

MOTHERHOOD, PARENTING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG FEMALE STEM EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC POLYTECHNICS, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of motherhood and parenting responsibilities on the work-life balance of female STEM educators in public Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted, and the study population comprised all female STEM educators across the six public Polytechnics in the State. Two hypotheses guided the study, and a structured questionnaire was administered to 300 female STEM educators. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data, while the hypotheses were tested at 5% significance level using linear regression approach. The findings revealed that mothers perform substantial roles and face significant demands in balancing their professional and family responsibilities. Results further indicated that motherhood has a significant effect on work-life balance (T-value = 3.510; $p < 0.001$), and parenting also significantly influences work-life balance (T-value = 2.675; $p < 0.0001$) among female STEM educators in public polytechnics in Ogun State. The study concludes that while motherhood and parenting can exert positive influences on women's work-life balance, the overall outcome largely depends on how effectively mothers manage the demands of both home and work. Consequently, the study recommends that educational institutions formulate and adopt flexible policies and work arrangements that accommodate the dynamic family responsibilities of female employees. Such measures may include flexible working hours, opportunities for remote work, and the avoidance of late-day meetings.

Keywords: Female, Motherhood, Parenting, STEM, Work-Life Balance.

JEL Code: J16, J22, I21, J13

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance is a critical issue for female academics, particularly in STEM fields where the demands of research and teaching are high. A study by Ojo and Sokefun (2019) found that female lecturers in Nigerian tertiary Institutions experience significant stress and burnout due to the pressures of balancing work and family life. The lack of flexible working arrangements, inadequate childcare facilities, and limited Institutional support further exacerbate these challenges (Adikwu, 2019). Academic staff in tertiary institutions are generally saddled with the responsibilities of research and effective curriculum delivery (Sheidu & Onikosi-Alliyu, 2025) which require work-life balance strategies for maintaining the well-being and productivity of educators especially the women (Eason et al., 2014). Work-life balance is now a major concern for both owner and workers in most firms (Fapohunda, 2014). Work-life balance, concerns female ability to correctly value employment, social activities, well-being, and home, and so on, is highly associated with staff efficiency and effectiveness (Ma, 2024).

A lack of work-life balance is a source of stress that can lead to health difficulties, poor work performance, and other issues.

According to Hilbrecht et al. (2008), some women may find it challenging to accomplish work-life balance due to job hours and workload changes over the last few decades. These changes have led to an increase in the constraints of time and minimize fulfillment in Work-Life Balance. Organisations have also made efforts to help staff deal with work-life balance through childcare facilities, flextime, telecommuting, and emotional support, including Collaborative positions of authority and caregiving assistance (Ten & Van Der 2010). Furthermore, not all working mothers have access to these beneficial incentives. Women in low-paying industries, such as food retail, face challenges in balancing family responsibilities, time constraints, and employment demands (Backett-Milburn, et al 2008).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite an increasing body of research on Work-Life Balance and gender equality in academia, there is a considerable vacuum in the literature, notably addressing the experience of Female STEM Educators in Nigerian Polytechnics (Eason et al., 2014). Despite significant progress in promoting gender equity in various professional fields, women are underrepresented in STEM disciplines (World Economic Forum, 2020). This underrepresentation is especially severe in Nigeria in Polytechnics, where female Educators play an important role in the future workforce shaping. Such Educators are usually challenged with special demands because they have dual roles to perform, as professionals and the family issues especially Parenting and Motherhood (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). The mothers are experiencing a new challenge of balancing their motherhood and work life. This can be simple to others and difficult to some to establish a balance. The inability to handle the stressors related to imbalance is perhaps not limited to mental health.

Gender-based obstacles in STEM teaching of females in the Nigerian Polytechnics are a common experience that prevents career development and well-being. These obstacles entail, the absence of Institutional support, expectations in society concerning gender roles and the rigor of the STEM fields (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2020). One may experience too much tension, burnout, and a poor work-life balance due to the pressure to perform in their professional position, taking care of the Motherhood duties (Ojo & Sokefun, 2019). In addition, it is possible that current Support mechanisms and policies applied in Nigerian Polytechnics are unable to cover the particular needs of females Educators which adds to their difficulties. The gap demonstrates the necessity of an in-depth knowledge of the problems related to the work-life balance of these women and the successful strategies and policies to assist them (Aina and Ajayi, 2018).

Inclusion of Women in STEM areas and Engineering and Mathematics is significant towards enhancing innovation and gender equity in education and the workforce. Female STEM educators are very useful in motivating and advising the future generations (Krüger & Levy, 2001). Nonetheless, these Educators tend to experience special difficulties in taking care of their professional duties as well as the Parenting and Motherhood requirements. It is necessary to understand the path their experience has taken to implement policies and practices that enable them to build their careers and lives. There are several personal coping mechanisms among Female STEM Educators to cope with their work life balance. They are time management, enlisting the help of the family members, and task priority (Enekwechi et al., 2021). These strategies may assist in alleviating some of the challenges but these are not always enough with Institutional backing. The information about these personal strategies, helps to

consider what strategies Female Educators use to cope with stress and what areas are in need of more support (Eason et al., 2014).

The situation with women in STEM is even more difficult in Nigeria. According to Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) culture and social expectations are significant factors in shaping the career preference of women who are rarely motivated to undertake STEM careers. As well, the policies and educational infrastructure in Nigeria fail to address the inclusion and retention of women in STEM subjects adequately (Aina and Ajayi, 2018). The same can be said about underrepresentation in the case of the Nigerian Polytechnics, with female Educators playing a critical role in motivating and informing the future professionals of STEM, but being confronted with significant challenges in their own part (Aarsand, 2014).

Danbolt (2016) says that Organisational rules that facilitate a nice work-family balance are an important trigger to attain the right level of satisfaction and success in the work and the parenting sphere. This means that the work environment nature is an important complementary variable in a good balance between family life and work demands (Kahanov et al., 2010). The necessity to perform parental roles and the need to meet the requirements of the profession is a specific problem facing female academicians worldwide (Ma, 2024). Studies have also shown that motherhood has a great influence on the academic career of women, which usually leads to slower career development and to reduced job satisfaction (Mason et al 2013). In Nigeria, cultural demands add to these problems, requiring women to bear a great responsibility of meeting the traditional family responsibilities (Enekwechi et al., 2021). Women STEM Teachers in State Polytechnics in Ogun, as such, have an uphill balancing task to meet their career goals and family obligations (Keldenich, 2022).

Almost all mothers strive to achieve a work-family balance while still practicing effective parenting. Good Parenting is defined as parents' understanding and capacity to meet their child's needs (Eve, 2014). Excellent parenthood is closely linked to the concept of positive parenting, which promotes parental warmth and attentiveness (Chen et al., 2022). A range of negative spillover consequences might arise at the start of the balancing act, including stress, family discontent, and lack of workplace outcomes, to mention a few (Milkie 2022). Parents must dedicate themselves to quality time with their children while also working hard. Early in the years of Parenthood and family life are fraught with conflicting emotions as parents strive to reconcile the demands of family and employment (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2018). The ability to balance this act requires parents to keep up with their children's rapid development and growth during the formative years (ECLKC, 2021). Furthermore, the motivation to succeed or succeed in one's career or employment is on the opposite end of the balancing scale (Parker., 2023).

2.1 Theoretical Review

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) explains how interrole conflict where participation in one role makes fulfilling the other role more challenging since the demands and pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible. In the subject of organisational research, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) first described this idea. Work-family conflict is a type of interrole conflict where role pressures from the work and family domains are incompatible in some way." This approach holds that the two sets of role demands fight for the same scarce resources, especially time, energy, and psychological attention, making it harder to invest more in one area than in the other. Organisations that have high performance work practices and a moderate degree of mobility offer a conducive work environment that encourages high productivity and satisfaction of family demands among female employees (Berg et al 2001).

High levels of work-family conflict are linked to detrimental effects like job dissatisfaction, emotional stress, burnout, decreased productivity, and impaired family functioning, according to empirical research. Persistent conflict can also have an impact on research production, job advancement, and general well-being for female academics (Keldenich, 2022). Therefore, Work-Family Conflict Theory offers a pertinent and strong framework for comprehending how professional duties interact with maternity and parental responsibilities to affect work-life balance among female STEM educators in public Polytechnics. In conclusion, by emphasizing the conflicting demands of work and home responsibilities, the mechanisms via which conflict emerges, and the effects of unresolved role tension, Work-home Conflict Theory provides a helpful lens for analyzing the difficulties experienced by female STEM educators. The theory emphasizes the necessity of support networks and institutional measures that might lessen role conflict and encourage long-term work-life balance Soneye, et.al. 2025).

2.2 Empirical Review

Research in a variety of settings has consistently demonstrated that parenting and motherhood have a major impact on women's work-life balance, especially in academic fields. Due to conflicting demands on their time and energy, research shows that female academics frequently struggle to balance work obligations with household and childcare responsibilities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Numerous studies conducted in Nigeria have shown how difficult it is for female academics to balance career and home responsibilities. According to Adewumi and Duma (2021), severe workloads, strict schedules, and a lack of institutional support for parenting are the main causes of the high levels of work-family conflict experienced by female lecturers in higher education. According to their research, parenthood exacerbates time-based and strain-based conflicts, which causes stress and lowers job satisfaction among female academics.

Furthermore, empirical studies have shown that inadequate organisational support contributes significantly to poor work-life balance among working mothers. Okeke, Mbonu, and Ndubuisi (2019) observed that the absence of flexible work schedules, childcare facilities, and supportive leave policies in Nigerian tertiary institutions increases emotional exhaustion and role overload among female educators. These findings suggest that institutional structures play a crucial role in shaping women's work-life experiences.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was descriptive survey research that included six (6) Polytechnics that were under government ownership in Ogun State, Nigeria. The population of the study was represented by the female STEM teachers recruited by the Institutions in the three Senatorial Districts of the State. In particular, the sampled Polytechnics covered: "The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, and Ogun State Institute of Technology, Igbesa, Ogun West; Moshood Abiola Polytechnic and D.S Adegbenro ICT Polytechnic, Itori, Ogun Central; and Gateway ICT Polytechnic, Saapade, and Abraham Adesanya Polytechnic, Ijebu-Igbo, Ogun East".

A simple random sampling method was used to select a total of 300 female STEM educators based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table used in a known population. It was also done using a proportional method of allocation thus 50 female STEM educators were selected in each Institution. A structured questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) was the main tool of data collection. To determine the reliability

of the instrument, the test-retest method was used and the correlation was done through Pearson Product-Moment Correlation which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

Out of 300 questionnaires, only 270 were returned and were duly completed. As a result, data analysis was made using 270 valid responses. Based on the purpose of the research such as investigating how motherhood and parenting affect the work-life balance of women who are STEM educators in the public Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria, the null hypotheses were tested. Regression analysis was used to test and compute descriptive statistics at 0.05 level of significance with the help of SPSS Version 25.

3.1 Hypotheses

H₀₁: Motherhood does not have any significant influence on the Work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnic in Ogun State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Parenting does not have any significant influence on the Work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnic in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The hypotheses were subjected to linear regression analysis at 95% confidence interval with the aid of SPSS Version 25.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

H₀₁: Motherhood does not have any significant influence on the Work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Regression Coefficients of Motherhood on Work-Life Balance of Female STEM Educator (Dependent = Work-Life Balance (WLB))

Model	Coefficients	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	2.348	.132	19.086	.002
Motherhood (MTH)	.499	.042	3.510	.000

$R = 0.504$; $R^2 = 0.254$; $Adj.R^2 = 0.246$; $F\text{-stat} = 3.370$; $p\text{-value} = 0.0000$

a. Dependent Variable: WLB

Source: Field Survey Result (2025)

The hypothesis (H₀₁) states that Motherhood does not have any significant influence on the work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria. The regression analysis, however, provides strong evidence to reject this null hypothesis.

The coefficient for Motherhood ($\beta = 0.499$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant positive influence on work-life balance at the 0.05 significance level. The t-value of 3.510 further confirms that motherhood makes a meaningful contribution to predicting work-life balance among the respondents.

The model summary shows an R-value of 0.504, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between motherhood and work-life balance. The R^2 value of 0.254 indicates that approximately 25.4% of the variation in work-life balance can be explained by motherhood-related factors. The adjusted R^2 (0.246) confirms that the model has good explanatory power, even after adjusting for sample size. Motherhood plays an exceptional role in the day-to-day activities in

the Institution and they often face unique challenges in balancing their professional responsibilities with the demands of Motherhood because this stage requires a lot of attention and it as to be balanced equally (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). In addition, the F-statistic ($F = 3.370$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) demonstrates that the overall regression model is statistically significant and sufficient in relating the work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnic, Ogun State, Nigeria with Motherhood. This result supports (Danbolt 2016), which implies that Motherhood is an important variable and there is a widespread belief that the setting of workplaces or places of employment plays an important role in the correct balancing act. It is critical for Parents to spend meaningful time with their children while also putting in significant effort at work.

Given the statistically significant relationship, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that motherhood has a significant influence on the work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnics in Ogun State. The positive coefficient suggests that as motherhood responsibilities increase or become more pronounced, they significantly shape and impact how female educators manage and balance their work and family roles (Van Putten et al., 2008).

This result supports Enekwechi et al., (2021) that Motherhood affects work-life Balance of Female STEM Educators because they are more engaged in the activities of STEM courses in the Institution, which requires more time and attention. In addition, the study of Aina & Ajayi, (2018) implies that Female STEM Educators who are involved in Motherhood activities are prone to be affected in their work-life balancing, thus demanding effective coping strategies to neutralize the possible undesired impact of the Motherhood status on work-life balance

H_02 : Parenting does not have any significant influence on the Work-life balance of Female STEM Educators in Public Polytechnics in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients of Parenting on Work-life Balance of Female STEM Educator (Dependent = Work-Life Balance (WLB))

Model	Coefficients	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	4.413	.320	13.771	.000
PT	.450	.094	2.657	.001

$R = 0.567$; $R^2 = 0.074$; $Adj.R^2 = 0.063$; $F\text{-stat} (df\ 1, 79) = 9.0612$; $p\text{-value} = 0.001$

The regression results presented in Table 2 provide evidence on the relationship between parenting and work-life balance. The coefficient for Parenting (PT) is 0.450 with a standard error of 0.094, yielding a t-value of 2.657 and a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value < 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_02) is rejected. This indicates that parenting has a statistically significant influence on the work-life balance of female STEM educators in Ogun State public Polytechnics. More so, it implies that female educators who are involved in parenting are prone to be really affected due to the much involvement and responsibility that will be required on every basis. The model also shows a correlation coefficient ($R = 0.567$), suggesting a moderate positive relationship between parenting and work-life balance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.074$) implies that approximately 7.4% of the variance in work-life balance can be explained by parenting responsibilities.

Although the explanatory power is modest, it still reflects a meaningful effect. Furthermore, the F-statistic ($F = 9.061$, $p = 0.001$) confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. The analysis demonstrates that parenting significantly influences the work-life balance of female STEM educators. This means that higher parenting demands such as childcare, domestic responsibilities, and emotional labour, affect how effectively these women manage and integrate their professional and personal roles. Due to the fact that Parenting is a continuous stage and it is difficult for parents to work while also caring for their children. Parker (2024) opined that Parents must have a lot of patience, strength, and tenacity to deal with the stresses of their daily jobs and care for their families. This reality is more strongly illustrated for starter families, in which young parents must balance being a successful and efficient worker while also devoting constant attention to their newly established family (Mazerolle et al., 2015).

The positive coefficient further implies that as parenting responsibilities increase, work-life balance is affected in ways that require greater adjustment and support. This result supports (Milkie 2022). that parenting affects Work-Life Balance of Female STEM Educators because it requires some stress, time constraints, career sacrifices, and sleep deprivation in order to balance the activities of work in the Institution, thus demanding effective coping strategies to neutralize possible undesired impact of the parenting status on the work-life balance (Sanz-Cruzado et al., 2021). Parenting is involved in a continuous stage and the pace of learning to execute the task of balancing grows as the family matures at that point, the children have grown up and require little attention to meet their personal requirements. Almost all parents strive to achieve a work-family balance while still practicing effective Parenting Soneye, et.al. 2025).

5. CONCLUSION

Research has also demonstrated that Motherhood and Parenting can have both good implications on women's professional advancement. Some women face career interruptions and less prospects for promotion after becoming mothers. However, other research studies, such as Schofield (2014) and Härkönen (2016) says Motherhood and Parenting can have positive effects on women's work-life balance, but how mothers handle their homes and work will determine whether the outcome is positive or negative. It has been suggested that motherhood can equip women with valuable skills and perspectives, like time management, multitasking, and problem-solving, these can help them advance in their careers (Sheidu & Onikosi-Alliyu 2025). Women felt more motivated to finish various duties after one succeeded as a mother, such as completing study work, in order to increase in mental ability, which was seen as an outcome of dealing with motherhood issues, for example, caring for children and multiple tasks to finish domestic duties.

Finally, Educational Institutions should adopt versatile rules and job circumstances to accommodate employees' shifting family situations, such as altering hours of operation, providing flexible work possibilities, and avoiding late-night meetings (Onah et.al, 2022). They may also enable job revamps and temporarily reorganise the responsibilities of pregnant women. Education is essential in alleviating the Motherhood penalty, therefore providing specific training programmes and resources for instructions are significant methods to boost mothers' employment. Institutions should implement the usage of technology for Female STEM Educators for easy and to keep them in current industry changes and facilitate their return from career pauses (Omotola et.al, 2024). Public Polytechnics should provide an enabling environment for Female Educators to thrive both professionally and personally Ibrahim, et. al, 2025).

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