# Chapter 2
# Managing Work and Family Demands: The Perspectives of Employed Parents in Ghana

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## Introduction

The interconnection between work and family has been a subject of great deal of interest over the past 3 decades due to the influx of women in the workforce, as well as the increase in the proportion of dual-earner families and single-parent households (International Labour Office 2009). Following the notion that individuals have limited time and energy to devote to multiple roles (Goode 1960), much of this research has focused on conflict experienced when meeting competing demands from work and family domains. In essence work–family conflict occurs when pressures associated with the work and family roles are incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Extant research has provided ample evidence of work–family conflict as a pervasive phenomenon with negative consequences for individuals, families and organisations (for example, Allen et al. 2000; Frone 2000; Shockley and Singla 2011).

Despite the global nature of the socio-demographic changes that precipitated research on work–family conflict (Aryee 1992), past research in this area has been conducted mainly in Western countries, most notably the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. Given the comparable socio-economic circumstances in these countries (Poelmans et al. 2005), models developed from this body of research might appear as though they are generalisable. However, as argued by Bagger and Love (2010), work–family experiences might vary across countries due to differences in cultural values, national policies, employment opportunities and family structures. Thus, participation in work and family roles might have different meanings and implications to individuals in different societies (Yang 2005). As such, it cannot be assumed that models developed on work–family conflict based on Western data can be readily generalised. A major limitation in the work–family literature has thus been the lack of research from non-Western

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contexts. The few studies conducted in non-Western societies have focused on Asian countries (for example, Aryee et al. 2005; Lu et al. 2009). Conspicuously absent in the work–family discourse has been research on sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this, and as in most Western countries, the increasing labour force participation of women has been well noted across different countries in sub-Saharan Africa (International Labour Office 2009). In addition, cultural endorsement of marriage and procreation (Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi 2001), an ageing population, high prevalence of HIV (Mokomane 2012), and the virtual absence of support from government and private organisations pose a great challenge to individuals, particularly women, who have to juggle paid work and caring responsibilities.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the lived experiences of parents who combine paid work with family commitments in Ghana. The objectives are to (i) examine incidences of work–family conflict; and (ii) identify sources of demands and support resources within the work and family domains, and the role these might play in impeding or facilitating participation in the work and family roles. The research reported in this chapter is part of a larger study examining antecedents and consequences of the work–family interface among individuals in dual-earner relationships in Ghana. The chapter begins with a brief review of previous research on work–family conflict, followed by an overview of the economic and socio-cultural context of the work–family interface in Ghana. This is followed by a description of the research approach, the findings on experiences of work–family conflict, as well demands and support resources in the work and family domains in the country. To conclude, the implications of the findings in the light of previous research on work–family conflict, and the socio-cultural and economic context of Ghana are examined.

## Antecedents and Consequences of Work–Family Conflict: A Review of the Literature

The linkage between work and family roles has classically been studied from the perspective of role stress theory. An underlying assumption of this perspective is that individuals have a finite amount of physiological and psychological resources to expend on multiple role obligations (Goode 1960). Consequently, involvement in work and family roles depletes these resources and inevitably results in role conflict (Kahn et al. 1964). Based on the perspective of role stress theory, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77) defined work–family conflict as "a form of interrole conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". In other words, participation in one domain (for example, work) precludes participation in the other (for example, family). They suggested three forms of work–family conflict: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behaviour-based conflict. According to Greenhaus and Beutell, time-based conflict occurs when time pressures associated with

involvement in one role make it physically impossible to meet competing demands in another role, or produce preoccupation with one role when an individual is physically attempting to fulfil demands in another role. Strain-based conflict occurs when strain created by involvement in one role makes it difficult to meet demands in another role. Behaviour-based conflict occurs when specific behaviour patterns developed in one role are incompatible with expectations regarding behaviour in another role. Although several researchers (for example, Carlson et al. 2000) have emphasised investigation of the three forms of work–family conflict there is little evidence to support behaviour-based conflict, perhaps due to difficulties in operationalisation (Dierdoff and Ellington 2008).

Earlier research in this area considered work–family conflict as a unidirectional construct, with the direction of conflict emanating from work to family domain (for example, Kopelman et al. 1983). However, consistent with Frone et al. (1997) and as stated in Chap. 1, recent research embraces a bidirectional conceptualization of work–family conflict. Thus, it is recognised that participation in the work domain can interfere with participation in the family domain (i.e. work-to-family conflict); and similarly, participation in the family domain can interfere with participation in the work domain (i.e. family-to-work conflict). There is ample evidence to show that both directions of work–family conflict are conceptually distinct (Byron 2005).

Antecedents of both directions of work–family conflict include within domain variables that make excessive demands on one's limited time and energy. Within the work domain job time demands have frequently been studied as antecedents of work–family conflict. It is assumed that the amount of time expended in a role is directly proportional to the amount of conflict an individual would experience (Gutek et al. 1991). In this regard, several studies have found that long working hours and inflexible work schedules are associated with increased work-to-family conflict (Byron 2005; Michel et al. 2010). The impact on work–family conflict is higher among employees who perceive greater misfit between job time demands and family-related responsibilities (Barnett et al. 1999). In addition to job time demands, other work stressors such as work ambiguity, work overload, lack of autonomy and job insecurity have been shown to be positively related to work-to-family conflict (see Byron 2005; Michel et al. 2010).

Within the family domain parental demands have been the most commonly studied antecedent of work–family conflict. Parental demands are thought to be highest among parents with preschool children and lowest among those with older children (Parasuraman and Simmers 2001) because younger children typically require more attention from caregivers. However, evidence on the relationship between age of children and work–family conflict is not conclusive. Some studies found that having a child below the age of six was positively related to work–family conflict (for example, Byron 2005; Parasuman and Simmers 2001). Other researchers found no relationship between age of children and work–family conflict (for example, Boyar et al. 2008). Yet, Wallace (1999) found that having preschool children was associated with decreased interference from family to work. Wallace suggested that the mere presence of a young child might not be perceived

as demanding, if there is enough support at home. Some studies also suggest that the number of children in the family, regardless of their ages, is positively related to family-to-work conflict (for example, Grzywacz and Marks 2000). Additionally, the number of hours expended on housework has been related to increased family-work conflict (for example, Gutek et al. 1991; Parasuraman and Simmers 2001). Other demanding aspects of the family role such as family role conflict, family ambiguity, and high level of spousal disagreement have been found to impact employees' ability to accommodate family responsibilities with work demands (e.g., Grzywacz and Marks 2000; Michel et al. 2010).

In addition to domain-specific demands, studies have also examined resources within the work and family roles that might reduce work–family conflict. A key resource most frequently studied in the literature is social support. Social support is an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental assistance, information, or appraisal (House 1981). Within the work and family literature, social support is typically studied as either a moderator, buffering the effects of work and/or family demands on work–family conflict; or as an antecedent, having a direct influence on work–family conflict (Carlson and Perewe 1999). Supervisors and colleagues represent informal sources of social support within the work domain. Thomas and Ganster (1995) demonstrated that having a supportive supervisor was related to increased sense of control over work and ultimately decreased work–family conflict. Recent studies have also found that emotional and instrumental support from supervisors and colleagues was negatively related to work–family conflict (Dolcos and Daley 2009; Kossek et al. 2011). Formal sources of social support within the workplace include family-supportive policies such as flexitime, telecommuting, job sharing, childcare, referral services, and eldercare services provided by organisations with the aim of helping employees manage family responsibilities. Formal workplace support has been found to decrease stress involved in combining work and family demands, thereby reducing work–family conflict (Frye and Breaugh 2004). Within the family domain, spouses have been the most frequently studied sources of social support. Matsui et al. (1995) found that husband support buffered the impact of parental demands on work–family conflict among working women in Japan. Several recent studies have also found that emotional and instrumental support from one's spouse was associated with lower levels of family-to-work conflict (for example, Aycan and Eskin 2005; Lapierre and Allen 2006). However, only a few studies (for example, Lapierre and Allen 2006) have examined social support from kin or extended family relations, with mixed findings.

Aside from antecedents, research has extensively examined myriad consequences of work–family conflict. These can be categorised under individual outcomes, work-related outcomes and family-related outcomes (Allen et al. 2000). Among individual outcomes, research has found that increased work–family conflict was associated with poor physical health (for example, van Steenbergen and Ellemers 2009) and greater odds of depression, anxiety and substance use (for example, Frone et al. 1993; Wallace 2005). Negative work consequences of work–family conflict include lower job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job

performance; and increased withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover (Allen et al. 2000; Shockley and Singla 2011). Within the family-related outcomes category, work–family conflict has been associated with lower marital satisfaction, marital adjustment, family satisfaction and family performance (Allen et al. 2000; see also Eby et al. 2005).

In summary, this section provided a brief overview of previous research on work–family conflict, noting that conflict may originate from either the work role or the family role. The review suggests that within-domain demands are associated with increased levels of work–family conflict, whilst social support helps decrease work–family conflict. It was also noted that work–family conflict has serious influences on individuals' wellbeing.

## The Ghanaian Context

### *The Work Context*

Ghana's economy has for the past 2 decades seen steady and significant growth, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita GDP growth rates averaging 4.9 and 2.9 %, respectively (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008). A key factor in this economic transformation has been the implementation of a series of economic reforms commencing in 1983 under the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program. These reforms included the abolition of price controls, the opening of capital markets, reductions in import tariffs and privatisation of many state-owned enterprises (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008).

In spite of the substantial improvements in economic performance, there has been a lack of corresponding improvements in social conditions and labour market outcomes in Ghana (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008). Much of these stems from lack of structural transformation in the economy. Ghana's economy still depends largely on agriculture, which accounts for about 36 % of GDP and 51 % of employment (Aryeetey and Baah-Boateng 2007). The significance of formal sector employment declined following the implementation of the neo-liberal economic policies that underpinned the structural adjustment program (Aryeetey and Baah-Boateng 2007), which saw large-scale retrenchment of public sector workers in the 1990s.[1] Consequently, much of the non-agricultural labour force participates in the informal sector of the economy. In addition to declining employment opportunities in the formal sector, there have been low levels of wages in both absolute and relative terms (Otoo et al. 2009). The daily minimum wage in Ghana for the past decade has averaged under US$2.00, with majority of workers earning below the minimum wage, particularly in the informal sector. Real earnings continue to

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[1] It is estimated that about 15% of public sector workers were retrenched during the Structural Adjustment Program (Otoo et al. 2009).

decline with increasing level of inflation and depreciation of the Ghana cedi against major international currencies such as the US dollar and pound sterling (Otoo et al. 2009). Consequently, a significant proportion of working class people find themselves trapped in poverty (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2008). Applied to the work–family interface, Aryee (2005:272) argued that: "inadequate pay is not only a potential source of stress in urban sub-Saharan Africa but also motivates an increased investment of time and energic resources into income generating activities".

In addition to these labour market conditions, there is a lack of conscious efforts on the part of government and organisations in Ghana to enact or implement family-friendly policies to support employed parents. Whilst some regulations exist regarding working time limits and leave entitlements, such regulations have not been very helpful in enabling employees manage work and family responsibilities. Although the Ghana Labour Act, Act 651 of 2003 stipulates a maximum of 40 h of work a week (8 h a day)[2] for workers the enforcement of this working time limit is very weak. Close to 48 % of workers have average work hours of 40−70 per week.[3] (Ghana Statistical Service 2008). In addition, further provisions regarding annual leave and periods of absence from work due to sickness are subject to the discretions of employers. For example, Act 651 of 2003 permits employers, "in case of urgent necessity, … [to] require a worker to interrupt his or her leave and return to work" (Section 25). Furthermore, women are entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, which may be extended by two additional weeks. However, the absence of paternity leave in particular makes it difficult for employed fathers to contribute to childcare, and thereby perpetuates existing gender inequalities in division of household labour. Family friendly policies such as flexible working arrangements and employer-provided childcare are largely non-existent. Privately run childcare centres, for example, remain the preserve of a small proportion of middle-class parents because these institutions are relatively expensive. In the absence of family-supportive programs from government and employers, workers in Ghana increasingly rely on supervisors and co-workers as sources of support for balancing work and family responsibilities.

## The Family Context

In Ghana, the term 'family' invokes the notion of "male-headed units of extended families consisting of one or several wives and their children and often extended with unmarried or elderly relatives" (Brown 1996:21). Within the traditional

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[2] This excludes overtime hours. The Act further establishes that any extra hours beyond the 40-hour statutory limit be considered as overtime, which may be paid or unpaid. The Act is, however, silent on the maximum number of overtime hours an employer can request from a worker.

[3] About 45 % of workers in this category work average of more than 49 h a week.

family structure men were regarded primarily as breadwinners whilst women took care of household responsibilities. Women's participation in income generating activities was mostly restricted to the informal sector, which offered the needed flexibility and geographical proximity to enable them meet their obligations in the household (Ardayfio-Schandorf 2001). However, this traditional family arrangement has undergone considerable changes in the past few decades. One of the most dramatic of these changes has been the increased involvement of women in wage employment, following better educational opportunities and economic transformations in Ghana. Although relatively low, the proportion of women involved in wage employment doubled between 1960 and 2008 (Ghana Statistical Service 2005, 2008). Complementing the changing nature of female work and family roles are the changes occurring in the work and family roles of men. Though women continue to bear much of household responsibilities, various rounds of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) point to a slow but gradual increase in male involvement in household chores and childcare, particularly in urban settings (Ghana Statistical Service 1995, 2000, 2008). In addition, although fertility rate in Ghana has declined over the past 2 decades consequent upon urbanisation and economic hardship, average family size remains relatively high.[4] Thus, given the cultural premium on large family size in Ghanaian society, the gradual changes in gender roles pose a challenge to employed parents in meeting parental demands.

In addition to heavy parental demands posed by large family sizes, eldercare presents another challenge to individuals combining work and family responsibilities in Ghana. Couched in the adage "the one who cares for you when you are cutting teeth must be cared for by you till all that person's teeth fall out in old age" (Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuona-Hammond 1996:16), caring for aged parents is regarded a moral obligation to adult children. This obligation is particularly important given that government-sponsored social security benefits for old age in Ghana are limited and mainly cover the small number of people who worked for governmental organisations or in the formal sector of the economy (Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi 2001). Traditionally, the responsibility to provide support to the elderly and less privileged relatives was that of the entire extended family. However, due to economic difficulties and migration, and the consequent weakening of extended family ties, the burden of providing care for the elderly has shifted from the extended family towards the nuclear family (Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi 2001), usually one's own children and spouse. Thus, providing care for the elderly can be additional burden to adult children, especially where such children are involved in paid work and have their own families to care for. In addition to elder care, participation in extended family activities such as funerals and weddings, which are considered very important social events, contribute to time demands on workers.

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[4] Total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 6.4 children per woman in 1988 to 4.4 in 1998 and then stabilized until 2003. As of 2008 the TFR in Ghana stood at 4.0 (GSS, GHS, and ICF Macro 2009).

Although extended family relations may constitute a source of demand, they also serve as an important source of social support for working parents. In the absence of family-supportive services from government and organisations, extended family relatives play a critical role in caring for young children. As a practice in most sub-Saharan African societies, grandmothers are often involved in providing childcare beyond the period of statutory maternity leave (Aryee 2005). Domestic helpers (commonly described as house helpers) also serve as an alternative source of instrumental support for employed parents when support from relatives is not feasible. Domestic helpers are often hired to assist in performing household tasks such as cleaning, washing, cooking and running errands, and sometimes to provide childcare. However, reliance on paid domestic helpers might increase financial burdens on workers. Hence, only a small proportion of (middle class) workers are able to afford the services of paid domestic helpers.

## Methods

As mentioned earlier, this chapter is informed by data derived from a larger study on antecedents and outcomes of the work–family interface in Ghana. Given the scarcity of research on work–family conflict in Ghana, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate for an in-depth exploration of the "lived reality" of individuals combining paid work with family commitments in this context. As Poelmans (2001) noted, one advantage of qualitative studies is that they provide rich data to illustrate the complex interdependencies between variables. Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews was informed by its flexibility in allowing respondents to initiate issues that had previously not been anticipated (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Participants comprised 18 university staff consisting of both lecturers and non-teaching staff, employed full-time at the University of Ghana—a public university. The sample was recruited through a combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling strategies. The sample included 10 women and eight men. Efforts were made to include different categories of employees within the university. Almost two-thirds of the participants were in administrative and clerical jobs; the remaining were academics, comprising a professor, two senior lecturers, three lecturers, and an assistant lecturer. The participants had worked in the university for periods ranging from 1 to 35 years. Finally, all the participants were married and were, with exception of one, in dual-earner relationships, and had at least one child living at home.

Prior to the interviews an interview guide was developed to ensure that participants were guided towards discussing the same topic areas. The interview guide was semi-structured, containing a series of open-ended questions with additional probes to ensure flexibility and to help the flow of interactions and encourage respondents to explore some topics in greater depth. The interview guide was based on a review of the relevant work and family literature, and my knowledge

and experience of the work and family contexts in Ghana. The questions were developed to explore participants' experiences of conflict between work and family roles, with a series of probes to seek clarifications or more information on particular issues raised by participants. For example, participants were asked: "could you describe any situation when you felt your work and family roles interfered with each other?" Questions relating to sources of demands and support were also included in the interview guide. Participants were contacted individually at their places of work to schedule the interview, assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity of participation and data. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, with all references to interviewees removed to ensure anonymity. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006:6). It minimally organises data set in rich detail, and interprets various aspect of the research topic (Braun and Clarke 2006:6). To begin with, I familiarised myself with the data by actively reading and re-reading interview transcripts. The data were subsequently coded with the aid of qualitative analysis software—*Atlas.ti*. This involved assigning codes to meaningful chucks within the data set, which could be a phrase or series of sentences. Coded extracts of the data were collated to identify key patterns within and across codes, and to identify potential sub-themes. Themes that emerged from the data include work–family conflict, work stressors, family demands, work support and non-work support. Detailed explanations of these themes are provided in the next section under various sub-headings.

## Findings

### *Work–Family Conflict*

One of the aims of this chapter is to identify forms of interference experienced by employed parents juggling demands in the work and family domains. In line with the scarcity argument that participation in multiple roles leads to strain and role conflict (Goode 1960), majority of participants discussed pervasive conflicts or strains experienced as they fulfilled responsibilities in the work and family roles. Supporting the bidirectional conceptualization of work–family conflict, it was evident that demands associated with the work role interfered with the family domain; and similarly, demands associated with the family role spilled over to the work domain. From the work-to-family direction, a number of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of attention they could give to their family due to high time demands of the job. For example, as one man noted, …. *the unfortunate bit is you don't have much time for your family because you're most of the time at work*. In several instances, tight work schedules coupled with

long commuting time between home and work meant that employees had to arrive home late, leaving little time to perform household responsibilities. The following quote from a father of two children illustrate participants' experiences of work–family conflict resulting from time demands from the work domain:

> I was always with the kids, taking them to school, walk with them from school, and go out with them. But this time, the times I leave for work and get home, these things are no longer there.

In addition, participants discussed how pressures from heavy workloads impacted negatively on their family obligations. Several respondents mentioned that the pressure to be productive at work made them exhausted thereby limiting their ability to perform effectively in the family domain. For example, one woman stated: *when I get home I am already exhausted. Sometimes I do not even bath; I feel too tired.* For academics in particular, the pressure to get published put enormous strain on family relationships. For example, a male lecturer talked extensively about how his home had literally become an extension of his workplace:

> So I work at the office and I work at home. I don't have home life. When I'm at home and the children want to play I shut the door. I always shut the door. I can tolerate them for 5 to 10 min then I shut the door and let someone take care of them. I guess it's a phase. When I get more accomplished I will get the better balance, but at the moment my life is skewed towards work.

Furthermore, three of the academics interviewed indicated that in addition to teaching and examination, they were also required to take up administrative duties. One lecturer discussed how stress associated with serving on boards and committees interfered with his ability to meet family responsibilities. He noted that:

> For me the committee work [and] the faculty board … are huge interruptions. Fatigue-wise, you'll be tired; you come and you can't do anything. You need to go and sleep. That is all, you simply need to go and sleep.

From the family-to-work direction, a number of participants mentioned time spent on family responsibilities as major constraints on their work. Interference resulting from family-related time demands was more pervasive among women, who were more involved in the family domain. For parents with young children (under age 10) in particular, taking children to and from school, and taking time off work to attend to sick children were major interruptions on performance at work. For example, one man shared his experience as follows:

> What I do at home is that from Monday to Friday I pick the children to school and go and pick them back. So it means that even if I'm in the middle of something I have to stop so I can pick them from school. And this is big interruption. It takes me not less than one hour to go and pick them and return to the office.

Another woman also said:

> The kids are always falling ill. And when you take them to the hospital you have to sit in the queue and wait your turn… You end up spending the whole day at the hospital and may not be able to return to work.

Additionally, family responsibilities placed considerable strain on parents, which spilled over to the work domain. A few participants mentioned that excessive household demands meant they had little amount of sleep at night, often resulting in feelings of fatigue and dizziness at work and reduced productivity. For example, one woman shared her experience as follows:

> Sometimes I feel dizzy, especially on Monday mornings. Sunday I have to go to church; after church I have to iron and prepare food for Monday morning. So I go to bed around 10.pm to 11 pm. Meanwhile, I have to wake up very early in the morning, 4 am. So when I come to work I have to sit down for a while before I start working.

In a minority of cases, participants shared their experiences in which their thoughts about unfulfilled family-related responsibilities hindered their engagement in the work role. One man described how his inability to meet his wife's request for assistance with domestic chores sometimes resulted in misunderstanding. Feelings of guilt resulting from this experience were transferred to the work domain:

> You quarrel with your wife before leaving the house to the office. … It worries a lot; you feel down. It makes you think the more because it's your responsibility and you couldn't do that and it starts disturbing your mind.

## Work Stressors

Participants mentioned different forms of stressors they encountered in the work domain. These stressors were grouped under job time demands, workload and insufficient pay. Job time demands include working hours, overtime, and weekend work. In terms of working hours both men and women worked average of 42 h per week. Generally, formal weekend work and overtime work were less frequent although a few participants were apparently willing to work paid overtime for additional income. Some participants worked occasional unpaid overtime as a strategy to avoid taking work home or piling up work for the next the day. A few participants, on the other hand, described overtime work as a routine in their jobs. These participants often worked over 10 h a day and usually without taking annual leave.[5] One participant lamented feeling "crippled" by the amount of time his job had taken, making it almost impossible to attend important social functions such as funerals: *at times you have to tell lies before you can sneak.*

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[5] Two participants said they deliberately refused to take annual leave because they could not afford to forgo the addition income they would get from paid overtime work.

Heavy workload emerged as a significant stressor within the work role. Majority of participants described their workloads as emotionally and physically exacting. The most common examples participants gave about heavy workloads were related to lack of institutional capacity in terms adequate number of personnel to match the enormous student population of the university. One participant described her work as "very tedious", noting that she was sometimes forced to return from leave because there was no one to take over her work. She said: m*y work is tedious; one person manning 30,000 students at a particular time is very tedious*. For academics in particular, heavy workloads were a combination of class sizes and the number of scripts they needed to assess after examinations. One lecturer showed me a backlog of scripts from a previous semester he needed to assess *because you cannot use 3 weeks [or] 4 weeks to finish marking about 900 papers*. To meet these heavy workloads, workers often had to double up their efforts, and as one participant noted, *in the end you have to split yourself into four individuals; you teach like two people and you work for your research like two people*.

In addition to long working hours and heavy workloads, some participants talked about insufficient pay as an issue of great concern in their job. A number of participants, especially those in lower level positions, lamented the fact that their salary could not adequately provide their family needs. One participant commented that *my take-home pay can't take me home*, to suggest he could barely survive on his monthly salary. To make ends meet, some workers were involved in petty trading and other forms of income generating activities outside their regular work schedules. One of these workers said: *the pay is not good. It is the extra job that helps*. Two participants who were not involved in any extra income-generating activity expressed interest in moonlighting as traders to support their income.

## Family Demands

Participants were engaged in various forms of household chores such as cooking, cleaning, shopping for groceries, fetching water, and washing. Consistent with previous research, child caring also emerged as another form of demand in the household particularly for parents with young children. In line with traditional gender roles espoused by the Ghanaian culture, women showed greater involvement in household chores and childcare relative to men. All the women interviewed mentioned household chores as their sole responsibilities. One woman remarked: *I don't have a house help; I'm alone. … And the children are young. So I have to do most of the things on my own*. On the other hand, less than half of the men indicated sharing household work with their spouses. Men's contribution to household work was mostly limited to transporting children to and from school. In instances where men were actively involved in household work, they did so in the absence of their spouses. Even so, that was considered an "extra job" as reflected in the following comment:

> I have to wake up very early because I need to take care of the child, make sure she takes her bath and take her to school with me because my wife is also in school. She is studying so I have to do that extra job as well.

In addition to household demands, a number of participants described their responsibility for extended family members. Mostly, extended family responsibilities were in the form of financial contributions toward caring for less privileged or elderly relatives. More than half of the participants mentioned that they were responsible for the care of their parents. In a minority of cases, participants also mentioned the need to provide financial support to their siblings. For example:

> Being the eldest son in my family—I've lost my mother and my father—I extend my hand to my younger brothers as well. So I have to double whatever I'm doing to make sure I am not found wanting when they're in need.

Another woman also described being a "mother figure" to her three siblings following the demise of their mother:

> I have both financial [and] kind of big sister role because now I'm like the mother figure in the family for them because mum is gone. So I give them pocket money.

## *Work Support*

Participants mentioned various forms of support resources within the work domain that helped in dealing with tensions in balancing work and family responsibilities. Informal support was the most dominant source of support in the work role. A number of participants, particularly non-teaching staff received instrumental and emotional support from their supervisors. One woman described her immediate boss as "more of a senior brother". She further noted: *we discuss our family problems together, we discuss the work*. One participant, on the other hand, described his supervisors as unsupportive particularly in sharing information that may be useful to his career. He noted: *here our bosses hide information from us. There is some information, when you go and ask they would not even like to give you*. In addition to supervisors, co-workers emerged as another important source of social support for a number of participants. Four participants cited instances in which advice they received from colleagues at work proved useful in dealing with important issues at home. However, a few participants were not comfortable about discussing personal problems with co-workers perhaps due to mistrust.

With respect to formal support at work, most participants were unfamiliar with any policies aimed at helping employees manage work and family demands beyond annual leave and statutory maternity leave. For example, when asked about policies in the university that facilitate combining work and family responsibilities, one woman noted:

> I don't think there is a facilitating policy here that says that because you're a mother, you're a woman let's give you this space". … There isn't any conscious effort by the university to give working mothers space and time; you have to create it yourself.

Maternity leave, though relatively generous in terms of duration,[6] was limited to nursing mothers. Some participants, particularly academics, considered annual leaves as "mere window dressing" because they needed to work through the period of leave to avoid piling up work. Although the university had a nursery this was meant for children of school–going age (age four and above). Some participants with pre-school children mentioned that privately owned crèches were the only alternative though such facilities are mostly exorbitant. Indeed, some participants acknowledged that the university had provisions for payment of family medical bills, which might help alleviate the burden of health care cost on families.

## *Non-Work Support*

Participants also described different forms of support they received from sources outside the work role. Immediate family members, usually spouses and older children, provided the greatest amount of support. Most of the participants discussed emotional and instrumental support they received from their spouse. One participant shared that the emotional support he received from his wife encouraged him about his work despite having tight schedule:

> When you tell her about what is happening at work she gives you the moral support and encourages you, and sometimes go to the extent of giving you some biblical quotations. Then you're compelled to realize there is somebody behind you who appreciates what you're doing, even if you're not appreciated at work.

A few participants mentioned that their older children provided instrumental support in the form of running errands, helping with household chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing. One participant described her children as her main source of emotional support, noting *we sit to converse; we talk about problems, issues, and crack jokes. That keeps me, but when they are away it makes me lonely*.

In addition, a number of participants also mentioned friends and extended family relatives as important sources of instrumental support especially in regards to childcare. Some of the participant reported receiving childcare assistance from elderly parents. This form of instrumental support relieved employed parents of stress involved in taking care of young children. One parent shared her experiences of the extensive childcare assistance she received from her mother and mother-in-law:

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[6] In addition to the statutory 12 weeks of maternity leave, the university permits nursing mothers to work half day till the child turns 1 year.

When I had my first child my mother came to live with us for five years and then she left…
And then when I had the second child my mother was with me for 1 year and then my
mother-in-law was also with me for five years. So I would say that I have not had problems
with who to take care of my children.

Finally, some parents also relied on house helpers including paid domestic
assistants and unpaid relatives for support in performing various household tasks
and childcare. In most cases, house helpers performed most of the household
chores, which helped alleviate the stress of working parents. However, some
participants considered the presence of paid house helpers as invasion on their
privacy and as such were reluctant to hire their services.

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine employees' experiences of work–family conflict as
they navigate the multiple roles of work and family. The chapter also sought to
identify factors that may impede or facilitate participation in work and family
roles. This section discusses the implications of the findings reported in the pre-
vious sections with reference to past research and the socio-cultural and economic
context of Ghana.

Findings from interviews with parents employed full-time at a public university
in Ghana showed similarities in experiences in the work–family interface relative
to previous research. The findings suggest that, for majority of these parents,
boundaries between the work and family domains were permeable. Thus, negative
experiences and strains experienced in one role impacted negatively on perfor-
mance in the other role. Consistent with the role scarcity argument (Goode 1960;
Kahn et al. 1964), it was evident that for many employed parents in Ghana par-
ticipation in multiple roles of work and family was a source of strain and conflict.
Participants' descriptions of work–family conflict were reminiscent of Greenhaus
and Beutell's (1985) notion of time-based and strain-based conflict. Participants
reported time-based conflict in the form of role-related time demands such as long
working hours, weekend work, overtime work and time spent on household work
that limited their ability to meet obligations in another domain. Strain-based
conflict occurred in the form of stress produced in one role having a negative
spillover effect on performance in another role. However, no incidence of
behaviour-based conflict was reported. This could be due to the fact that partici-
pants were not specifically probed for instances of behaviour-based conflict.
Another possible explanation could be the nature of occupations in which the
participants were engaged. A recent study by Dierdorff and Ellington (2008)
suggests a high degree of diversity in behaviour-based sources of work–family
conflict across occupations. Behaviour-based conflict tends to be higher in occu-
pations characterised by high levels of interdependence and responsibility for
others (Dierdorff and Ellington 2008).

Findings from the interviews also supported the bidirectional conceptualization of work–family conflict (Frone et al. 1997). In most cases, participants were able to distinguish whether interference was due to experiences in the work domain or the family domain. These findings suggest that the conceptualization of work–family conflict in Western based studies is largely applicable to the Ghanaian context.

As noted previously, several studies have examined within-domain demands as antecedents of work–family conflict. Within-domain demands are characteristics of one domain that are associated with processes that limit the ability of individuals to meet obligations in another domain (Voydanoff 2005). Evidence presented in the previous section suggests that the nature of within-domain demands is shaped by contextual factors. In the Ghanaian context stressors in the work domain were not limited to the physical or emotional aspect of the job (such as time demands and quantitative workload), which have been shown to have direct impact on combining work and family commitments, but also included the amount of financial rewards the job could provide. Several participants lamented low levels of pay, and were forced to increase the amount of time they devoted to extra income generating activities, which negatively impacted the amount of time they devoted to family activities. This finding supports Aryee's (2005) proposition that inadequate pay represents a major source of stress for employees in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, it was found that family demands also goes beyond presence of children at home and time devoted to the family. In traditional Ghanaian society, as noted previously, 'family' connotes both nuclear family and extended family. As such, caring for relatives in the extended family, particularly elderly parents and siblings, was considered a legitimate concern among a number of participants. This finding points to a major limitation in conceptualization of 'family demands' in the work and family literature.

It was also evident that despite the absence of formal family-supportive practices, employed parents in Ghana were not completely bereft of support for managing work and family responsibilities. The family served as an important source of support for majority of working parents. It was found that instrumental and emotional support received from spouses helped eased the burden of meeting family demands. However, support in the family domain was not limited to spouses. Older children were also found to be a vital source of emotional and instrumental sustenance to working parents. This is in sharp contrast to the existing literature, which portrays children entirely as a source of stress to parents. Moreover, extended family relatives and house helpers were other important sources of support for some participants. It is therefore important that researchers incorporate these diverse sources in measures of family support, especially in the Ghanaian context. Within the work domain employees often relied on social support from colleagues and supervisors in balancing work and family responsibilities.

It is worth noting that the findings reported in this chapter are not without limitations. The purposive nature of the sample prohibits generalisation of the findings. In addition, the university employees used in the study may not be typical of the average worker in Ghana. Moreover, although in-depth interviews are useful

in obtaining a rich descriptive data, this method is not amenable to testing causal relationships. Consequently, studies using quantitative approaches would help to understand how the role demands and support resources identified relate to work–family conflict. To do this, there would be the need to develop comprehensive measures that incorporate the various aspects of work/family demands and support identified in this chapter. Such studies would also benefit from examining work–family interactions beyond the individual level.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, the findings have illuminated important aspects of the work–family interface in the Ghanaian context. The findings reported in this chapter have practical implications for the design of human resource practices in Ghana. An important consideration is that work–family conflict is not unique to only women; men are equally affected. Thus, introduction of paid parental and paternal leaves would enable employed fathers in particular to contribute effectively to family obligations. This could help minimise gender inequality in the allocation of household labour, and reduce the burden of household work on women. Considering the increasing strain on kin solidarity (Ardayfio-Schandorf 2001) in Ghana, it remains to be known how long employed parents can continue to depend on extended family relatives for support in managing work and family demands. As such, it behoves organisations to consider assisting employees with such policies as flexible working arrangements and childcare services for increased productivity of their employees.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an empirical examination of the phenomenon of work–family conflict in a non-Western context: Ghana. Furthermore, it has identified different forms of role demands and support resources that can exacerbate or reduce work–family conflict. More importantly, it has also demonstrated that while the experience of work–family conflict might be considered universal, some underlying factors may be context-specific. To this end, this chapter has responded to Aryee's (2005) call for examination of the subjective experience of work–family conflict in a sub-Saharan African context using a qualitative research approach.

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