ($n = 195$). All the respondents were female heads and teachers. The discussions present demographics and then research questions follow. Tables 1 and 2 show demographics of interest: social life and work life, respectively.

Table 1 shows the majority of the respondents are married (62.6%), with children (84.6%). Over 80 percent have more than one child. This highlights the family or social life of the respondents. At this point in life, they are preoccupied with a dual role of raising a family and progressing at work. In addition, Table 2 shows the

majority (80%) has 10 or less years teaching experience. They mostly work in mixed-gender schools (71.3%), and hold a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree. The respondents are mostly principal superintendents (56.9%) and serve as subject tutors (79.5%). These are socially responsible, professional, experienced, and respectable teachers.

Table 1: Sociodemographic distribution

Social demographics	Variations	<i>n</i>	%
Marriage status	Married	122	62.6
	Single	64	32.8
	Divorced	9	4.6
Children	Yes	165	84.6
	No	30	15.4
Number of children	One	56	28.7
	Two	88	45.1
	Three	39	20.0
	Four	12	6.2

Table 2: Work-oriented demographic distribution (*n* = 195)

Work demographics	Variations	<i>n</i>	%
Teaching experiences	1–5 years	87	44.6
	6–10 years	69	35.4
	>10 years	39	20.0
Gender of students in teachers' schools	Boys only	0	0.0
	Girls only	56	28.7
	Mixed	139	71.3
Academic qualifications	Master's degree	90	46.2
	Bachelor degree	104	53.3
	Higher diploma (HND)	1	0.5
Rank of the teachers	Principal superintendent	111	56.9
	Deputy director II	12	6.3
	Assistant director II	49	25.1
	Assistant director I	23	11.8
Designation of the teachers	Heads of department	11	7.2
	Housemistress	26	13.3
	Subject tutors	155	79.5

Data collection instrument

A questionnaire was developed from the literature with three segments. The first queried demographic characteristics, including the respondents' family status, academic qualifications, working experience, present designation in the school, and

present rank in the GES. The last two segments had closed-ended questions based on WLB perceptions, satisfaction with working hours, the ability to balance work life, missing quality time with family and friends due to the pressure of work, and an organization's initiatives to manage the work life of its employees.

The researchers developed and tested the study questionnaire to determine the validity and reliability at other SHSs in two different districts. The test allowed face-value content validity and the review of items such as, "Are you satisfied with working hours?" and "Do your working hours fit well with your private life?" Most of the items have a Likert scale of 1–5, where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. After all the questionnaires were retrieved, responses were coded with SPSS 20.0 for calculations of the central tendencies, variances, and chi-square for differences.

Results and discussions

The results from the survey provide answers to the three questions raised about WLB among female teachers in Ghana: 1) What are the opinions of female teachers on WLB as professionals? 2) What are the support system(s) available for the WLB of female SHS teachers? 3) How are female teachers modeling the way for other female career aspirants, particularly the school children?

Opinions on WLB

The following discussions were based on the responses to each question. For simplicity, most of the discussions focused on data aggregates. Table 3 presents the results to question 1: *What are the opinions of female teachers on WLB as professionals?* It is followed by discussions.

Table 3: Opinions of female teachers on the concept work-life balance (n = 195)

Items	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
Satisfied with your working hours	0.0	73.3	0.0	26.7	0.0
Time spent on domestic activities daily	0.0	73.3	0.0	26.7	0.0
Working hours and private life balance	8.7	36.9	11.8	42.1	0.5
Work interferences with family life	15.4	30.3	20.5	25.1	8.7
Missing quality time with family and friends	15.4	30.3	20.5	25.1	8.7

Notes: Mean of means = 2.71; 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

When the respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with their working hours, Table 3 reveals that the majority (73.3%) responded "agreed" (i.e., 4 on the Likert scale), which means few (26.7%) said they disagreed. This contradicts Louise Thornthwaite's (2004) study of European, North American, and Australian

workers, which asserted there is a strong preference for flexibility in working hours among female career seekers. Thornthwaite's (2004) study mentioned a significant dissatisfaction stemming from unmet demands from working parents for shortened working hours in order to attend to family responsibilities. The author (Thornwaite, 2004) claimed that as a result, most female professionals are dissatisfied with WLB and resorting to part-time or flexible work.

Second, many (45.6%) respondents disagreed that employers (in this case, the GES) do not offer equal access to alternative working hours and provisions for balancing work and private life (despite the provisions in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana). Many (45.7%) were worried about work interfering with their family life and missing quality time with family and friends. But this may have a significant sociocultural ramification among Ghanaian women, because the ordinary Ghanaian woman hardly complains assertively. Traditionally, those who do complain are seen as recalcitrant, stubborn outliers. This sociocultural element is reflected in 73.3 percent of respondents choosing to be satisfied with their working hours as teachers, even though the contrast is evident in Table 3, which raises concerns about data conflicts. For example, 45.7 percent are worried about work interferences, and yet 73.3 percent "agreed" they are satisfied with their working hours.

Data also shows that respondents have issues with missing quality time with family and friends. (This has a combined score of 45.7% responding "neutral" or "agree" to "Missing quality time with family and friends.") The results show that the majority of the respondents were of the view that the hours at their work places *do not fit* quite well (mean of means = 2.71). Respondents are worried that working hours interfere with their private lives (see Table 3). This supports the notion put forward by Saritha Madipelli, V.S.Veluri Sarma, and Y. Chinnappaiah (2013) that organizations with poor working conditions and long working hours do not favor employees, especially most female employees with families. Yet the aggregated view of the respondents is a significant finding. Almost half of the respondents (45.7%) view missing quality time with family and friends as a significant worry but consider it a career sacrifice (occupational hazard). This is also consistent with Erik Eriksonian's belief that career consolidation typically calls for sacrifice and preoccupation with self-resiliency (Vaillant, 1993). Career consolidation demands a period of enormous sacrifice and self-preoccupation, which translates to a significant resilience in adult life.

Sacrifice is an enormous part of the work of teaching (Ball & Forzani, 2009). Deborah Loewenberg Ball and Francesca M. Forzani (2009) wrote that "the locus of the role of teacher is other people—learners. Acting in learners' interests is the core imperative of the role. Acting in their interest entails the deliberate suspension of aspects of one's self" (p. 499). John L. Holland's (1997) Theory of Career Choice (RI-ASEC) maintains that career choice correlates with job environments, personality, and respectability. Female teachers' choices and mindsets affect their views. Their career occupation can be daunting, but it remains a choice that emanates from ambition, passion, and a "self-focus" on the intricacies of the work of teaching (Ball & Forzani, 2009). Maintaining WLB is complicated by the contrast between the challenge of missing families and friends and job satisfaction. Furthermore, succeeding as a role model is another pressure that can have an effect on WLB.

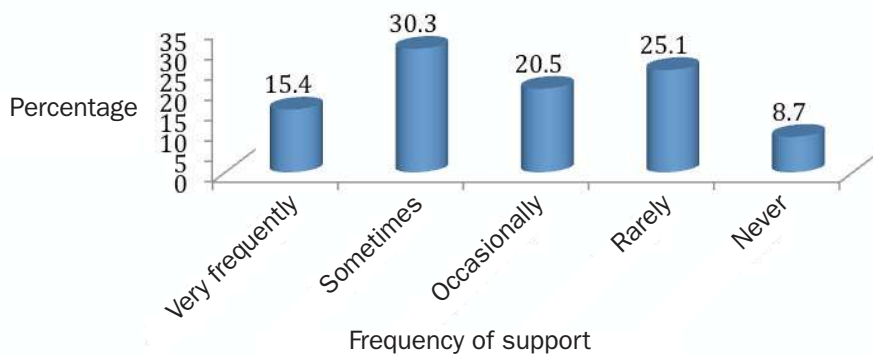
Available support systems

Discovering what support systems are available for maintaining WLB was achieved with research question 2: *What are the support system(s) available for the WLB of female SHS teachers?*

When the respondents were asked the ratio of time they spend daily on domestic activities, only 3.6 percent indicated less than two hours, a fair number (46.2%) indicated between two and four hours, while a significant number (50.3%) indicated they spend more than four hours a day on domestic activities. These responses indicate that the majority of the respondents spend a significant amount of time on domestic activities daily, and yet they have to work several hours at school to progress to higher ranks in their career (see Table 2 for ranks in GES). This is a reflection of the changes in Ghanaian cosmopolitan lifestyle: more and more women are managing homes, family affairs, and social responsibilities, while still working as career women.

This research question explores where female teachers get their support from in order to effectively combine work life with other social roles. An item asked how frequently respondents get support to allow them to function effectively at work, at home, or in any social activities. Figure 1 shows the frequency of support they received for managing their lifestyle and maintaining WLB.

Figure 1. Managing Frequency of support received to help manage work-life balance



First, respondents were asked whether they felt able to balance their work life properly with or without support from others. Figure 1 shows an interesting distribution of responses, ranging from never (8.7%) having any form of support to sometimes (30.3%). Based on this analysis, it can be deduced that the majority of the respondents were of the view that they were “neutral” about their ability to balance their work life without the necessary support. Presumably some feel as though they can manage without support. This result is in contrast with the 2013 study conducted by Maria Ahemad, Anupa Chaudhary, and Denish Kumar Karush, which revealed that work life and personal life are interconnected and interdependent in such a way that their success or otherwise is dependent on significant support from outside. Most Ghanaian female teachers who responded said they receive support occasionally (20.5%) and rarely (25.1%), and few respondents (8.7%) said they never have any direct support. Only 15.4 percent said they get support very frequently. Yet, Table 2 shows that 20.5 percent have additional responsibilities as heads of department and housemistresses. In Table 4, the highest mean score is with the item on “flexible work timing” ($M = 2.98$) with 70.3 percent responding “neutral.”

Table 4: Organization initiatives to manage work-life balance (n = 195)

Is your school able to provide ...	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	Mean
Flexible work timing	4.96	12.3	70.3	8.2	4.6	2.96
Maternity leave	21.0	27.7	39.5	11.8	0.0	2.42
Job-share options	8.2	34.4	32.8	21.0	3.6	2.77
Option to work from home	13.8	25.6	43.1	13.8	3.6	2.68

Notes: Mean of means = 2.71; 5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree

When respondents were asked whether they think flexible working hours will help support WLB, it was revealed that a significant percentage of teachers (41.5%) think flexible hours can be a step in a positive direction. Only a few respondents (16.4%) disagreed with this statement. However, another significant percentage of respondents (42.1%) was undecided about this statement. A mean value of 3.30 confirms that the majority of respondents were close to a neutral position regarding the idea of female teachers needing flexible working hours. Again, this contradicts the findings by Sussanna Shagvaliyeva and Rashad Yazdanifard (2014), who examined the impact of flexible working hours on WLB outside Ghana. Even though their study further revealed that flexible working hours reduced stress and increased employee well-being, this study found Ghana respondents neutral about flexible hours. The Ghanaian female teachers' responses are consistent with the findings by Sahana Maiya and Professor M.M. Bagali (2014), who reported that working mothers faced difficulty in balancing their work and family responsibility because of the need for flexibility in working hours. In Table 5, we see many respondents remaining neutral about the suggestion of needing support in terms of flexible working hours (42.1%) and also split in decisions on whether "We get enough support from supervisors and colleagues" (Neutral = 33.8% and Agree = 32.3%).

Table 5: Suggestions of support needed for the WLB of female teachers (n = 195)

	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	Mean
We need flexible working hours	3.6	12.8	42.1	33.3	8.2	3.30
We can work from home sometimes	8.7	30.8	25.6	34.9	0.0	2.87
We need time off during school holidays/emergencies	0.0	12.8	19.0	64.6	3.6	3.59
We need support from other family members	0.0	16.9	11.8	55.4	15.9	3.70
We get enough support from supervisors and colleagues	0.0	22.1	33.8	32.3	11.8	3.34

Notes: Mean of means = 2.71; 5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree

It was revealed from the study that the majority of the female teachers generally agreed that one of the sources of support that would make a significant impact is time off during school holidays and/or emergencies. The majority of respondents (68.2%) agreed that they need time off during school holidays and emergencies ($M = 3.73$). When the respondents were asked whether they have support from family members,

the study revealed the majority (71.3%) agreed that they have some kind of support from their family members ($M = 3.7$). This result is contrary to previous studies (Annie & Anitha, 2014) that claimed that there was no motivation for family support regarding the WLB of female academicians. This is a significant finding related to the sociocultural element (or family involvement in Ghana) of support systems for WLB.

Another interesting finding is that when the respondents were asked whether they have support from their supervisor or colleagues, “We get enough support from supervisors and colleagues,” the study revealed respondents (44.1% in total) said they remained “neutral” support from their supervisors/or colleagues ($M = 3.7$, 33.8%). It is worrisome to see some respondents remained neutral about receiving support from their supervisors/or colleagues in terms of WLB. This finding reflects the culture of neutrality surrounding female career orientation in Ghana. This is significant evidence of the need for policy implementation and practice.

Modeling the way

Female teachers are role models in every respect. Research question 3 asks: How are female teachers modeling the way for other female career aspirants, particularly school children?

All the respondents are in secondary schools and their work orientation has a significant influence on the students around them. Table 2 indicates that the majority (80.0%) of respondents have teaching experience up to ten years. Most (53.3%) have the minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree. Such teachers are career focused, respectable professionals who have a requisite interest in teaching at the secondary school. Such teachers are leaders in the learning environment. Kouzes and Posner (2012) mentioned that in such cases, these teachers model the way as leaders and provide inspiration. Their demonstration of clear personal values will affirm a shared vision for others—male or female colleagues and, more importantly, female student aspirants. Again, this affirms the observation of Alexander Edwards and Samuel Aboagye (2015) that many educators in Ghana have the potential to be transformational leaders and model the way in the community of learners.

Based on the female teachers' designated positions in schools, ranging from subject tutors (79.5%) to housemistresses (13.3%) to heads of department (7.2%), their influence on teaching and learning cannot be ignored. Their leadership is implied and their moral dimension is assumed. Yet, these female teachers might have to demonstrate their potential far more than their male counterparts. Table 2 shows, however, that the majority (71.3%) of the respondents are in mixed schools and they are performing. Whereby the examples they have to set through the “alignment of actions with shared values” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 27) might have caused female teachers to remain focused and comparatively consolidated in order to face the competition. Their abilities or competencies must confirm their authority on any subject matter to their fellow colleagues, causing extra demands and expectations for female teachers, which leads to extra stress on WLB.

It can be inferred that those respondents who are in the girls-only schools (28.7%) are likely to be role models for the aspirant girls in their respective careers.

Their success in WLB can have a significant effect on the perception of the students they teach and influence the school environment. Many studies have shown the differences in the genders, particularly in leadership (Edwards & Aboagye, 2015; Glynn & Defordy, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Hypothetically, the respondents of this study are, therefore, unknowingly modeling the way for aspirant students through their competencies and professional aptitudes. Work-life balance may be by choice or attitudes, yet the success is based on support systems, self-beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1982), and leadership competencies (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Conclusions, implications, and recommendations

Conclusions

Most respondents of this study are satisfied with their working conditions as teachers. The work of teaching is still a better fit than most jobs for career women balancing work pressure and private or social roles, especially in Ghana. Because the study reported that most of the respondents spend over two to four hours a day on their domestic home management, most female teachers sacrifice quality of life and time with family and friends because of the pressure of work.

Concerning the study objective of investigating support systems when it comes to WLB, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents acknowledged the need for more support from their social circles, and that they want the school to provide flexible hours. Apparently, most female respondents remain neutral when it comes to discussions of this nature because of the apparent disapproval of school authorities, but evidence shows that female teachers have managed WLB well. Their employers (GES) seldom provide flexible hours, job-share options, or time off during emergencies. This may lead to cumulative stress and unnecessary imbalances. The support systems may be written in GES policy, but when it comes to implementation at all levels, it seems to be practically difficult.

Finally, with respect to examining the female teachers as role models, the study revealed that this balancing act of maintaining WLB while teaching in SHS must be taken seriously. Female teachers model the way as teacher leaders in the classroom and in the school, where they serve as housemistresses and heads of departments. The female teachers balance their career goals with societal demands and expectations, which often compete or interfere with their private lives. The teachers are models for both boys and girls, yet more girls look up to these teachers as examples. These female teachers use their “stories” to inspire and encourage the girls. The management of schools and employers (GES) ought to recognize this stressful expectation and grant female teachers the space and support to enable them to act and train the next generation of young adults, both girls and boys, how to balance family life and work life for the future workplace.

Implications for policy

Institutions ought to design policies that make strong provision for both genders to manage WLB successfully. First of all, policy documentation, evidence, and practical issues should inform policy leadership. The health and well-being of female teachers through WLB should be recognized and documented. The documentation should

have signs and symptoms associated with WLB challenges, stresses, and effects. The sociocultural ignorance about and denial of WLB should be eradicated from the Ghanaian education system. Policy should spell out all manners of cultural resistance aiming to alienate the role of women to the background and establish associated punitive action in the education system.

There should be policies that encourage championing WLB at every opportunity in the workplace. The GES policies on equal opportunity and equal rights should be highlighted and all bottlenecks hindering their full realization should be tackled. At each level of administration policy, leadership should be promoted and encouraged by top management and supervisors. The policy should spell out consequences and punitive actions against those who deliberately impede female support systems in the schools. The policy must encourage those who excel in WLB, against all odds, at the various educational administrative levels. Such WLB champions must be rewarded openly at all levels.

Implications for further research

Research should investigate the practices and exceptional cases of WLB nationwide in Ghana to serve as great incentives for female teachers. Government and advocacy organizations should fund studies to bring out evidence, scholarly focus, and best practices to eradicate ignorance about WLB in the Ghanaian workplace. Studies should look at various levels of teacher education and sensitize potential teachers about WLB threats and opportunities. Large-scale studies can be done at trainee levels to examine how female students can cope with the stress of combining studies, career, and family life. Teacher training sessions, curricula, and activities can highlight an adult's journeys through career life, with prominence given to WLB stories, challenges, and regrets.

Furthermore, a sample of teacher leaders who excelled at work, irrespective of challenges associated with their career, should be studied qualitatively. Such qualitative investigations should be documented and published in order to have a significant impact on WLB scholarship. Contextual studies and comparative studies may also inform the global audience.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence, the following recommendations are put forward:

- Flexible working hours, working from home, and the use of technology such as social media must all be explored in the Ghanaian education system to help foster WLB. Teachers should be allowed flexible hours to mark and discuss assignments using the necessary technology from the comfort of their homes, similar to an online learning environment, and policy should spell out the acceptable limits and practices.
- A WLB support system must be included in GES policies and practices to align with modern lifestyle. The human resources department of the GES should encourage and enable female teachers to enhance their career progression with minimal disruption to their family life and with maximum support from all

levels of leadership by allowing spouses and significant other persons to support home activities. Therefore, policy should consider the idea of a paternity leave for husbands when female teachers are stressed with homemaking activities.

- The GES's professional development practices should encourage circuit supervisors/teacher colleagues to support SHS female teachers, especially through formal in-service training. Leadership should be mindful of female teachers' WLB and psychological needs. Other people who relate and interact in any way with the female teacher striving for WLB should be conscious of this and offer maximum cooperation.
- The GES's system should encourage the art of *modeling the way* by nurturing leadership potential through peer-to-peer mentoring, volunteerism, and deliberate content development at school-based in-service training (InSET) and/or cluster-based InSET sessions. Female teachers should be encouraged to reach out to serve as role models for girls. Girls should be exposed to WLB at an early stage in their young adulthood in order to engage in multitasking roles with ease and to encourage them to go into teaching careers.
- Finally, support systems, especially in terms of counseling at the SHS, should be formalized and made available at cluster centers as part of the school ecology. Maintaining WLB can be stressful and therefore GES must support the socioeconomic and psychological needs of female teachers, especially at the secondary schools. Because of the fact that at the secondary school, female teachers have both academic and social roles to play, they must be recognized and rewarded for parental supervision at the boarding facilities, counseling and resolving conflicts, and managing stressful and disruptive behaviors among teenagers. Psychologists should be deployed periodically to assist in the female teachers' sociocultural adjustment to WLB, stress management sessions should be offered, and a group therapy practiced.

Study limitations

This entire work is situated in a seemingly homogeneous community where there may be a significant limitation on diverse opinions. The methodology is limiting the extent to which inferential analyses will provide much more evidences for generalizability. In other words, the opinion of employers, male colleagues, and other experts could have enriched the discussions. However, the issue of WLB in the Ghana education system at all levels—i.e., from teaching at the basic school level through the secondary to tertiary level—needs investigation to scale up and discover nationwide WLB challenges, the plight of female teachers, and the support system they need in order to be progress in the career and serve as role models. Quantitative methodology is limiting, it has its issues with data integrity and reliability, and there-

fore such WLB studies may benefit from mixing methods and/or using the qualitative paradigm, which may give a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through female teachers' personalized stories.

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