Work- family life reconciliation: An exploration of strategies employed by female senior members of the University of Cape Coast.

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Abstract

This paper uses a life history methodology to explore how three female senior members of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana have attempted to reconcile the demands of work and family life. They indicate that they experience role overload at work, fatigue and stress and this affects their ability to honour family and cultural obligations. To deal with this imbalance between the two domains these female employees have relied on support from extended family members, spouses and other domestic helpers in the discharge of their domestic roles. They have also relied on colleagues and subordinates and taken advantage of legislation that supports them as spelt out in the conditions of service. In spite of these the female employees have also employed both integration and segregation as strategies to manage the conflict that has arisen over the years between their work and family domains. These have been employed to manage time and the stress experienced as a result of the imbalance. They have called for the Counselling Centre to offer more support to female employees and the Gender Centre to help the University fashion out a work-family life policy.

Key words: work, family life, conflict, reconciliation

1.0 Introduction

In recent times, there has been a critical mass of women finding careers in the labour market (Anna, 2010; Shriver, 2009) as a result of higher educational attainment. This transition into the labour market has given a measure of financial independence and improved status to women and offered some financial security to their households. The mass transition of women challenges the concept of the ideal worker who does not have families competing for time and identities during working hours. This is because ideal workers are seen to place work ahead of families. Women's transition into the labour market, working heavy schedules and long hours away from their homes, leads to an imbalance in family-related workloads (Doble & Supriya 2010). This is because they have a customary responsibility to care for children and the elderly particularly and this responsibility increases in the face of diminished traditional support systems. The cultural factor in this instance is significant in shaping the relationship between work and home and sometimes generates inter-role conflict where the pressures from the work and family spheres become mutually incompatible in a number of respects (Doble & Supriya, 2010; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Governing Body in one of its sessions in 2011, identified the following as determining work-family tensions: the unequal share of care giving work between men and women for children and the aged, and a shift in work patterns such that the worker's needs do not match with family responsibilities. It also identifies the lack of or inadequate family support social services (eg provisioning of drinking water and electricity) that compels women and children to secure these goods and global economic shocks (ILO, 2011). Other challenges identified include globalization of markets and advancement in technology, increase in number of single parents, dual earner families, and absence of organizational support (Kumarasamy, Pangil & Isa, 2015; ILO, 2011; OECD, 2011; Gouvernement du Quebec, 2007; Heymann, 2006).

Tandzegolskiene, Trepule, Rutkiene, Tamoliune and Jurgile (2017) note that in the face of competing demands of work roles, leisure time and family commitment, work-family-life conflict causes stress, depression as well as increased sickness rate or decreases self-satisfaction of accomplished work or even family life for the employee. The authors further note that organisations are also affected by inadequate employees' involvement in workplace activities, an increased intension to change work places and a decreased quality of achieved results.

This study seeks to investigate the employment experiences of female senior members in management and academic positions at the University of Cape Coast especially as they try to reconcile family and work roles. It aims at unearthing the strategies that these career women have employed to cope with the expectations and roles of the work and family domains.

1.1 Theoretical underpinnings of work-family life conflict

Some theories underlie work-family life conflict. Resource drain or scarcity theory indicates that personal resources of time, energy and attention are finite. Hence the devotion of greater resources to one role necessitates the devotion of lesser resources to the other role (Morris & Madsen, 2007; Hill, 2005; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This theory supports the assertion of some feminists that in low income countries women perform a triple role of reproduction, production and community management and each of these roles compete for time and other resources of women (Moser, 2012; March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999).

The inter-role conflict theory sees the two domains of work and family as incompatible and therefore conflictual as they have different expectations, norms and responsibilities These present themselves such that complying with one makes compliance with the other more difficult. (Dizaho, Salleh & Abdullah, 2016; Gouvernement of Quebec, 2007, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time conflicts arise when the demands imposed by the different roles make time management difficult. Tension conflicts also occur when the stress generated in the performance of one role affects the way an employee fulfils the demands of other roles. This is consistent with headaches, fatigues, tiredness, anxiety, depression, lack of concern, and bad temper. Behavioural conflicts also refer to when a behaviour which is specific to one role becomes incompatible with the behaviour required by another role. The changes in behaviours include mood swings, unfriendly attitudes and behaviour, reduced work effort, reduced performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover. The proposition is that any role characteristic that affects a person's time involvement, strain, or behaviour within a role can produce conflict between that role and another role. This makes employees have difficulty adapting to the divergent demands. In addition, Walker, Wong & Redmond (2008) posit whether women perform their work and family roles with approximately equal levels of attention, involvement and commitment. Family-to-work or work-to-family conflict has been identified to create poor emotional, mental, cognitive, psychological wellbeing, poor professional performance, and poor quality of life (Dizaho et al, 2016).

Inter-role conflict may also present as role overload (Barnett and Baruch, 1985). Here, an individual takes on too many role demands and obligations and is unable to perform all these roles effectively. The result is that the employee becomes tired, tensed and depressed. In addition, inter-role conflict may arise from role ambiguity arising from lack of information required to perform a particular role, or a lack of clarity and hence uncertainty concerning the expectations connected with the role. The inter-role conflict theory thus posits that job stressors produce conflicts that are transmitted from work to family and vice versa and this affects employees personal satisfaction, job performance and career development (Hertze, 1986).

Spill over theory explains the process whereby experiences in one role affect experiences in another. Spill over effect could be a positive or negative association between work and family life. In positive spill over, participation at work or home is made easier because of experiences, skills and opportunities gained or developed at home or work. Negative spill over on the other hand, transfers problems of despair from one domain to another. In spill over theory therefore the roles are rendered more alike in the two domains. Related to the above theory is that of enrichment or facilitation theory. Here, the concern is the degree to which experiences in one role (whether instrumental or affective) such as skills, abilities, values, mood and satisfaction, improve the quality of life in the other role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hill, 2005; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

1.2 Reconciling work-family life conflict

Research has identified that in the face of challenges, employees and their families also engage in boundary management strategies and tactics that make them effective and satisfied both at home and at work (Baltes, Clarke & Chakrabarti (2009); Haddock et al. 2001).

These are strategies, principles, and practices people use to organise and separate role demands and expectations into specific realms of home and work. The concept of boundaries refers to the physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and /or relational limits that define entities as separate from one another. Individuals create and maintain boundaries as a means of simplifying and ordering the environment by erecting mental fences around areas, events and ideas that appear similar, functionally related, or otherwise associated such as work and family (Ashford, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Zerubavel, 1991). When these boundaries are created and maintained, it makes it difficult to move from one domain into another and to perform the roles associated with individuals in the various domains.

Two conceptual models have been developed to address the concept of boundary management of work and family. These are Boundary theory and Border theory and address how people construct, maintain, negotiate and cross the lines of demarcation between work and family (Clarke, 2000). Boundary theory focuses on outcomes such as the meanings people assign to home and work and the ease and frequency of transitioning between roles labelled as segmentation or integration (Baltes et al. 2009). Two key concepts that affect role transitions are the flexibility and permeability of a given role boundary. Whilst a role with flexible boundaries can be enacted in various settings and at various times, roles with inflexible boundaries severely constrain when and where the role may be enacted. The concept of permeability relates to the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in one roles domain but psychologically and/or behaviourally involved in another role (Ashford et al., 2000).

Border theory also posits that work-family balance can be achieved in a variety of ways depending on factors including similarity of work and family domains and strength of the boundaries between the two (Desrochers, Hilton & Larwood, 2005). Individuals who perform certain roles take on role identities that are socially constructed. Thus the performance of roles goes with certain attributes such that where there is a marked contrast in attributes of any two roles, it becomes difficult for one to transition between the two roles.

Boundary management is thus seen as a continuum where one end deals with boundary separation or segmentation (keeping work and family roles completely separate), and the other deals with boundary integration (seeing no distinctions in thought, time or space between work and family roles). Each choice comes with costs and benefits, advantages and disadvantages Whether individuals choose segmentation or integration, their primary objective becomes the minimization of the difficulty of enacting both home and work roles (Ashford et.al, 2000; Baltes et al. 2009). It is observed that instances of complete segmentation or integration are rare with individuals tending to enact less extreme versions of segmentation and integration in their desire to either heighten or blur the boundaries between roles (Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005). Integration of work and family life roles benefit employees in a number of ways. This includes accommodating multiple identities and constituencies in the workplace (Meyerson & Scully, 1995), resolving tensions or enjoying the flexibility that helps them to cope with multiple demands in their lives and reducing the effort needed to transition back and forth between roles (Ashforth et.al, 2000). It is also argued that when employees employ greater segmentation, they become less susceptible to stress, depression and mood swings (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Linville, 1987), and are able to focus more exclusively on the salient role (Ashforth et.al,2000).

Work place support systems are important if employees are to find the necessary balance between work and family life. Research has found evidence of a positive effect of organisational work-life balance practices on recruitment, retention, attendance and productivity. This is because employees who benefit from these organisational work-life balance practices would reciprocate with increased loyalty, effort and productivity in appreciation of the organization's care and concern (Bauregard & Henry, 2009). Organizations may thus offer three types of support namely, those that help employees to accommodate their family responsibilities without reducing the amount of work that is done (work support policies), those policies that allow workers to take time off from work so as to meet family responsibilities (family support policies), and those that support supervisors to implement a work-life policy (normative support) (Voydanoff, 2005). Work support policies include flexible work arrangements and on site child care whereas family support policies include paid leave for childcare, eldercare or personal problems (Skinner & Chapman, 2013; Obrien, 2012; ILO, 2011). Normative support is offered in the context of the organizational climate which is key to the overall success of the work-life policy. McDonald, Pini and Bradley, (2007) identified five key dimensions of workplace culture in relation to work-life issues to be manager support, organisational time expectations, career consequences, gendered perception of policy use, and co-worker support.

Such normative support from organisations signals to the employee that the organisation cares for their wellbeing and makes her/him give off her/his best. The literature discussed is captured in the conceptual framework in figure 1 below.

1.2 Study Institution and Methodology

The University of Cape Coast was established in 1962 as a University College. In 1971, the University College attained the status of a full and independent University, with the authority to give its own degrees, diploma, and certificates by an Act of Parliament (ACT 390) and subsequently PNDC Law 278. The University was established out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education to meet the needs of the country's accelerated education programme at the time. Today, the University is organised into five colleges with fourteen faculties and schools and offers diversified programmes to meet the manpower needs of other sectors of the economy. It runs regular, sandwich and distance learning programmes at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels and has a combined student population of over 74,000 (UCC, 2018). The running of the University is supported by 973 Senior members (both academic and administrative) of which 753 are males and 220 are females

This study has used a qualitative methodology. It has collected mainly qualitative data from three female senior members in management and academic positions at the University of Cape Coast using life (employment) histories. The life history methodology primarily uncovers the diversity of women's experiences and projects women's voices into areas where they have previously been ignored. Thus it allows one to look at old issues with new eyes, to open up new fields of enquiry, and develop new modes of analysis (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). Thus this methodology was used in an ethnographic way to map out female senior members' employment trajectories in an attempt to identify the key work-family life conflict drivers and reconciliation strategies. Respondents were thus guided with specific open-ended questions to give a personal account of their employment background with the University of Cape Coast, work-family life challenges, work-family life reconciliation strategies, and work-family life support systems using their own personal timelines and experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the transcribed documents were returned to the respondents to check for their accuracy and editing. The life (employment) histories were presented as stories and an interpretive analysis of the narratives was done within contextual themes taking into consideration the background of the respondent. Their experiences and strategies of reconciliation, if any, were also compared.

3.0 Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented under a number of themes. These include respondents' background, work-family life challenges, cultural and institutional support systems as well as their own strategies at reconciling the imbalance.

3.1 Background of participants

Life History 1(LH1) is narrated by a 58 year old Deputy Registrar with two adult children. She holds a Master's degree and has worked with the University for twenty-five years. She is currently the head of her household and her family responsibilities include managing the home, shopping and marketing, engaging in family gatherings as well as getting involved in every aspect of the lives of her adult children.

Life History 2 (LH2) is narrated by a thirty-five year old married academic with two young children aged 8 and 10. She completed her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme a few months ago and has worked with the University for eleven years. Her family responsibilities also include home management, shopping and marketing, cooking, engaging in family outings, sending her children to school and collecting them after school and sometimes sending her children to the hospital when they fall ill.

Life History 3 (LH3) is also narrated by a fifty-four year old married administrator with two adult children over 18 years old. She holds a Master's degree and has worked for the university for close to 15 years. Her family responsibilities include caring for her aged father, shopping, marketing, and managing her home.

It is observed that the two female administrators are serving their twilight years in the University as they will be due for retirement in the next few years. The academic is however much younger and thus has a younger family to manage.

3.2 Work-family life challenges

An examination of all the three life histories reveal that respondents have ever encountered and still encounter challenges trying to maintain their families and carve careers for themselves. All three life histories identify tiredness and stress as part of the work experience and give varying attributions for their experiences in the form of increased workload. This experience is identified as an aspect of inter-role conflict by Doble & Supriya, 2010, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 as well as Barnett and Baruch (1985). We are also given insight into how the work stress affects other areas of family life.

> *I have had to take on additional teaching load because two of my colleagues are away. I therefore get home very tired, emotionally drained and stressed up. I do not only have an increased teaching load but I am also expected to do research and publish. (LH2)*

> *I feel stressed up and emotionally drained when I get home from work. At my level, I shouldn't be doing so many of the things I am doing now but I realised that the younger ones have not developed themselves so professionally to do the things we used to do when we were like them…. Sometimes I have to think for them, sometimes I have to do some of the things they should do just to make sure I get results. Now when you are so stressful, you cannot attend so many of the funerals and other family engagements. You know Africans have social lives. (LH1)*

> *I have a heavy workload at the faculty level. You are supervising activities of the lecturers so that they work, you are at the dean's office, you also have to manage that place and the workers and administrators at the various departments. Sometime I am stressful and get emotionally drained when I get home. (LH3)*

Participants also identified time, tension and behavioural constraints as sources of work-family life conflicts. For instance, participants indicated that they did not have the time to attend to personal, and other family and cultural commitments and this leads to tensions between work and family life.

> *I really do not have time for myself. I do wish to have the time to do things with my family, talk and help my kids with their homework but this is difficult…My work affects my family roles. I have tried to manage and balance things up. I do most of the cooking during the weekends as well as my other chores, but it is difficult to commit fully to family expectations and roles. This affects me psychologically. (LH2)*

> *I don't think I have enough time for myself. At my age I feel I should have time to do a lot of exercise, to cook properly, settle down and relax, and have some leisure time but it doesn't work that way. My family role is also affected because I don't have much time with my children these days. Even though they are adults, I feel that I should be able to have time with them. (LH1)*

> *My work is stressful. Sometimes when I have a meeting and I need to prepare the minutes to be presented the following day, I sit up at home to write the minutes. This does not give me enough time for my husband and kids. I am lucky my kids are grown, they are all in the university but when they come home, I need to make time for them which the nature of my work does not allow. (LH3)*

The conflicts from time and tension constraints that give rise to stress and emotional fatigue affect behaviours that are exhibited in the two roles. LH2 gives an insight of the psychological trauma and by extension the accompanying mood swings and unfriendly attitudes that accompany role performance both at work and at home. In addition to this LH1 claims that she has tended to be bossy even at home because her children are now adults. These experiences and behaviours are in line with Dizaho et al. 2016 identification of the emotional and psychological well-being of employees who experience work-family life conflict. They are also in line with the concept of permeability of roles as espoused by Ashford et al, 2000.

> *I have certain expectations from my adult children so I sometimes exhibit the same bossy behaviour at home. When they were much younger I did not need to do that with them because I could easily switch over from the bossy type and come down to their level and play with them and help them to acquire the social skills they would require in future. (LH1).*

For LH3, she does not carry her bossiness from the office to the home since her husband is the household head. She immediately takes off the 'boss coat' and engages in her duties as a subordinate at home. In this instance her bossy behaviour at work does not affect behaviour at home.

The various accounts of participants suggest that all of them experience role overload in that their administrative and academic roles and this has consequences for individual level outcomes that relate to their physical and mental health. Working longer hours and having heavy schedules places too many demands and obligations on female staff as to prevent them from having their own spaces in terms of responding to personal, family and socio-cultural obligations. In addition, for one staff with adult children, she has shifted from becoming the loving and playful mother that she used to be to becoming bossy and autocratic at home. There is therefore a spill-over effect over expected behaviour at work into the family space, one that has the potential to fuel arguments and rebellions by adult children. Respondents thus experience conflict between their work roles and customary family expectations and obligations. It also appears that for the older staff, work-family life priorities have changed. Whereas they could find time to be with their children when these children were much younger, this is not the case currently. LH1 in an earlier quote, reports that she would like to have more time with her adult children and that she could play with them as children. For LH3,

> *When I was not the faculty officer, I had too much time with the family. I could close at 4:30 pm and go home. With the increase in rank comes increased responsibilities. You need to be sure that all doors are locked, all lights are switched off and when you have work to be completed you sit and finish it off. Positions come with responsibilities so this time I have more responsibilities. (LH3).*

3.3 Support Systems

Participants have claimed that in the face of the conflict experienced as working women, they have had support from both family and colleagues and this has helped them to resolve the multiple and often incompatible demands of work and family roles. Such support systems have been found to be very important for the creation of work-family life balance. Two types of support systems have been identified in this study.

3.3.1 Family and cultural support

Participants indicated they have great support from spouses, extended family members and sometimes domestic helpers to cope with the challenges they faced. In the first few years of work, LH1 claimed she had support from the husband and her mother. She had to leave her baby with the mother who lived some 100 miles away in another city and would make the trip every Friday after work to visit and return first thing on Monday morning. Later she engaged the services of a domestic help who was happy to stay and assist her for seven years. According to LH1, she also used labour saving gadgets such as the washing machine and blender and so was able to multitask at the same time. LH1 could also send messages through whatsapp to her domestic help from work and give instructions as to what should be done at home before she arrives from work. LH2 has the mother in-law staying with her for long periods at a time to help with the children and cooking. She also enjoys the support of the husband from time to time. LH3 has had both family and in-laws coming in and out of the house for some time to offer their support particularly when her children were much younger. She now has a stay-in domestic help.

It is evident from the above accounts that respondents have relied upon spouses, family and others to share the load of domestic chores and parenting duties. This contributes significantly to the participants' quest for balance or reconciliation between work and family life. The use of labour saving devices at home served to help participants to multi task and reduce time for doing chores. Without such support, female senior members of the university would have great difficulty pursuing their careers.

3.3.2 Work Support Policies

The literature presents three forms of work support policies that institutions and organisations can give to workers. These are family support, work support and normative support (Voydanoff, 2005. In the main respondents were aware of a family support policy couched as conditions of service at the University. Family support in this instance is in the form of paid maternity leave and working only half day upon resumption until the child is a year old. Generally however, the perception was that the university did not have a family-friendly climate and this did not encourage female employees but particularly female non-senior members to take advantage of the policy. Administrators claimed that some male heads of department either do not have the working condition communicated to them or just do not want to grant new mothers the half working day schedule. Thus there was the belief that the University should provide the normative support to heads of departments as a number of them lacked emotional intelligence to enable them implement the working conditions for female staff.

> *A female staff who had just given birth and was entitled to close at half day was denied that because her superior would overload her with work so she cannot leave. It went on for a while until he started intimidating her in the office. Eventually she lost the baby and so she was advised by friends to leave and find another job which she did. (LH1)*

> *Although we have an eight hour workday nursing mothers by their work conditions are allowed to close at half day. Some heads of department are not aware of this and tend to see things differently. The working conditions should be communicated to the heads. (LH3)*

The above shows that the University as an institution does not have a supportive work culture and this acts as a disincentive accessing existing family support policies enshrined in the conditions of service. This situation is confirmed by studies in Australia in which respondents identified poor communication of policies, and management attitudes among others as the main disincentive to uptake of work-life policies (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). Managers and supervisors must create organizational cultures that support workers willingness and capacity to use organisational policies.

Participants also stressed the importance of flexibility of time on the job particularly for nursing mothers to keep workers on the job. They indicated that if managers are so rigid, there is the possibility of a high employee turnover. For instance there was the suggestion that breast feeding mothers could be up to an hour late for work, working mothers could be allowed to pick their children from school at 3:30pm, an hour before the work day ends. That, so long as heads of department get the desired results from staff, they should be flexible in their dealings with them.

Apart from what was contained in the working conditions of staff, female senior members had no idea of the University having in place a work-family life policy.

> *There is no policy, no guide for managers. We use our discretion. If you do not meet a head who is understanding and empathizes with you the worker, then everything goes haywire. (LH1)*

> *I have not seen any university work-family life policy. There is also no guide available for managers to follow but if you have a problem and you go to them, they will assist you. (LH3)*

> *I am not aware that the university has a work-family life policy. What will that entail? I would expect that such a policy would be part of a package given to new employees during their orientation. I have not had any package that details my roles, responsibilities and where to go for information since I became an employee of this institution. (LH2)*

It appears that the university does not have the mandate to publish its own work-family life policy which is very surprising given the numerous benefits such a policy will offer to both employees and the institution. A private communication with a principal officer indicated that these policies are legislated and therefore it is work to be undertaken by the country's parliament. It appears that family support policies and some aspects of work support policies will have to be legislated.

Yet it is also possible for the institution to evolve some work support policies such as on-site creche services and family support policies such as flexible work schedules particularly for female senior members without resorting to parliament and also support managers with the skills and tools to manage employees (communication, conflict and time management and organisational skills as well as the legislated policies on leave and time). Participants indicated that the University Counselling Centre and Centre for Gender Research and Advocacy (CEGRAD) should offer counselling for staff who need support to reconcile the work-family life domains and also champion the call for a work-life policy.

3.4 Individual reconciliation strategies

Life histories recounted show that female senior members employ a number of strategies to reconcile their work-family life conflicts. These strategies and activities may be located on the segregation-integration continuum of boundary management strategies identified in the literature (see Baltes et al, 2002; Haddock et al, 2001). Strategies employed by participants include the use of technology, help from co-workers and subordinates, time management and stress management activities.

> *I don't take work home because I don't want any added stress. I decouple my work from my household chores. That is why I do not take any office work to the house. I do everything here in the office. I would rather stay in the office a little bit longer or stay on during break time to complete what I have to do but will never take work home. (LH1)*

This strategy from an administrator suggests complete segregation of family domestic life from work as all office work is finished in the office before she goes home. Thus, she manages her time and does not use family time to do office work. It is a strategy that currently greatly departs from what she did as a young mother. She had so much work to do that she would take her two young children to the office even on weekends. She tried using labour saving gadgets such as the washing machine and food processor to help her multi-task at home. Eventually, she researched into coping with work related stress and published a paper out of that. Her research helped her to map out a strategy for separating work from family-life as her children grew older. According to LH1,

> *I got the trick early after I had read around stress and written that paper. I could clearly see the coping strategies and decided to follow them to the letter. So this is what is helping.*

The strategies below also indicate that of integration of work and family-life with the help of technological devices.

> *Sometimes I take work home but I wake up early to do it before attending to my morning domestic chores. I have my laptop, books and internet connectivity at home to help me with work. (LH2)*

> *I type out minutes of meetings and print them at home with the aid of a laptop computer and printer. But I have now decided not to send any work home. I need to strategize so that work does not overshadow my other family responsibilities, (LH3)*

The senior member (academic) indicated that she sometimes falls on the support of colleagues or her Teaching Assistant to stand in for her and keep her class busy when a family emergency comes up.

Two life histories indicate the use of vacations to manage work-family life stress. This they claim reinvigorates them. While the younger staff indicates she shares quality family vacations the older one relaxes at conferences each year. This is another attempt at segregating the boundaries of work and family life.

> *During the vacation period, I try as much as possible to spend time with my family away from Cape Coast. This way, we can have enough time for ourselves. I try to tune myself to keep my mind off from work during this period. (LH2)*

> *As part of my strategy to deal with stress, I decided to travel outside the country for my professional development as well as for leisure. I try to get a conference or workshop to attend and then spend some time to relax. When I come back, I am invigorated to carry on with work. (LH1)*

The above individual reconciliation strategies reveal that female senior members of the University employ both segregation and integration to manage the boundaries of work and family-life. These are employed as and when they need to and at various stages of their employment trajectories.
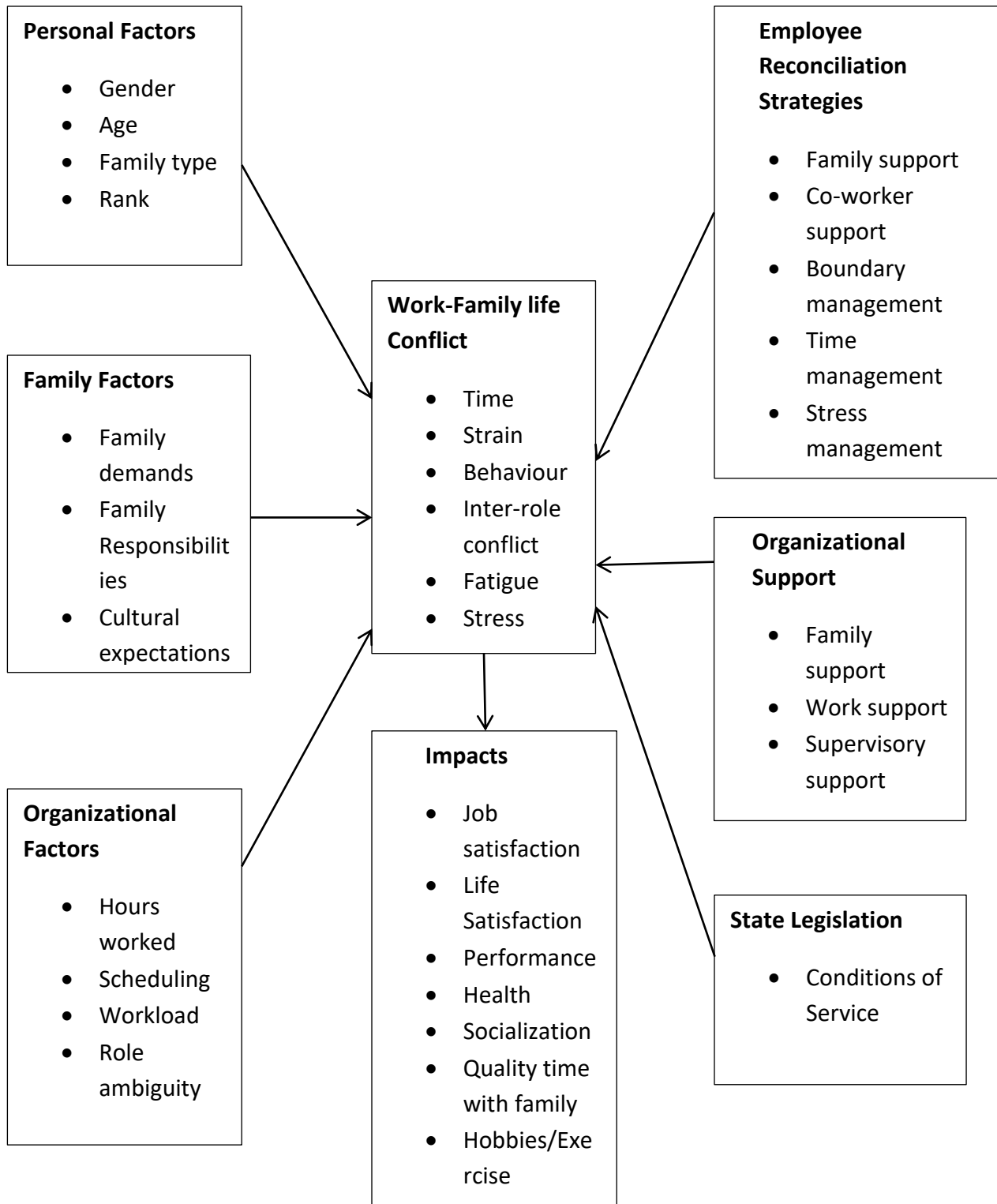
4.0 Summary and Conclusion

This study has unearthed the challenges confronting some female senior members of the University of Cape Coast. It is seen that the nature of their work and family commitments and expectations create role overload with its attendant fatigue and stress. The spill over of experience, expertise, and knowledge from work to the domestic domain is negative and thus there is no facilitation or enrichment of the domestic domain. The presence of family and other cultural support systems help to reduce the stress of work but do not completely do away with the negative experiences female senior members face on a daily basis. Some work support policies are enshrined in the employee's condition of service such as maternity leave and working half day for up to a year after delivery but participants identified a poor institutional climate, which prevented some Heads of Department not to implement the half day work. These heads were either ignorant of the policy or had poor emotional intelligence. The university itself believed that all work policies should be legislated and so had not done anything about going out of its way to implement childcare facilities or creches to support staff with babies, or implement flexible work schedules for such senior members. Female senior members thus engage in their own strategies to deal with the challenges of role overload and inter-role conflict. The strategies employed indicate that they adopt both integration and segregation to manage the two domains of work and family life.

It may be concluded that workers who have challenges with work and family life do not give off their best in terms of output in both domains even though they try their best. They need both the family or cultural as well as the institutional support systems to help them negotiate the demands of both roles. In Ghana, where public institutions such as the Universities rely on government to legislate on the conditions of service, such legislation should go beyond the token given to female employees and recognise that these employees perform crucial roles in contributing to production in the formal sector of the economy as well as caring for and nurturing the current and future labour force of the country. Public institutions such as the universities should be allowed to carve out their own work-family life policies based on the legislative template given by the state.

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Personal Factors

- Gender
- Age
- Family type
- Rank

Family Factors

- Family demands
- Family Responsibilities
- Cultural expectations

Organizational Factors

- Hours worked
- Scheduling
- Workload
- Role ambiguity

Work-Family life Conflict

- Time
- Strain
- Behaviour
- Inter-role conflict
- Fatigue
- Stress

Impacts

- Job satisfaction
- Life Satisfaction
- Performance
- Health
- Socialization
- Quality time with family
- Hobbies/Exercise

Employee Reconciliation Strategies

- Family support
- Co-worker support
- Boundary management
- Time management
- Stress management

Organizational Support

- Family support
- Work support
- Supervisory support

State Legislation

- Conditions of Service

Fig 1   Conceptual Framework of Work-Family life Conflict and Reconciliation Strategies

Source: Author's Construct, 2019.