

JEM

Journal of

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A Bi-annual Publication of
**THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION**
(IEPA)
University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

ISSN 0855-3343

Vol. 3

Nov. 2000

WORK-HOME CONFLICT AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS
IN BASIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
IN THE CAPE COAST MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

One of the factors that contributes most significantly to the success of an organization is the effectiveness of its staff. This is particularly true of educational institutions. No matter how efficient and well-intentioned the school administrator is, he can hardly achieve success without the support and co-operation of well-qualified, dedicated, committed and effective staff.

The study critically examines work-home conflict among female teachers at the Basic Education level and its impact on effectiveness in the classroom and other organizational work in the school. Data from questionnaires and interviews with 268 female teachers and 25 heads respectively suggest that there is a relationship between work-home conflict and effectiveness of female teachers. The combination of paid employment with the care of the home and children involves an excessive strain and stress which negatively affects effectiveness of female teachers.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing national concern about the falling academic standards of pupils in public schools at the Basic Education level. Parents, social workers, scholars, clergymen, opinion leaders and educational authorities in various communities in Ghana most often blame teachers for this national phenomenon and persistently express disgust at their attitude, especially that of female teachers, toward teaching. It is common knowledge to hear parents/guardians making such remarks as “female teachers are lazy” and “female teachers dodge classes and are often absent from school”. Al-Khalifa (In Coyle & Skinner, 1988) carried out a study into women in teaching in Britain and came to the conclusion that in the view of many people, “a large number of female teachers do not exhibit any strong sense of work commitment, dedication and involvement in

the teaching profession. They seem to approach teaching as a dull routine work which they have to do to earn a living and view parenting as incompatible with professional work” (p. 81). This approach to teaching in the basic schools has been of much concern to the Educational Authorities and School Administrators. The engagement of female teachers in family responsibilities, to a large extent, tend to reduce their effectiveness at work place.

Montagu (1968) states that the working mother subscribes completely to the view that the home is the most influential environmental factor in the moulding of human personality. She wants the love of her husband and children and the shared responsibility of making good human beings of her children, but she has the feeling that she has the talent, capacities and abilities to serve her community and the people therein. The effectiveness of the classroom teacher, more especially the female teacher, for the success of any school programme is of grave concern to the Educational Administrator. Much work is expected of female teachers likewise their male counterparts. Though female teachers in all circumstances have dual role to play, i.e. the traditional role of

housekeeping and paid employment, one expects them to be efficient and effective at work, for that matter, at school.

Combining formal employment with housekeeping appears to be a cumbersome mixture. In the face of mounting pressures at work places for employees – both male and female – to perform exceptionally well to justify their retention on the jobs, the question as to whether working mothers can cope in such a competitive situation is being raised.

Date-Bah (In Anker & Hein, 1986) conducted an investigation into sex segregation and discrimination in Accra-Tema in Ghana and reported that employers were generally not happy about the level of women’s productivity. The employers complained that the women’s productivity was so much affected when they were pregnant especially during the early and last stages.

Date-Bah further noted that when women employees went on maternity leave, their schedules were added to those of their colleagues or, in few cases, temporary employees were engaged who were less qualified or less efficient in the performance of their duties. Thus, production within the organization suffered set back.

She noted that "some of these working women go home to breastfeed their babies while at the same time they are expected to be at work place" (p. 266).

Solman and Feld (1989) carried out a study in 82 schools in New South Wales into occupational stress and stated that male teachers were absent less frequently than their female colleagues. They contended that the frequent nature of female teachers' absence might in part be a consequence of their dual roles as career teachers and parents primarily responsible for child raising and household management.

Klein (1965) who conducted a study on Britain's married women workers states that working women certainly face dilemma as long as housekeeping largely rests on their shoulders and is considered their primary concern. Thus conflict of loyalty often arises between their jobs and their domestic duties and are in most instances resolved in favour of the latter. To a large extent "women with home ties are looked at as less reliable employees than their male counterparts" (p. 18).

Prokopec (In Michael, 1971) carried out a study into problems facing Czechoslovak women and observed that though paid employment of women increases

their prestige in the family and serves as source of income, it also increases their workload, intensifies their mental stress and aggravates problems related to child rearing and household management. "A clash between the role of the mother and the role of the employee leads to conflicts which often result in neurosis of the women" (p. 68).

Housekeeping by itself is a full time occupation which demands the time, energy and ingenuity of a mother. This is particularly so when the children are still very young and are full of energy and capable of causing mischief and the mother has to "divide" her attention into as many parts as there are children. Obviously, it takes time to train, teach and care for children if the ultimate objective is to turn out well-disciplined adult citizens capable of steering the affairs of the nation in the future.

On the other hand, development on the economic front over the years has made it mandatory that public and private enterprises harness all resources to enable them maximize profit if they are to remain in business. Subsequently, employers expect employees to perform to their best ability. The married female teacher and those who have homes to keep have to meet many contrasting demands at a particular

time. They have to play their traditional role of housekeeping in addition to paid employment.

The central focus of attention in this study is women's traditional role activities and expectations as child bearers, wives, mothers, caretakers of children and the sick. Focus is also on how female teachers are able to combine housekeeping with employment as they feel they have the talent and abilities that cry out for exercises, and that they are obliged to help their community with the knowledge, skills and expertise that they have obtained. Dahlstrom (1967) observes that the more intelligent, lively and educated woman fears that her mind will get narrowed within the confines of her home and stultified by lack of practice. Though children and home may be an emotionally satisfying milieu, they are hardly mentally stimulating and most of all, housewives suffer from social isolation, confinement to the home, lack of prestige and underdeveloped impulses.

Work-home conflict which appears to be widespread cross-cultural phenomenon and very common among working women has been defined by Greenhaus and Bentell (1985) as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family (home)

domain are mutually incompatible. Kahn *et al.* (1964) define role conflict as the simultaneous occurrences of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. The female teacher faces the dilemma of meeting contrasting demands at a particular time. She has to play the traditional role of housekeeping in addition to paid employment, thus, she has to leave home at certain times of the day for work. The female teachers' capability of performing the task of teaching effectively is of grave concern to the educational administrator.

The purpose of the study is to examine how work-home conflict affects output of work of female teachers and how best the effects of the conflict could be minimized. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How does work-home conflict manifest itself among female teachers?
2. What is the nature and extent of the conflict?
3. How does the conflict affect efficiency and effectiveness?
4. How can the conflict be managed?

Method

Target Population:

The population for the study was made up of 54 primary and 34 Junior Secondary Schools in the Cape Coast Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana in the 1993/94 academic year. This gave a population size of 444, made up of 58 Headteachers/masters and 386 classroom female teachers. Some of the Headteachers/masters administered either primary or junior secondary schools only while others administered both.

The Sample:

Purposive and simple random sampling procedures were used in selecting the sample of the respondents. The respondents were female teachers and Headteachers/masters of Basic Educational Institutions. Only professionally trained female teachers who were married with children or were single parents were selected, and all of them had taught for one or more years and therefore have had some experiences as regards work-home conflict. Untrained/non-professional teachers and professional teacher who were not working mothers were excluded from the sample for the following reasons:

- (a) Teaching work for untrained teachers is temporary. Their appointment could be terminated when a trained teacher is available. The temporary nature of their teaching service does not give them much opportunity to experience work-home conflict.
- (b) Professional teachers who were "single" were also left out since it was assumed that they might not have had much exposure to the work-home conflict as working mothers. They had neither children nor husbands to cater for; thus their responsibilities in the home were not considered to have any significant effect on teaching/learning.

In all, 268 female class teachers and 25 headteachers/masters, totalling 293 respondents, constituted the sample. The headteachers/masters who were involved in the study gave account of what transpires at the school in terms of output of work by female teachers .

Research Instrument:

A questionnaire was designed for the female teachers while an interview guide was prepared for

the headteachers/masters. The probe method made it possible to get maximum information from them. The questionnaire was mostly of the checklist and likert type. Some open-ended items were included. These two techniques were used in order to capture a more reliable picture of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis:

Chi-square calculations (X^2) were used as a means of testing levels of significance ($d = 0.001$) in the responses made by the teachers. These helped to determine whether differences which were observed in the opinions of female teachers were due to chance.

Results

The study recorded a number of findings relating to the extent to which work-home conflict affects performance of female teachers.

Feeling of Satisfaction with Work

About 58% of female teachers expressed the view that they feel more satisfied emotionally when they are with their families at home rather than when they are at school while 42% stated otherwise. To those who feel more satisfied being with their families at home, school

work or teaching is mentally stimulating; however being with their own children at home gives them emotional satisfaction. This confirms the findings of Dahlstrom and Liljestrom (1967) when they stated that the most important role of women is the caring of the home and children as they have been found to be emotionally satisfying.

Absence from School to give Proper Care to Children

Approximately 67% of female teachers stated that they were never absent from school in order to give proper care to their children. This was because they left their children under the care of their mothers, grandmothers, househelps and professional caretakers and those who were above two years were taken to crèches, nurseries and kindergartens. A very significant observation was the fact that they never brought their babies to school for breast feeding neither did they obtain permission to go home to do so. However, they exhibited the desire to go home immediately school had closed. Thirty-three percent (33%) of female teachers who were compelled to absent themselves from school did so when they had to take their sick children to the hospital, attend funerals or pay visits to sick relations. To a large extent, instructional time was

judiciously used or at best female teachers were often present at school.

Maternity Leave/Replacement

It was noted that Ghana Education Service (GES) had not put in place any mechanism whereby female teachers who had to go on maternity leave could be replaced. This concern was expressed by all the headteachers/masters. To them it retarded work in affected classes. Detached headteachers were compelled to teach in addition to office duties while non-detached heads had to teach two classes. This situation usually had serious repercussions on the academic performance of pupils in such classes.

Importance of Work and Welfare of Children

Teaching and housekeeping are two issues facing the married female teacher and the probability of one being done at the expense of the other cannot be ruled out. About 72% of female teachers expressed the view that they did not consider teaching to be more important than the welfare of the family, i.e. they cannot sacrifice the welfare of the family at the instance of work. The children must be given proper care i.e. taken to the hospital when ill,

provided with enough security, et cetera, even if it means doing so at the expense of work. These views are consistent with the findings of Dahlström and Liljestrom (1967). They stated that the women's most important role was that of caring for the home and children and that paid work is secondary.

Experiencing Stress and Strain

The study revealed that 78% of the female teachers did experience stress when they combined teaching with family/home responsibilities. They tend to become tired after work and subsequently burden their husbands with functions in the home; their double work leads to friction in the home and their free time is reduced. This is consistent with the findings made by Prokopec (in Michael, 1971). He stated that though paid employment of women increased their prestige in the family, it also increased their workload, intensified their mental stress and aggravated the problems related to child rearing and household management which often result in neurosis of the women.

Adequate Preparation for Work

Teaching involves thorough preparation on the part of teachers. It involves lesson notes preparation,

thorough knowledge of the subject matter, preparation of teaching/learning resources, knowledge of teaching methods, strategies and techniques, et cetera. It was revealed in the study that 70.1% of the female teachers between the ages of 25 and 50 years never had sufficient time to prepare adequately before going to school. This factor had been attributed to the performance of household chores like cooking for the family, bathing the children, washing clothes which to them had serious repercussions on their work. Lesson notes were hardly prepared on time while teaching/learning materials to enhance teaching were neither made available nor prepared in good time. At times, they were never prepared. This attitude to work was different from teachers between the ages of 50 and 60 years. Teachers above 50 years of age prepared adequately for work. According to them (teachers), they had less household chores to perform as their children invariably gave them the necessary assistance thus enabling them to concentrate on their work (teaching).

Commitment to Work

Every organization has a goal to attain and this depends so much on so many factors, one of them being commitment. Higher teacher

motivation to work and strong commitment to work are essential requirements for effective teaching. When these characteristics are absent, teachers are likely to consider their commitment as being a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay" (Sergiovanni, 1968). The study revealed that the level of commitment of female teachers was not very high because of the double role they play. Most of them (60%) came to school late because they had to prepare breakfast for the family and get the children ready for school or take them to crèches. They were also anxious to get home immediately after school had closed because they had to go for their children at the crèches or prepare lunch for the family. They were hardly involved in co-curricular activities like sports, games, clubs, and cultural festivities as that was considered to be the preserve of men. It was when such activities took place during instructional hours that they actively participated. It was noted that there was discrepancy between what the teachers said and what the heads also stated as regards effective teaching. While the teachers claimed they engaged in effective teaching, the heads expressed contrary views. To the heads, only 30% of the female teachers engage in effective lesson delivery. They stated that 70% of the female teachers were not able

to put in the same number of hours at their jobs as their male counterparts because of their responsibilities. This confirms the findings of Brekke (1985) which state that "working women are simply not able to put in the same number of hours at their jobs as men" (p. 32). It was also observed that female teachers, like other women, experience nausea in the mornings during the early stages of pregnancy and felt tired and weak during the advanced stages which greatly affect their performance in class, thus portraying them as being ineffective.

Managing Work-Home Conflict

Respondents expressed various ways by which work-home conflict could be managed.

1. About 60% of them were of the view that GES should provide adequate teaching/learning resources to save working mothers' time in preparing such materials and to enhance teaching and learning.
2. 20% of them stated that crèches and nursery schools should be established and attached to every school

to take care of teachers' children and those from the neighbourhood as this will prevent them from thinking about security.

3. About 8.7% of them were of the view that working mothers should be encouraged to get trained househelps who would help in managing the home. These househelps should be well motivated in order to manage the home effectively.
4. Spouses should be counselled on the need to give a helping hand in the performance of household chores, for example, washing of dishes, bathing of children and ironing of clothes. Though performance of these activities by men is not part of our cultural system there is the need to change our attitudes toward things since we live in a world of change. This view was expressed by about 5% of the respondents.
5. 5% of the respondents expressed the view that sons should also be given the necessary training to enable them contribute toward the management of the home.

6. Nursing mothers should be granted two (2) hours off-duty every working day to nurse their children up to a period of 12 months and the School Management Committee (SMC) should take up the challenge to see to it that affected pupils do not suffer in terms of effective teaching and learning. This view was expressed by about 1.3% of the respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research was conducted at a time when most educationists, policy makers, administrators, social workers, parents, and guardians expressed much concern about the falling standard of education in the country and the attitude of female teachers towards the teaching profession. The researchers critically examined the work-home conflict among female teachers and its repercussions on both housekeeping and the teaching profession. From the study, the Ghanaian female teacher seems to derive emotional satisfaction from home and family life than teaching. In the same vein, she considers the welfare of the family to be more important than the work she does,

hence little enthusiasm and low level of commitment is shown towards teaching.

1. Though lateness and absenteeism have not featured prominently as problems facing female teachers, thoughts of the security of family members, lack of concentration on whatever they do at work and little or no adequate preparation of teaching and learning resources are bound to have adverse effect on their efficiency and effectiveness. It is recommended that the Department of Social Welfare should help train househelps. This, to a large extent, would enable them to manage the affairs of the home very well and to give the much needed attention and care to the children. Heads should also counsel female teachers on the need to produce improvised teaching/learning materials.
2. Combining teaching with family/home responsibilities implies work overload, especially when there is no househelp. Stress and strain may set in due to the inability to cope with the workload

which invariably affects one's productivity. About 78% of the female teachers experience stress and strain as a result of the dual role that they play. It is suggested that the Press should help in educating the public on the need for women to share domestic/household chores with men. Parents should also train their sons in housekeeping or in the performance of household chores.

3. Female teachers, to a large extent, do not have sufficient time to make adequate preparations for work as they have to cook for the family, bathe the children, wash their clothes and get them ready for school. The ill preparation of the female teachers have serious repercussions on their performance likewise the pupils. It is recommended that supervision by Heads of Institutions and Circuit Supervisors be strengthened so that teachers, especially working mothers, become enthusiastic and more committed to the teaching profession.

It could therefore be concluded that work-home conflict among female teachers to some extent has repercussions on their classroom performance and also their attitude towards the teaching professions.

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