Work–Life Integration: Experiences of Women Faculty and Administrators Working at Tangaza University College (TUC), Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Kenya

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1.1 Introduction

Globally, juggling a career and personal life continues to be a challenge, particularly for career women. As observed by Parker (2015), this continues to be a front-burner issue—one that is being recognized by a growing number of employers. Unlike the traditional society that clearly defined roles for female members of the society (which were mainly limited within the home), the contemporary society makes it possible for career women to play the two roles and require them to meet the demands of both work and family. Just like in other regions, while the proportion of women working in the formal sector (career women) in Kenya has increased in recent years, their share of household and family responsibilities has not changed much. In a survey conducted by Pew Research Center (2013), an observation was made that mothers were much more likely than fathers to report experiencing significant career interruptions in order to attend to their families' needs. Additionally, a recent McKinsey and Company (2021) report on COVID-19 impact on women's employment states that women have been deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a case study design, this chapter explores work–life integration experiences of career women working at Tangaza University College (TUC), Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA).

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1.2   Work–Life Balance or Work–Life Integration?

Over the years, there have been various researches documenting the interrelationship between work and family life, some of which have explained work and life as separate domains of life that need to balance. Rincy and Panchanatham (2014) in their *Work Life Balance: A Short Review of the Theoretical and Contemporary Concepts* outline theories that explain work and life as needing a balance. Many people still hold on to the opinion that these are separate domains of life that need to be separated and can be separated to achieve success in both. Raja and Stein (2014) explain that the concept of work–life balance is not new to the current generation and limiting the amount of time spent at work can be traced back to the manufacturing laws of the late 1800s.

The Fair Labour Standard Act established a 44-hour week, and in addition, the 1980 Women's Liberation Movement brought back life–work balance considerations and advocacy for flexible working schedules and maternity leave. Further, Raja and Stein (2014) state that work–life balance is often discussed yet difficult to achieve, and although it is an individual responsibility that cannot be standardized, assessing and evaluating its main concerns may be helpful in increasing awareness and managing imbalances.

In the African context, Amah and Ogah (2021) observe that prior to the precolonial era the terms work–life balance, work–life integration and work–life conflict were not used in Africa, since there were clear-cut boundaries in the work and family domains. Men were assigned to work, and women occasionally helped; hence, there was no indication of work–life conflict.

Over the years, work–life balance is recommended for maintaining well-being and fulfillment at a personal and professional level so as to manage stress, prevent burnout, enhance employee morale/productivity, retain employees, and achieve desired outcomes/goals. However, Heathfield (2021) asserts that achieving work–life balance is a daily challenge and describes it as an ideal situation in which employees can divide their time and energy between work and essential aspects of their life. MacAulay (2020) indicates that many argue that work–life balance is an illusion. In addition to the technological advancement in the twentieth century and employees looking for meaning and purpose in work, the phrase work–life balance has "evolved over time to work–life integration and has created challenges and opportunities along the way." Further, MacAulay states that the 2020 global pandemic has brought dramatic changes and brought the term work–life integration to the forefront since people have been forced to integrate their personal and professional life by remote working. "Working remotely means home has become the new workplace," and hence, work–life integration takes a new level of urgency and importance.

Hass School of Business (2021) states that whereas work–life balance can be described as separation of one's professional and personal lives, work–life integration conceptualizes life as a connection between work and other life commitments. Hence, there has been a progress in conceptualization and diction used from what was traditionally referred to as "work–life balance" as it creates a sense of
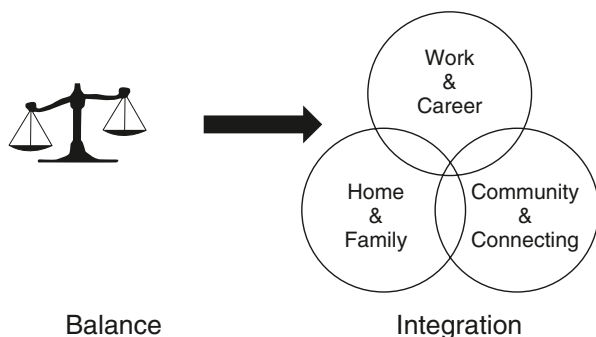
Fig. 1.1 This model was produced by Hass Business School in 2021, to demonstrate work life integration instead of work life balance

competition between life and work rather than a whole–life integration of the two main places people live, mainly work and home. The Fig. 1.1 illustrates the progress discussed in this paragraph.

1.3 Global Trends on Work–Life Integration amid COVID-19 Pandemic Disruptions

A recent survey conducted by Merchants Survey (2020) illustrates that flexible working conditions (work–life integration) have become the dominant work ethic the world over. The survey indicates that flexible working conditions have translated to happier and productive employees. Apart from flexible working conditions being cited as contributing to lower overheads and savings for organizations, they have also become valuable incentives to retain employees besides attracting new applicants and contributing to employee good health and general well-being.

In the Kenyan context, a report entitled *The COVID-19 pandemic and the Kenyan workplace,* by Corporate Staffing Services (2020) released in-depth research on remote working amid the COVID-19 disruption. According to the report, the employees who were interviewed indicated that they would like to entrench the "work-from-home" culture, post-COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis of the responses showed that 52.6% of the employees indicated that they had never worked from home/remotely before the COVID-19 pandemic, while 47.4% (398) had worked remotely before. Then, 51.1% of the employer organizations had a policy on working remotely while the rest, 48.9%, did not have such a policy. In addition, 55.5% of the employees indicated that their productivity had been negatively affected, 20.4% indicated their productivity at home was similar to working from the office, and 24.1% stated that their productivity is better while working from the office. The above statistics are an indication that in the Kenyan context, there is a need to

develop clear policy guidelines on remote working patterns and work–life integration in order to enhance employees' productivity and physical and psychological well-being.

1.4   Work–Life Integration and Career Women

Sandberg and Scovell (2017) observed that for many men, the fundamental assumption is that they can have both a successful career and a fulfilling personal life, yet for many women the assumption is that trying to do both is difficult. For Sandberg and Scovell (2017), the conflict in the life of women is not so much about achieving everything but the worry about losing what matter to them most such as their occupations, their family's well-being, and their financial security because of the pressure between being a good employee and parenting well. Further, she observes that women can thrive in both family and career.

For the religious nuns, work–life balance can be elusive. Eze et al. (2015) observe that religious women come across as fulfilled and industrious. However, they are repressed and overworked by their religious superiors who view them as inferior or low ranking. Furthermore, there is little consideration for their well-being and personal interest.

1.5   Statement of the Problem

The general quality of an employee's life in relation to their working life is the most important in the achievement of organizational goals (Bello & Tanko, 2020). With the changing landscape of the work–life scenarios due to technological changes, both are seen as interrelated paradoxes, partially conflicting and partially complementary. Forbes (2020) affirms that work–life integration focuses on incorporating the different areas of one's life to create a whole picture. This suggests that the different areas/dimensions of one's life, including work, are dynamic and change over life cycle and career progression. Additionally, an effective synergy between an individual's personal and work–life can yield positive results on performance (Kumari, 2012). On the other hand, work–life integration is feared to promote blurred boundaries between work and life-risking health, relationships, and productivity. Rothbard and Ollier-Malaterre (2015) propose factors such as technological progress as being culprits in the redefinition of the boundaries between work and personal life, hence increasing the permeability of the two spheres. Montanez (2020) asserts that 26% of workers take work home with the possibility of increasing the chance of burnout due to overwork, and 40% use their computers after 10 p.m., reducing what is considered optimal sleep quality.

Amid this controversy of work–life integration and COVID-19 global disruption that has necessitated working remotely, parental roles, and professional career, it is important that organizations and employees have healthy and productive work–life integration practices and policies. Therefore, using a case study, this research

investigates the work–life experiences of career women working at TUC-CUEA during COVID-19 pandemic global disruption and provides recommendations for better practices to promote well-being and productivity.

1.6   Methodology

This study used a case study design as it best answered the questions and the purposes of the study. The study was carried out in TUC, a constituent college of CUEA located in Nairobi County. The purposive sampling method was used to arrive at a sample of ten women working as full-time staff in administration and academic duties. The researchers used an interview schedule for data collection, and data were collected by means of in-depth interview technique. A pilot study was conducted to assist in determining the accuracy, clarity, and suitability of the research instruments. Two senior administration female staff drawn from TUC were interviewed in the pilot phase. However, their views have not been incorporated into the final analysis of this chapter. Data analysis was conducted by means of thematic analysis technique. The researchers adhered to all the necessary ethical requirements including obtaining research authorization from the Institutional Ethical Review Committee (IERC), Daystar University, and a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before undertaking the study.

1.7   Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following five objectives

  (i) To examine perceptions of career women working at TUC on work–life integration
 (ii) To explore the impact of work on the participant's quality of life
(iii) To assess the existing strategies to manage work–life demands of the career women at the TUC
(iv) To assess work–life integration experiences of TUC career women during the COVID-19 pandemic global disruption.

1.8   Findings

1.8.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The respondents were both lay and religious nuns in TUC taking both administrative work and lecturing roles. In addition, married women had children ranging from two to three, while all religious women did not have children.

Table 1.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Respondent	Lay or religious	Children
#1	Married	Three
#2	Not married (religious)	None
#3	Married	Two
#4	Not married (religious)	None
#5	Married	Three
#6	Married	Two
#7	Not married (religious)	None
#8	Not married (religious)	None
#9	Married	Two
#10	Religious	None

1.8.2   Objective 1: The Understanding of Work–Life Integration for Career Women

In response to the question on one's perception of work–life integration, the following themes emerged from the interviews.

1.8.2.1 No Difference Between Work–Life Balance Versus Work–Life Integration

As per the analysis of the responses, the majority of participants understood work–life integration to mean the same as work–life balance. In fact, 90% of the respondents used expressions that indicated that the two concepts mean the same or rather used the word balance in their explanations. Moreover, the respondents understood work–life integration as ensuring equal commitment for one's personal responsibilities and work responsibilities. The following are a sample verbatim from the respondents.

P1: *This is complicated; it is balancing the different responsibilities in my life. To give quality in work there is a need for a balance of work and personal life. It is very demanding to achieve a balance both at work and in other aspects of life.*

P4: *I dedicate quality time for work, my personal (spiritual growth) and community life as a woman who is religious. If I let one slip off my hands, life will become miserable for me. If I do this, life becomes worth living. I don't carry work home, I work.*

1.8.2.2 Live Life in a Unified Way

The second theme that emerged was work–life integration being explained as the ability to unify one's life and work in a way that the two are not conflicting but complementing each other. According to one participant, *working at something you find purpose in…stuff that makes sense to the purpose of life. Life and work are one even if they have to have boundaries between them.* This demonstrates that work and life flow and they are not separable, hence should be managed as such. One of the respondents also indicated that to her, work–life integration is about integrating both personal/family obligations and professional duties seamlessly such that both

are delivered as required. In her words, P8: *I believe work, life (spiritual and material), are critically embedded in each other. I believe my life would not be whole without either.*

1.8.3 Objective 2: Impact of Work on the Participant's Quality of Life

Concerning the impact of work on quality of life, the overall theme that emerged from the assessment was that it affected the general wellness of an individual. These effects would be in the following areas:

1.8.3.1 Impact on Health

Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that due to the demands of their work expectations (with specific reference to their professional duties), they often find themselves unable to get adequate time to focus on themselves in areas such as exercises and healthy eating habits and sleep. This feeling was common for both religious women and lay respondents. A religious sister indicated:

> P4: *......my work involves administration, teaching, being a student and my community responsibilities can be overwhelming. I have to attend community moments ….they do not understand I work at Tangaza.* The same respondent pointed out that the situation provided an opportunity for improving well-being in the following words. *It promoted healthy living- I had time to eat most meals. At work I skip most of the meals.*

Another participant, a married woman, expressed a similar sentiment as follows:

> P5: *Yah…maybe not say much…last year my work took away quality of life. Sleeping was 1-2 am and no time for exercise…always seated too heavy at work. If given a Likert scale to choose that work was very much….I would tick- strongly agree.*

From the above responses, we can decipher that work overload demands have a negative impact on health and well-being of workers.

1.8.3.2 Personal Development and Growth

Work was seen as something that makes life meaningful and affords opportunities for growth and teamwork. These reflections are captured in the following sentiments:

> P7: *Well, I can say my work has afforded me new experience; I am consulting, researching and want to know more. Some circumstances are pushing me to grow, sometimes I go home feeling like a new person. I have bigger things to handle.... [I am]...more mature, people oriented, internet savvy.*

> P10: *I grow from my work; I have learned a lot as a lecturer, interacted and grown. Workshops and seminars added a lot to my wellbeing as a person-we have counseling, chapel and individual work, and share life.*

1.8.3.3 Personal Responsibilities

The rest of the respondents who held that their work had an impact on the quality of their lives made their observations concerning the difficulties they found in balancing their professional and personal obligations. Some of the key observations made in this regard are indicated below.

- *I am forced to delegate some of my family duties to catch up with work responsibilities and this is not always what I want.*
- *Due to the grueling demands of preparing for lessons, I am often left exhausted and not able to deliver appropriately on my other family and personal duties including personal exercise;*
- *The tension between work deliverables often pressures time available for family and personal exercise. Particularly being in a new office at TUC has been tedious sometimes working deep into the night but I have always strived to carve out time for self-exercise and family.*
- *Demands for my professional work are often in contention with the state of my well-being where I am at times not able to deliver properly on my "other work" at home as I would like to.*
- *My own experience was that work obligations greatly impacted the quality of my life where at some time I was only able to sleep for 1–2 hours in a day and went for long periods without exercising.*
- *Being in a new office (barely 5 months), it is tough delivering on my duties as expected in the different areas I am engaged in—consulting, research, meeting people's expectations,* etc. *Despite the learning opportunities I am getting in the process, these engagements are very tiring and I often find myself with little time for myself.*

From the above responses, it can be argued that the assumed possibility to have work and life unified needs intentional and purposed efforts. Moreover, 12.5% of the respondents in responding to whether their work impacts on the quality of their lives observed that they considered their work as being an integral part of their lives. For example, a respondent said that *I believe work, life (spiritual and material), are critically embedded in each other. I believe my life would not be whole without either* (P8).

1.8.4 Objective 3: Realizing Work–Life Integration for Career Women

The third objective sought to assess the respondents' perception as to whether it is possible to realize work–life integration. Having established, in the previous section, that participants had different understandings of the term work–life

integration, this also influences their perception of whether it can be achieved or not. The following section presents the thematic analysis of their responses.

1.8.4.1 Achieving Work–Life Integration Is Possible

Ninety percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative that work–life integration is achievable. In their responses, they admitted that it was difficult for career women to realize work–life integration, but with proper motivation and strategy, it can be realized. The following sub-themes emerged from the explanations of what makes work–life integration possible for career women.

1.8.4.2 Intentionality, Choice, and Efforts

Achieving work–life balance requires one to be intentional.

As observed by P6: *It is possible to achieve this balance and it requires deliberate choice and effort to realize the same. For instance, this year I have decided that I will not carry any work assignments from the office home and I have decided only to spend the time required at work; nothing more so that I have a balance. Last year I was coming to the office at 7 am and leaving at 7 pm; not anymore.*

> P9: *Our life and work and well-being are intertwined. Proper planning can help you achieve this.*

The above participants expressed the deliberate intention made to achieve work–life balance.

> P8: *It depends on how one plans things out so that they can develop their career and at the same time take care of their personal life obligations and family.*

1.8.4.3 Support System

The need for a support system, both at work and in other responsibilities, was seen as useful for work–life integration. For one respondent, P7: *It requires a lot of effort and planning to realize the balance and also requires a support system that helps to realize that integration—both at the institutional level and at a personal level through things like mentorship.*

Other respondents indicated that they require their line managers to understand the circumstances in different life seasons for a woman and make adjustments in terms of the expectations as shared in the following reflections:

> P2: *It can be achieved when work expectations are reasonable and family members are supportive to help realize the balance when the assigned work is reasonable and also family members become deliberate. Impossibilities in understanding the concept of self-care can make one find a balance between work and other aspects of life.*

> P4: *This can be achieved when there is support; I rely on my sisters for this support in working towards achieving work-life integration.*

1.8.4.4 Work that Brings a Sense of Purpose

A sense of purpose is characterized by things that give meaning, security, and well-being. These include family, finances, and health. Work–life integration can be realized when one engages in work that brings them a sense of meaning and contributes to their well-being. This is contributed to by engaging in work where individuals feel they are making a difference in the world.

> P5: *When we find a job that contributes to a sense of meaning that we are fully engaged. In psychology, we say that a sense of flow contributes to wellbeing. If you are making a difference in the world you will feel better.*

1.8.4.5 Work–Life Integration Is Not Possible

Ten percent of the respondents argued that achieving work–life integration was not possible given the extreme challenges unique to career women that they must deal with to realize work–life integration and observed that in most cases these challenges are rarely overcome. For instance, one of the respondents argued that *Systems and structures do not favor women. There is a constant struggle for women to manage their work expectations and their family, especially during their childbearing age. Such may affect how much a woman can progress in her career* (P3).

1.8.4.6 Strategies for Work–Life Integration

The respondents further shared different strategies that can be used to realize work–life integration for them as career women as presented in Table 1.2.

These strategies point to the fact that work–life integration can be realized by harmonizing personal/family obligations and professional duties with a deliberate

Table 1.2 Themes of strategies for work–life integration

Professional strategies	Personal strategies
From the workplace: 　Mentorship (peer-to-peer and overall mentors) 　Flexible work schedules that accommodate the expectations at different life season childbearing, etc. 　Reasonable and clear expectation from the employer 　Institutional values 　Networking 　Delegation *Best practices:* 　Prioritizing important activities (at work and family) 　Goal setting 　Work–life integration schedule 　Multitasking 　Focus	*Self-care:* 　Exercise 　My me-time 　Practicing healthy eating and other well-being practices 　Meditation/prayer therapy 　Finding ample time to rest *Philosophy:* 　Engage in work that gives a purpose fulfills 　Self-understanding–personal values at different seasons 　Accepting challenges 　Accept responsibility 　Innovation/creativity 　Work on bouncing back. Resilience. 　Learn from mistakes. 　Finding support from family and extended family

intent to ensure wellness productivity. The themes are presented under four broad categories—workplace strategies, best practices at work, self-care, and philosophies that drive these themes as shown in Table 1.2.

1.8.5 Objective 4: Remote Working and Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Work–Life Integration

The third research objective addressed how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on work–life integration for career women. This objective assessed the respondents' perception of how COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their work–life integration and the challenges and opportunities they encountered as they worked under COVID-19 protocols that reduced face-to-face meetings and preferred virtual working.

The first COVID-19 case was first reported in Kenya in March 2020, and shortly after, the government provided a raft of measures and protocols aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus in the country. Part of the protocol was the immediate closure of all learning institutions in the country and banned public gatherings in all social places for an initial period of 60 days (Aluga, 2020). These protocols meant that learning institutions had to devise methods and systems to continue offering their services to learners mostly via virtual platforms and tools. The respondents shared their experiences of teaching, meetings, and other work engagements virtually. The following information themes emerged.

1.8.5.1 Technological Challenges

The respondents indicated that it was a difficult experience at the beginning due to the technological challenges of virtual working. All the respondents indicated that they struggled mastering the virtual tools they were required to use for curriculum delivery. Others faced challenges with Internet access and connectivity where poor connection impacted the quality of their delivery of lessons.

> P5: *The experience of working virtually was very difficult at the start with challenges around technology and the cost associated with virtual working—internet.*

1.8.5.2 Long Working Hours

The respondents also observed that virtual working was challenging given that they had to work from home and often ended up working for longer hours than they would generally work if they went to the office. This then called for greater discipline and resilience to ensure that there was a balance between professional duties and personal/family obligations. According to one of the respondents:

> *Working virtually was challenging particularly with regard to tendency to work way after the designated working hours, sometimes up to 9.00 pm in the night leading to burnout. I was however able to deliberately take charge of my time and ensure I created time for other things. The experience was also flexible and allowed more time for domestic chores at home* (P3).

1.8.5.3 Psychological Impact of COVID-19

The study found out that there were both positive and negative effects on the lives of the respondents. On the positive note, the respondents expressed reduced stress that is occasioned by traveling due to traffic jams. The relief from spending long hours on the road afforded participants more time to work and also engage in other personal responsibilities without being too rushed by life. As observed by P4: … *stress of traffic was reduced and I was more relaxed, I had more time to prepare for my classes and also teach, avoiding more interruptions at work resulting from attending people in the office*.

In addition to this, the study found that the working experience under COVID-19 also had negative psychological effects for career women, especially for those whose families were directly affected by the virus in one way or another. The emotional burden for those that were directly impacted by the pandemic was very crucial in their capacity to realize work–life balance in the course of their duties. One responded in this regard said:

> *I experienced difficult emotional challenges related to COVID-19 disease…. where my sister working at [XYZ] Hospital as a frontline worker was always a worry for us about her safety. I also had a brother in [BBB] who had a COVID-19 infection scare and had to undergo testing and all these were very traumatizing experiences. In addition to this, it was difficult undertaking congregational liturgical events virtually and required a lot of support and encouragement from our congregation and family of sisters* (P5).

1.8.5.4 Improved Family Engagement

Lastly, the study also found that to other respondents, the experience was good as it allowed them more time to spend with their families and engage in domestic chores where going to work was not allowing them the opportunity. Some of the sentiments in this regard include the following:

> P4: *I reconnected more with my family…my sisters...my social life was enhanced.*

> P2: *Working remotely has afforded time to support my family with domestic chores that I was previously not able to.*

> P6: *My experience working virtually was good as it allowed me some time to focus on some domestic duties at home.*

1.8.5.5 Opportunities and Challenges

The study also required the respondents to highlight the specific opportunities and challenges they faced while working remotely. Table 1.3 provides the summarized responses and observations made.

Table 1.3 Challenges and opportunities working under COVID-19 pandemic restrictions

Opportunities working virtually	Challenges working virtually
1. I have been able to learn *additional skills* through virtual learning and I feel well-rested and able to engage in my work effectively	1. Difficulty in time management and learning to work with technological skills required for virtual working
2. Virtual working provided an opportunity for professional growth through *additional virtual learning activities* and programs and helped realize the balanced time to work and attend to personal home duties.	2. Working virtual has robbed me of opportunities for *social interaction* and creates a lot of stress when facing challenges with connectivity when engaged in virtual sessions
3. Working remotely had a positive impact in the sense of reduced stress of traveling to work and hence had more quality time to prepare and deliver on my teaching roles. I also had *quality time for self-care* where I was able to eat properly most meals and also enhance my social life by connecting more with my family, my sisters.	3. Virtual working comes with a sense of antisocial behavior where long times are spent on electronic gadgets *without human interactions* and it is challenging to separate home and office work at times.
4. This experience was good for me particularly in allowing me more time to *connect with my family* and also give my family a glimpse of what my work entails.	4. *Lack of physical interactions* with students was difficult as I did not know whether I was fully meeting the needs of students
5. The experience was good, particularly now that I did not have to get caught in traffic going to work and thus was able to concentrate more on work.	5. It was difficult to designate time for work and personal time and therefore found myself working way over office times; the protocols for online classes—recording sessions, filling of Google forms, etc.—*were very tedious.*
6. The experience brought appreciation and understanding among colleagues working in different spaces. The flexibility also allowed me the opportunity to focus on personal things for my own well-being.	6. *There was stigma* associated with one catching COVID-19 diseases and so people were living in fear of becoming victims, which was not a good thing.
7. I learned how to use technology for virtual learning, which has brought increased interest to learn more and explore the many learning opportunities that are available online for my personal career progression.	7. There was *increased workload* sometimes working way past work hours and spending many hours before a computer is not healthy for the eyes. There was also lack of social interaction due to the lockdowns and restrictions around public gatherings.

1.8.6 Objective 5: Recommendations to Help Promote Work–Life Integration for Career Women

This objective presented proposed interventions to help realize work–life integration for career women. The key recommendations were as follows:

1. Capacity building to develop technological skills for virtual working and facilitation support for costs related to virtual working, i.e., Internet, computers, and setting up workspaces.
2. Organization supporting employee well-being by providing psychosocial support for staff. One participant expressed this in a question form "Who cares, does anybody ask the employee, how are you doing and how are you coping in order to know how to cope?"
3. Emphasis on self-care and boundaries to avoid work overload, working remotely, and beyond working hours.
4. Institutional initiatives such as health and fitness programs to support staff in being fit and healthy at the workplace.
5. Flexible working hours focusing on productivity rather than length of time where office times can be staggered for different staff to realize convenience without compromising on quality of delivery; support staff with personal professional ambitions such as additional training or further studies.
6. Be considerate about the amount of work required to be delivered by staff; and supported.
7. Provide a work environment that is task-focused and not time-dependent, where performance is delivery based other than the amount of time one is at work.
8. Provide avenues for support for staff in personal development particularly in line with their careers.
9. The institution to consider allowing for full remote working and only come to the institution for specific in-person issues when need arises.
10. Institute team-building initiatives to support staff to integrate more with each other and support each other.

1.9 Discussion

This research explored the experiences of women working at Tangaza University College to establish how they integrate their work roles into their personal life and community engagement, especially during the remote working period accessioned by COVID-19 pandemic. Informed by the understanding of work–life balance, some participants considered work and life as separate components that need to balance, while others looked at it as interlinked components.

It was observed that some participants explained their lives as revolving around separate components in terms of space, time, and responsibility. Different spaces hold specific responsibilities that have to remain separate and given due attention in terms of time. *I dedicate quality time to work, my personal (spiritual growth) and*

community life as a woman religious. If I let one slip off my hands, life will become miserable for me. If I do this, life becomes worth living. [I] leave work at work and go home. Such a perspective of the relations between life and work is what Friedman (2014) sees as unawareness of the fact that life has interlinked components. He further asserts that the idea that "work" competes with "life" ignores that "life" is actually the intersection and interaction of four major domains: work, home, community, and the private self.

Further, the participant's explanations indicated lack of conceptualization of the difference between work–life integration and work–life balance and its implications on what one desires to achieve. They indicated a desire to achieve work–life harmony, integration, flexibility, the flow which Ellard (2016) established in her engagement with people across 50 countries on the subject that it is a simple desire to create easy joy, meaningful engagement between interconnected roles, relationships, and responsibilities that make up their lives. And this is what they mean when they talk about life balance.

The impact of work on the individual's well-being, health, relationships, and personal growth was observed as significant issues. The respondents largely acknowledged that work impacts on their health, especially in circumstances when priorities of work override their personal roles. In their struggle to fulfill work obligations, the respondents' other life domains suffer. As explained by the resource theory of integration, the transfer or shift of a limited amount of available resources (e.g., time, energy, and attention) from one domain (i.e., family) to another (i.e., work) and the availability of the same resources for utilization in the domain originally owning the resource become insufficient, are depleted, or both. Consequently, the potential for increased levels of stress, fatigue, and burnout ensues (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Frone 2003 cited by Moris & Madsen, 2007).

The expectation of work–life integration contrasts resource theory of integration as explained in the enrichment theory. This theory proposes that having an experience in a work role helps to improve the quality of other life roles and vice versa (Bello & Tanko, 2020). Enrichment is defined as the degree that experiences, resulting from either instrumental pathways (i.e., skills, abilities, and values) or affective pathways (i.e., moods), in one domain (e.g., work), which positively enhance the quality of life in the other domain (e.g., family) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Thompson & Bunderson, 2001 cited in Moris & Madsen, 2007). The women in this study experience opportunities of friendship, mentorship, counseling, and spiritual growth from work, which in essence promotes fulfillment and wellness. Further observation is made that there are many enrichment opportunities as expressed by one respondent: "life grows from my work. I have learned a lot as a lecturer, interacted and grown. Workshops and seminars added a lot to my well-being as a person. We have counseling, chapel and individual work." However, one of the respondents felt that current work structures are completely unfair to women and do not consider the season or their responsibilities in the family/society, leading to some of their roles suffering as a result of delegation, exhaustion, and health-related issues. For instance, traditional roles for women conflict with professional expectations like promotions during childbearing age.

Regarding working virtually, participants' experiences were both positive and enabling, while others experienced challenges. Of significance is the ability to engage without necessarily having to travel, which was deemed a waste of time and stressful due to traffic snarl-ups. The experience was also flexible allowing more time for domestic chores at home.

Technological challenges saw that the majority of the respondents indicate that they struggled with mastering the knowledge and skills required for virtual learning, meetings, and operations. Others faced challenges with Internet access and connectivity due to low bandwidth impact on the quality of their delivery during lessons. This is in agreement with the corporate staffing report (2020), which observed that during the COVID-19 lockdown, most employees reported that the biggest challenge they experienced was Internet instability.

Additionally, as observed by some of the respondents, working remotely enhanced the tendency to work after the designated hours, leading to burnout. A study of three million people, as cited in (Kost, 2020), confirms what many work-from-home employees already know: "We're swamped." This was explained by the increased emails, zoom meetings, and work, which blur the boundaries. Some respondents, however, were able to deliberately take charge of their time and ensure they create more time for other things. Deliberate effort and choice are mentioned by participants as a necessity to work–life integration. In addition to this, the study also found out that working remotely under COVID-19 had negative psychological effects for career women, especially for those whose families were directly affected by the pandemic in one way or another.

1.10 Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter has explored the differences between work–life balance and work integration. A case study conducted through interviews explored the experiences of career women working in TUC in their endeavor to achieve work–life integration. The key findings were that most women perceived work–life integration as being the same as work–life balance. Further, most of them indicated that work–life integration is possible with relevant support and personal commitment through implementation of workplace strategies, best practices at work, self-care, and philosophies that drive them. Though COVID-19 had its disruptive impact on work–life relationships, there was general resilience and adaptation amid too much work and changed work arrangement. Following the outcome of this research, the following are some of the recommendations that the researchers draw from the research findings.

- Work design to include time allocation for the various work and personal development expectations such as semester off for research, recreation, caring responsibilities, training, and education.
- Promoting coaching among career women that increases self-awareness and awareness of one's own abilities and core competencies, effective communication, and ability to navigate professional transition and generally improve work–life integration.

- Develop policies and guidelines for remote working.
- Training staff on work–life integration for productivity and fulfillment.
- Family–work facilitation where organization policies and structures support both the employees and organization to thrive, which is key to work–life integration such as day care for mothers with young children.
- Further research to be conducted in institutions of higher learning that includes a wider population of respondents inform policies, which promote healthy work–life integration for productivity and fulfillment and also an in-depth research on women religious in relation to work–life integration.

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