

On the question of work-life balance in Africa: The case of women administrators in public universities in Ghana

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Abstract: Organizations in their quest to enhance work-life balance have been admonished to institute many human resource interventions including flexible and alternate work schedules. Meanwhile, promoting policies and interventions that facilitate work-life balance require a deeper introspection of effectively diagnosing and assessing the sources of stressors that tend to obstruct this optimal balance. The overarching question underpinning this study is: *how does the context of women professionals serve as a 'catalyst' or 'obstruction' to competing work-life balance?* Taking inspiration from the work-life border theory, the study designs a comprehensive framework to assess the sources of work-life conflict among women administrators from three selected public universities of Ghana. Adopting a case study design within qualitative research approach, a total of the 74 respondents are selected, 22 are sampled from each of the three institutions (making a total of 66 from the three institutions), while eight (8) are selected from national institutions and associations. Elite interviews and focus group discussions are the main instruments of primary data collection. Among its key findings, the study underscores how the socio-contextual forces, economic and physiological factors could help serve as a catalyst or obstruction to work-life balance. Beyond these forces which occur on the part of the individual employee, organizational forces and demands of the particular job could help compound or lessen the plight of women administrators in their quest to maintain work-life balance. It is important for organizations and their human resource management outfits to take into account the human resource management information systems very well in all their personnel policies especially how they react with different people.

Keywords: work-life balance; work-life conflict; women professionals; socio-cultural; HRM interventions

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of work-life balance remains a very important issue that confronts many employees and organizations as well. This phenomenon has even become more crucial in the wake of COVID 19 which has increasingly encouraged a more blend between the office space and home domain as the already thin line between the duo has been broken (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). The idea of increased working hours poses an enormous stress on the everyday life of a great number of people, creating work-life imbalance and stressful lifestyles for employees both at the workplace and at home (Giurge & Bohns, 2020). Any imbalances in the work-life relationship do have cascading impact on the quality of role performance in

both domains, which also has socio-cultural and economic implications on workers (Mudrak et al., 2018).

That regard, work-life balance remains a major concern for people and institutions concerned about the quality of working life in relation to the broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). This is because a balanced work-life score offers an organisation with a creative employee (Moore, 2007), while disparity in the work-life balance brings about depressed staff (Sandhya et al, 2011). The situation becomes more problematic for women who as human beings almost always have to juggle between the economic and social imperatives with parallel expectations from both pulling with a centrifugal force. In other words, the whole idea of work-life balance among women professionals is centered on their different critical roles as both economic and social beings (Powell et al, 2019; Greenhaus & Powel, 2012). The woman at the centre of the concept of work-life balance, is perceived as an economic resource at the workplace, and as a social resource to family and community development. As a result, the interplay between the economic and social roles of this employee always generates imbalance, where the dominance of the functionality of one role over the other affects the overall performance of the individual in both ends. More problematic is that the inter-role stressors from work and life domains are considered to be mutually dissenting (Lewis, Gambles & Rapoport, 2007). Whereas employers demand the maximum concentration, innovativeness and experience from individuals as employees within a defined time period, families and communities require the attention, care and guidance of these same individuals who are parents and relatives at certain time periods.

There have been attempts by researchers to study concerns about work-life balance, job satisfaction and career progression among women (Adame et al., 2016; Bateman et al., 2016) which have since recognised the conflict between family duties and career demands. Adame et al. (2015) contend that such conflict comes about due to the fact that some aspects of work and family roles are irreconcilable and mostly is a question of the career phase or family stage of women (Beigi et al., 2018). In their efforts to address these concerns, many organizations have responded are still responding by instituting interventions that reinforce the quest for best practices on work-life balance (Ribeiro-Soriano &

Urbano, 2010). To adequately understand and to prudently respond to this noble concern, scholars have made a case for a broader and more diverse approach to ascertain how respective social groups and people grapple between work and life domains (see Kamenou, 2008). A cursory understanding of these diverse contexts remains necessary to prevent a shallow conceptualization or impression of the experiences and needs of various social groups.

Organizations in their quest to enhance work-life balance have been admonished to institute many human resource interventions including flexible and alternate work schedules. Meanwhile, promoting policies and interventions that facilitate work-life balance require a deeper introspection of effectively diagnosing and assessing the sources of stressors that tend to obstruct this optimal balance. In most cases, the woman professional becomes worse off as the work demands tend to take more of her time and attention thereby derailing how they conduct affairs in the social vicissitudes. Meanwhile, there is a lacuna in the extant literature which made Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) posit that efforts to manage work-life balance should first consider the sources of competing work-life demands. To contribute to the literature and to fill the gap, the overarching question underpinning this study is: *how does the context of women professionals serve as a source or potential source of competing work-life conflict?* The study set out to examine the sources of work-life balance among women professionals of public universities in Africa using cases from the Ghanaian context.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the review of concepts and guided by the work-life border theory, the study has developed the conceptual framework below to guide the study.

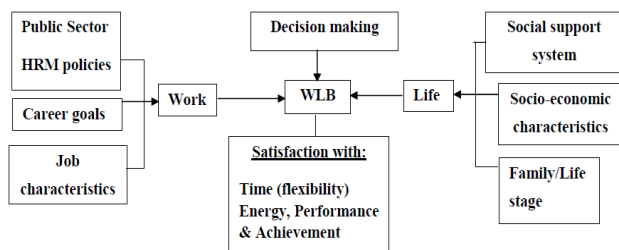


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for managing work-life balance among female administrators

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Developed by author

Figure 1 indicates that work and life role activities are iterative in a continuum as suggested by the work-life border theory. In an educational institution just like many others work demands are mainly determined by the job descriptions and human resource policies which detail out the expected roles and responsibilities of employees in the organisation. The role scarcity theory explains that individuals may not have the time and energy to effectively perform their roles

from both work and life domains and as such, require some human resource management policies to promote flexibility and permeability of roles to enable them meet the demands from the two domains. According to McCarthy et al. (2010), the utilisation of work-life balance strategies by employees is partially propelled by their perceptions and career progression goals.

Those employees who perceive organisational work-life balance policies as compatible with their career development goals adopt them and whilst the reverse also holds.

Another element that tends to affect the working environment of employees is the *job Characteristics* or nature of the job. Job characteristics include the operational approach of an organisation and its operational structures. The operational approach considers the performance target system. Is performance measured based on the time one spends at work or operational targets? If it is the former, it mostly may compel workers to overstay at their workplaces to demonstrate their commitments to their superiors which may inadvertently breed an imbalance with their family demands. On the other hand, over ambitious operational targets could also compel workers to work at home, which disrupts the boundary between working time and family time as well as influence one's expected roles in the family.

Operational structures, as part of job characteristics, examine working characteristics where some employees could step in for others when they are absent without any serious disruptions in operational processes. It also shows the supervisory roles in helping workers to manage their work and family demands to avoid conflicts. Here, the personality and management style of superiors come to play. The extent to which superiors are flexible, empathetic, compassionate and adopt the human relation approach to management would help strongly encourage work-life balance whilst the reverse also holds.

The framework also provides that family environment in relation to maintaining work-life balance is largely influenced by the available social support systems, socio-economic characteristics and life stages of workers (Ungerson & Yeandle, 2005). Life stage refers to the complex association between age, number of children, marital status, ages of children, and career development plan

According to McElwain et al. (2005), socioeconomic characteristics of workers that influence their work-life relationships include gender, age, income levels, social class, job positions, marital status, and level of education. These elements influence work-life balance because they all come with different roles and expectations in family life as well as present various levels of resources to enable workers to meet demands from both work and life domains.

III. METHODS

The study was carried out within the interpretivism research paradigm which informed the choice of research design. Consequently, the case study design was selected for study. The case of three public universities (UG, KNUST, and UCC) was purposively selected and studied. Both primary and secondary data were adopted. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select a total of 74 respondents for the study. Out of the 74 respondents, 22 were sampled from each institution (making a total of 66 from the three institutions), while eight (8) were selected from national institutions and associations relevant to women welfare and affairs. It included one (1) representative each from the human resource departments of the selected universities, one (1) representative each from the Social Welfare Department and Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection, 18 executives of women caucuses in the three selected universities, six (6) National Executives of the Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA), and 45 female administrators. Purposive sampling was used to select the institutional representatives because of their in-depth knowledge and unique roles in the enactment and implementation of policies and practices regulating work-life balance among female administrators in public universities. Semi-structured interviews focus group discussions were used as instruments for primary data collection. Separate interview guides were developed for the female administrators, representatives of the human resource departments, social welfare department, and Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP). Data was analysed using the thematic analysis to ascertain the themes emerging from similarities and variations in responses given by participants.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Sources of competing work-life demands on female administrators

This was imperative because Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) posited that efforts to manage work-life balance should first consider the sources of competing work-life demands. This enables people to devise strategies to effectively manage the activities and allocated times in each domain to balance work-life demands. From the data, the following themes were derived and discussed.

Socio-contextual factors

Mostly in African settings and for that matter Ghana, activities and professional roles tend to be defined and interpreted through social and cultural perspectives. From our discussion with respondents, key themes that emerged relating to socio-cultural underpinnings and worldview of the Ghanaian people which would have implications on work-life balance have been identified and presented in this section. The study observed that the context of one's home and the peculiarity of their partner and phase in the marriage journey

also have implications on how they are able to navigate between work and life domains in a less stressful manner.

Marriage

Marriage was found to be a critical source of competing work-life demand on female administrators in public universities which without proper interventions easily become source of conflict. Essentially, respondents regarded marriage as a blessing, that notwithstanding, some conditions and imperatives in marriage tend to pose greater difficulties for them to ensure a balance between the family demands and work.

Some of the conditions identified include the context of the marriage especially whether the couples stay together in one accommodation or where each stay in a different place. Thus, female administrators who are not domiciled together with their husbands would have to be paying regular visits to maintain the relationship and preserve the marriage. The demands of preparing to regularly pay visit to the husband among the demands of work pressure tend to disrupt the work-life balance. In the course field data gathering, one female administrator from UG who finds herself in this category mentioned:

" [I] always retire to bed very tired because of so many house duties especially on Mondays when I had visited my husband during the weekends and have to rush back home on Sunday night or early Monday morning to prepare for work... sometimes waking up from bed to prepare for work becomes very difficult... you come to work and you still feel tired and sleepy... it sometimes affects the quality of my work output "

This imperative of rationing between work and marriage demands tend to pose serious and threatening situations to most female administrators. In explaining this situation, another respondent from KNUST not domiciled with her husband emotionally made this submission:

"My sister, as I'm speaking to you now, my husband is threatening me with a divorce that if I don't quit my job to come and stay with him in Sunyani... I don't know the kind of job I'm going to do there, but he is insisting... it's not easy for me at all... I'm very much confused... I get to work always in a confused state... I smile because I have to but deep within me, I'm a confused woman... sometimes I vent my anger and frustration on my subordinates which I regret later".

This point was corroborated by another respondent from UCC who averred:

"I have thought on a number of occasions to leave my husband because I don't see his usefulness anymore... I do everything all by myself, yet he doesn't appreciate me... he hardly comes here... he always wants us to go to his place... so if even a month and I don't get time to go there because of job demands, he won't come here... I pray I don't break my marital vows one day... yes, I am a woman and have feelings

so sometimes I feel attracted to my male colleagues which is not my fault”.

The foregoing statements demonstrate how marriage imperatives could create confusion for female administrators in the workplace. The extension of such frustration may inadvertently affect the focus and the quality of work done in the office (professional) domain. Thus, family issues have the tendency to negatively influence the quality of time, emotional feelings and mindset a female administrator spends in the work domain.

Nature of husband

From interactions with respondents, especially, those who domicile (stay together) with their husbands led to the classification of husbands into either ‘supportive’ or ‘non-supportive’. It was revealed that a major source of competing demands in the work-life nexus of female administrators in public universities happens to be the type of husband. The study found that female administrators with supportive husbands were effectively able to attend to their work-life demands without major emotional stress. Thus, supportive husbands provided support to their wives (female administrators) in their family roles to ease pressure on them to balance work-life demands. In contributing to this theme, a female administrator from KNUST submitted:

“my husband picks the children from school before picking me to the house... he assists them with their homework and engages them after work, while I concentrate on cooking and other house chores... he helps in preparing the children for school as well... this helps us to leave for work early”.

This point was given support by another respondent from UCC who indicated:

“my husband really supports me with the house chores... he cooks well so I don’t get disturbed when I’m still engaged at the office outside working hours... he understands the nature of my job”.

The foregoing point on ‘supportive’ husbands was seconded by a participant from UG who avers:

“my husband makes it easy for me to combine my family roles with that of my job duties”.

On the question of unsupportive husbands, some respondents shared their experiences to demonstrate how the phenomenon clearly affects work-life balance. They began by conceptualizing ‘non-supportive’ to mean those husbands who would not provide satisfactory assistance to their wives in carrying out household chores and in attending to other family responsibilities. Respondents indicated that female administrators with non-supportive husbands struggle to meet work and family competing demands. A female administrator from UG contends:

I have to create time for both job and family demands... you always retire to bed very tired, while he goes around with

friends to have fun... I’m always wearing this hairstyle because I don’t even get time for myself”.

This point was given support by another female administrator from KNUST who indicated:

I sometimes ignore some of his requests because of tiredness and frustration I have to endure in meeting demands and pressures from both work and family without his support”.

Another participant corroborated the issue by a participant from UCC who averred:

I have to run around the whole day with excuses to my superior officer just to meet some family demands and occupational demands... my husband is not supportive at all... sometimes when I see men sending and picking up their kids from school I wonder where mine comes from.

From the above narratives, one observes that the critical role played by supportive husbands in ensuring those female administrators in public universities effectively combine their work roles with family duties cannot be overemphasized. In other words, individuals who have supportive husbands do get some ‘breathing space’ or able to effectively manage work-life balance because the household demands are lessened due to the helping hands offered by their husbands. On the other hand, those with non-supportive husbands are overwhelmed with household chores and numerous family obligations which further compounds the job task thereby causing work-life conflict. The results show the frustration, stress, and strain married female administrators with non-supportive husbands have to contend with in order to meet their work-life demands. It also shows the importance of the roles played by husbands in supporting wives to balance their work-life demands. The results above showed that issues about marriage played an essential role in the sources of work-life demands on female administrators in public universities. The results further showed that female administrators across the three public universities had similar issues regarding marriage and its impact on their work-life balance. This was because the three universities were located in cosmopolitan areas with a mix-up of several tribes or ethnic groups and people from diverse backgrounds with different perceptions about marriage. As a result, cultural differences among the people of Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast where UG, KNUST, and UCC are respectively located, have minimal influence on marriages. In other words, the cosmopolitan areas in Ghana have assumed a universal or common cultural identity which explains the similarities in the marital factors influencing work-life demands of female administrators in public universities.

Family stage

Another social factor identified as a source of competing work-life demand on female administrators is the family stage. It is defined to encapsulate the marital status of female administrators and the growth stages of their wards. With this factor, the sampled female administrators from the three public universities were organised into five cohorts; singles,

married without children, married with children within five years of age, married with children within six and 17 years of age, and married with children above 18 years of age. These family stages are deemed important in analysing work-life balance among professional women because they all have implications on the family demands on the workers.

The study observed that female administrators who are single, largely, do not find work-life demands as more problematic. However, those officers who are married with children under the age of five years and below 12 years complained of always having divided attention both at work and at home. Essentially, those administrators who are in the early stages of marriage or at least have their wards to be in their early formative years tend to face greater levels of work-life conflict. This reflected in the submissions given by respondents which suggests a relationship between the age range of female administrators' children and their work-life balance. For example, a female administrator from UG with children under five years of age stated:

“At work, you will be thinking about kids in other people’s care, whether they are handling them well or not, while thinking about your uncompleted job tasks at home”.

This was corroborated by another female administrator from KNUST who also averred:

“Honestly, the three months maternity leave is woefully inadequate... how do you expect us to do six months exclusive breastfeeding with three months maternity leave?... initially, what I did was to wake up in the night and press as much milk as I can for my baby. But I realized that it was taking a toll on my health because when he wakes up, I can’t sleep again... for me what I did was to take my annual leave... I was not even fully fit after the three months maternity leave”.

In providing support to the above theme, another female administrator from UCC contended:

“It is really difficult preparing the kids for school... you have to wake up early, prepare their food, iron their uniforms, bath and dress them... even after waking up at dawn, I mostly get to the office late”.

It was, however, found that female administrators of public universities with children between 12 years and 18 years of age were largely satisfied with their work-life balance. From the study, some of the respondents with children within the ages of 12 and 18 years reported that such children support other young siblings as well as help mothers to perform family duties. This helps to reduce the activity load and stress of female administrators in the family domain, thereby enabling them to concentrate much on their professional job. One of the respondents from KNUST indicated that the eldest son picks the younger siblings from school to the house, while she is at work. This theme was given support by another respondent from UCC who reported:

My eldest child within 12 and 18 years of age help the younger siblings to prepare their homework and prepares them for school.

Interestingly, the hypothesis got distorted along the way as the study, contrary to the linear progression rather observed that those female administrators with children above 18 years of age rather complained of difficulties in meeting their work-life demands. Such respondents are mostly above 50 years of age. Some of the respondents attributed their difficulties in coping with job stress to menopause and other health related issues as well as shifting of their focus to family and grandparenting issues. In explaining female administrator from KNUST with children above the age of 18 years stated:

“I take care of my grandchildren to enable my daughter cope well with her job and marriage in Accra”. Another respondent from UG reported, I sometimes feel very uncomfortable at work... you will feel too cold with the air conditioner on but when you put it off too you will feel too hot and be sweating all over... the menopausal stage is not easy at all... just that because of education, we understand some of the changes the body is going through”.

From the results, other family matters coupled with menopausal changes in the bodies of female administrators in public universities in Ghana makes it difficult for them to meet effectively their work-life demands.

Physiological factors

Menstrual and reproduction processes

Menstrual and reproduction processes are natural physiological forces found to pose greater risk factors to female administrators in their work-life balance imperatives. Issues concerning menstrual and reproductive processes (pregnancy) were about the discomfort, pain, and strain associated with the two, and the little regard given to them in the execution of job duties and family responsibilities. The study found that some menstruation and pregnancy periods were associated with discomfort and pains which make it difficult for female administrators to perform their dual roles about work and family. In other words, such discomfort and pains cause stress and reduce the energy levels of female administrators to effectively meet work-life demands. In the course of the focus group discussion, a female administrator from UG reported:

“I always have to slow down work during menstrual periods due to headaches, abdominal pains and discomfort”.

Addressing the situation?

Although it was unanimously agreed that menstrual and reproduction periods pose greater difficulties regarding work-life balance, there were however mixed reactions on how to effectively address the issue. Whereas some respondents opined that establishing policies to address the difficulties associated with menstrual and reproduction could be a disadvantage to female’s engagement in professional jobs and

more likely to be subjected to abuse, others were of the view that acknowledging menstrual difficulties in human resource management policies will help to encourage more women to assume professional duties.

This suggests the lack of a consensus among female administrators on how to effectively deploy human resource management interventions to addressing menstrual discomfort and difficulties among female administrators in public universities. One respondent from UCC stated:

“Pregnancy periods slow us down as women... By the time you go through the nine months pregnancy period with maternal leave for delivery and breastfeeding, many of your colleagues may have gone ahead of you in terms of writing papers for promotion... Your office will have been declared vacant and filled by another person... So you come back and have to be posted to a new office with different job tasks... It’s difficult but you can’t complain because it’s natural”.

The above result shows that female administrators are naturally disadvantaged in job progression due to issues related to pregnancy. It also shows that the maternal leave policy is not adequate enough in addressing issues related to pregnancy among professional women in public universities. The above also shows that socio-cultural factors have significant influence over the work-life balance of female administrators in public universities.

Economic

The study also revealed that economic status or aspiration of women administrators also contributes to the extent of their work-life balance. It was observed that some women engage in extra-income activities ostensibly to augment their incomes or for higher economic aspirations which they inadvertently have to ration time between their official job, extra-trading activities and home duties. The study found that female administrators with other economic commitments such as trading have it more difficult to balance their work-life demands. From the study, many shops on university campuses were owned by female administrators. As a result, such female administrators have to create time to manage the shops for good returns. This affects the work-life balance as they have to contend with sharing their scarce resources (time and energy) among all these competing demands. With the extra economic commitment, some of such female administrators have to join the workers in the shops after the official working hours to relieve them of their duties and continue trading for some time before going home. They report to the shops on weekends and holidays as well to continue their private business activities. This can potentially reduce the quantum and quality of time such female administrators have with their families, thereby distorting their work-life balance. The implication is that such female administrators do not have clear boundary lines between work and life domains. One of the respondents from UG who was engaged in extra economic activities reported:

“Sometimes, we also have to take advantage of opportunities on the university campus... we cannot allow only the men to grab such opportunities... if you only think about family issues you will not move on because we need monies from such businesses to supplement our salaries to meet our household demands... I, for example, use part of the income from my shop to employ house help to take care of my kids so that I can focus on my business”.

A female administrator from UCC narrated that such extra income generating activities sometimes conflict with their job roles as they must frequently check on the activities and items in the shops during working hours. Another female administrator from UCC reported that they engage in extra income generating activities because their husbands were not contributing much to the household budget. The result shows that the female administrators perceived other economic commitments as an opportunity to enhance their living conditions or quality of life.

Transportation issues

Another economic factor which tends to influence work-life balance of female administrators in public universities is the ease to *transportation*. This includes access to vehicles and the nature of traffic congestions that female administrators in public universities have to daily contend with in commuting between their homes, workplaces and other places such as the school premises of their wards. The study found that female administrators with personal vehicles are able to switch between their dual roles of work and life more swiftly and conveniently than those who have to depend on public transport. A female administrator from the KNUST with a vehicle stated that:

“after work, I just pick the kids from school and drive them home and continue with the family activities”.

Another participant from UG currently without access to private vehicle flipped the coin to provide support to the transportation theme by stating this:

“vehicle has become a necessity because you have to leave home very early to get a car to drop the kids to school before coming to work... after work, I have to join long queues with the kids to get a car home... I sometimes have to close early to avoid issues about getting a car home... I am thinking of securing a loan to acquire a vehicle”.

The study found some form of uniformity with the situation of female administrators across the three public universities with respect to the extent to which their engagement in other economic activities influences their work-life demands. This could be attributed to the common conditions of service for female administrators in all public universities in Ghana. Nonetheless, respondents from the UG largely complained of traffic congestion as a critical element influencing their ability and capacity to effectively meet their work-life demands. Thus, the study found that heavy vehicular traffic and road congestion compelled most of the female administrators to

leave home early to work, drop their kids to school, and return home late to attend to their family needs. From the study, a female administrator from UG narrated:

“I am forced to wake up at dawn and prepare the kids for school just to avoid heavy vehicular traffic on the road... sometimes you get to work already exhausted from not having proper sleep and driving through the rush hour... after work, it's even worse since everybody is also going home... you get home very tired... sometimes I sleep without eating”.

The above narration shows the difficult conditions female administrators in public universities must go through daily to meet their work-life balance.

Organisational factors

Nature of task performed and job description.

Another source of competing work-life demand on female administrators in public universities as identified by the study was organisational elements. These include the type of office (in terms of how busy the place is), staff strength at the office, quality of staff, and posture of supervisors. The study found that female administrators in the principal offices (Offices of the Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Finance Directors, and Provosts) found it more difficult to maintain their work-life balance than those in less busy offices. In such offices, the study found out that one could not afford to be late or go for long leave when in such offices because of the heavy demands on their services and those offices. Such female administrators spend much time at the office, even after the close of work than those in other offices. Some of the female administrators in the principal offices of the public universities reported that they always have to wait for their superiors to close before they can go home. This suggests that the nature of task (the type of office) of female administrators in public universities has implications on their work-life balance as they have such very tight schedules in the workplace and also need to meet family demands.

State of personnel conditions in the respective office

The study observed that staff strength of the respective office plays key role in the work-life balance imperative. This is explained to mean the size or the number of workers as well as the quality of workers who operate in the particular unit where the female administrator works has implications on the latter's work-life balance. In situations where there is staff shortage, she would find it extremely difficult to go on leave or even to absent themselves for family issues. A female administrator from UCC posited:

“I even work from home during my leave because of the small staff strength and poor quality of staff”.

Working from home disrupts the quality of time one spends in the family domain which negatively affects the work-life balance of individuals.

Nature of supervisor

It was also found that the posture of the supervisor remains essential in effectively meeting work-life demands by female administrators in public universities in Ghana. Respondents across all the three sampled public universities indicated that having an empathetic and ethical supervisor who understands people's situations help significantly in meeting the balance of demands from both work and life domains. The respondents reported that a supervisor who is understanding at times can allow them to close from work earlier to attend to their kids when one has kids at the crèche. This shows the role of superior officers in ensuring a balance between work and life domains of female administrators in public universities in Ghana.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed at exploring and examining the sources of work-life conflict among female administrators of selected public Universities in Ghana. From the data analysed above, the conditions identified include the context of the marriage especially whether the couples stay together in one accommodation or where each stays in a different place. Thus, female administrators who are not domiciled together with their husbands would have to be paying regular visits to maintain the relationship and preserve the marriage. The demands of preparing to regularly pay visit to the husband among the demands of work pressure tend to disrupt the work-life balance. In the course field data gathering, one female administrator from UG who finds herself in this category mentioned.

Findings from the study demonstrate how marriage imperatives could create confusion, frustration, and stress for female administrators in the workplace. The extension of such frustration may inadvertently affect the focus and the quality of work done in the office (professional) domain. Thus, family issues have the tendency to negatively influence the quality of time, emotional feelings and mindset a female administrator spends in the work domain.

The study observes that it is not marriage per se but the context of marriage which greatly determines whether people will have optimal work-life balance or otherwise. The critical role played by supportive husbands in ensuring their partners effectively combine their work roles with family duties cannot be overemphasized. Put differently, individuals who have supportive husbands do get some 'breathing space' or able to effectively manage work-life balance because the household demands are lessened due to the helping hands offered by their husbands. On the other hand, those with non-supportive husbands are overwhelmed with household chores and numerous family obligations which further compounds the job task thereby causing work-life conflict. The study observes similar trends across the three Universities which is perhaps due to the cosmopolitan nature of the study contexts which suggests that these areas in Ghana have assumed a universal or common cultural identity which explains the similarities in

the marital factors influencing work-life demands of female administrators in public universities.

The study reveals that the phase of an individual's life whether single, married or how long one has gone into marriage has implications for work-life balance. Individuals who are in the early stages of marriage or at least have their wards to be in their early formative years as well as those in the latter phases of their lives tend to face greater levels of work-life conflict. In other words, those administrators in the early phases of marriage and child birth tend to go through a great deal of work-life conflict in their quest to navigate between official roles and the need to respond to family demands. It is against this observation that some scholars have argued for 'family-friendly policies' such as on-site childcare, work-schedule flexibility, supervisory support, maternity leave, and paternity leave (Berg et al, 2003; Keene & Quadagno, 2004) to help reduce the plight of working women.

The study also contends that those in the latter phase of life who are aging together with its associated deterioration in the physical strength, activeness, and health influence a professional woman's ability to meet her work-life demands. Interestingly, the hypothesis got distorted along the way as the study, contrary to the linear progression rather observed that those female administrators with children above 18 years of age rather complained of difficulties in meeting their work-life demands. Such respondents are mostly above 50 years of age.

Although female administrators go through a deal of managing a balance between work and home, their predicament becomes exacerbated and peaks during periods, especially, during their menstrual period and that stage of going through pregnancy together with early stages of post-partum. The latter has implications on their job progression as at times by the time they are back from maternal leave many important progression exams and interviews might have been organized already for the other office colleagues. In effect, the physiological and life cycle reproductive process which is a major aspect of 'life' unduly interferes in the official operation or capacity and corporate functioning of the female administrator.

The lack of sufficient income or the quest for extra income propels women administrators to enter other moonlighting activities which compounds their plight regarding work-life balance. Although engaging in other two or more economic activities remains an option for generating extra income and an opportunity to enhance their living conditions or quality of life, it nonetheless contributes to work-life conflict of employees which when not managed very well could negatively affect the professional capacity of women.

The economic position as well as the ability to access those essential items necessary for life enhancement contributes essentially to maintain work-life balance among women. Due to the stress at home and workplace coupled with the need to navigate between these two at short intervals requires ability

to commute without delaying. That regard, road traffic congestion and the lack of access to personal vehicles to a greater extent reduces work-life balance as each of these greatly affects the other. This finding affirms an observation by Warren (2004) who contends that economic elements could either enhance or frustrate the work-life balance of professional women. Positive compliments from economic elements could enable professional women to effectively balance their work-life demands, whereas negative demands from economic elements could create extra frustration to distort the work-life relationship.

The study contends that organizational factors especially the nature of tasks one performs, availability of enough and experienced staff in the respective office as well as the management philosophy of the direct supervisor go a long way to affect the work-life balance. It is important for organizations and their human resource management outfits to consider the human resource management information systems very well in all their personnel policies especially how they react with different people. The study contends that the peculiar context of women administrators place them under different levels of work-life balance domain, it is crucial for supervisors to assess the specific context of their subordinates to adopt context-specific policies, HRM intervention and strategies to ensure they do not go through too much stress as too much work-life conflict can lead to burnout.

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