

Challenges and Coping Strategies of Employed Mothers in a Social Security Scheme in Tanzania

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Abstract

This article explores the challenges facing working mothers, both at work and home, and their coping strategies. The study involved in-depth interviews with 25 working mothers, and 11 male and female administrative staff in a social security scheme, the PPF Pensions Funds, in Ilala municipality, Dar es Salaam region, Tanzania. Working mothers face individual, societal, and organizational challenges at work. These include the lack of confidence due to insecurity, mistrust between working mothers and other staff members, gender and cultural stereotypes, unwanted family planning, discrimination and disregard, administration problems, and sexual harassment. At home, working mothers encounter social and economic challenges, including limited time to engage in family and social issues, managing family and work roles, and creating additional income. Mechanisms for coping with these challenges include building confidence; developing hardworking spirit; reporting sexual harassment; following work rules, regulations, and instructions; use of family planning; planning activities well; assistance by husbands and relatives; hiring domestic workers; and sending children to boarding schools. The study is informed by the work-family border theory to establish different challenges that contradict expected equilibrium between work and family responsibilities experienced by working mothers. Moreover, the agency theory assisted to explain strategies employed by working mothers to cope with their situations.

Keywords: *working mothers, work-family conflict, challenges, coping, agency, Tanzania.*

Introduction

This article examines challenges facing employed mothers and the coping strategies they use, both at work and home. In most societies, especially in Tanzania, women in general—and mothers in particular—were not allowed to do paid jobs, but were glued to housework that remained their primary responsibility (Sik, 2015). Currently, however, the situation is different for most educated mothers, especially in urban areas who are now employed in formal paid jobs (Hollos & Larsen, 2008). However, various challenges confront working mothers, particularly the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities (Kirai & Kobia, 2012; Clark et al., 2017). The government of Tanzania has taken several efforts to address the needs of working mothers in their working places. These efforts include policies that allow working mothers to have breastfeeding breaks, maternity leave, and maternity benefits (ILO, 2014). Nevertheless, these efforts have not been able to

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completely curb the challenges facing these mothers. For instance, the 2004 reforms made by the government of Tanzania are insufficient to address workers and family issues in the country (ILO, 2009). Although the legislation provides for maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, maternity benefits, and so on, the paternity leave entitlement of three days is too short. Maternity benefit entitlements could also be improved. The major limitations here are the conditions attached to the entitlement to maternity protection, which include that an employee must have worked for the same employer for a minimum period of six months, and that an employee must not have taken a similar leave during a three-year period. Moreover, employers are under no legal obligation to allow women coming back at the end of their maternity leave to return to the same job, or even to an alternative job with the same terms and conditions. The legislation also discriminates against women who have children at shorter intervals: women are permitted to take maternity leave only once every three years to be eligible for maternity benefits (ILO, 2009: 10).

Despite identifiable challenges in the daily lives of working mothers (Okafor & Amayo, 2006; Gyateng, 2012; Saher et al., 2013; Doumbia & Meurs, 2017) and the coping strategies used (Supe, 1998; Mokomane, 2014), not much is documented on working mothers in Tanzania, who may hold different views from other women in general (Lansky et al., 2017). Thus, understanding of challenges facing mothers is important because they experience specific disadvantages when at workplace in the way they are regarded as mothers and as workers (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Jayita & Murali, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

This study used the work-family border and agency theories. The main objective of the work-family border theory, also known as the border theory, is to understand how individuals negotiate work and family responsibilities, and the borders between them to attain equilibrium (Clark, 2000). The theory shows dynamics constructed socially in lines of demarcation between work and family responsibilities, and the means in which persons sustain, negotiate, and transition across the lines created (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). This implies that a working mother needs to be actively accountable both at home and work place with minimum conflict. According to Clark (2000: 751), "People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between these two settings, often tailoring their focus, their goals, and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each." The theory provides explanations on how an individual can balance performance between work and family: "... individuals can shape to some degree the nature of work and home domains, and the borders and bridges between them" (ibid.). Ashforth et al. (2000) and Keesay (2012) define border as "... the lines that demarcate different life domains." In this article, working mothers are seen as border-crossers between two worlds: the world of work, and the world of family (Clark, 2000:3). Although working mothers "... shape these worlds, they are, in turn, shaped by them" (ibid.).

Clark (2000) contends that conflict would arise when two spheres that are unrelated from one another have weak borders, such as the case when work and home can interrupt one another. Reiterating Clark, Keeseey (2012) explains that when the boundary between the two is weak it "... creates a situation where work interruptions of personal life might be construed as detracting from one's personal well-being, and where personal interruptions of work life might be construed as detracting from professional success" (Keeseey, 2012: 30).

The border theory allows us "... to increase understanding concerning the ways in which individuals create and manage the boundaries between work and family" (Allen et al., 2014: 103). Thus, this study employs the border theory to establish the challenges that contradict expected equilibrium between work and family responsibilities experienced by working mothers. Although Clark (2000) shows the interplay of work, family, border, and how persons negotiate these domains, she has been criticized for explaining these spheres as constructed and greatly challenged, viewing them as social facts and not "the practices through which these meanings are constructed (and sometimes changed) on an everyday basis, such that these realms can never been seen as "finished" but rather are always in process" (Cohen et al., 2009: 231). The border theory shows that there is equilibrium in performing roles, but this equilibrium is not guaranteed (Keeseey, 2012). The purpose of this article is to examine the imbalance arising from the work-family interruptions, which the border theory is useful for.

Our second intent is to also focus on ways in which individuals manage the imbalances happening due to the interface of work and family. Individuals, as social actors, may devise strategies to cope with challenges emanating from their role as both workers and mothers. Therefore, we use the agency theory to explain the strategies employed by working mothers to cope with their situations. The agency theory has been spelled out in several sociological writings, however, for the purpose of this study, it is used as propounded by Long (2001). In general, Long argues that agency gives the actor the capacity to process social experience and devise ways of coping with life. He further contends that there is a chance that human beings will look for ways to navigate and adopt to situations, even under the most extreme forms of coercion (ibid.).

The agency theory is based on the assumption that, within the limits of information, uncertainty, and other constraints like physical, politico-economic, and normative behaviour that exist, social actors possess knowledge and capability to act. Furthermore, actors attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and monitor their own actions to a certain degree. In doing this, they as well observe how others react to their behaviour considering various contingent and essential circumstances. On their part, Sewell (2005) and Long (2001) also argue that agency arises from actors' knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them in new and various contexts.

Sewell (ibid.) insists that the extent of agency exercised by an individual depends profoundly on the individual's position in collective organizations (ibid:145). Moreover, different habits—including desire, forming intentions and active creativity—are inherent in all human beings (ibid:144).

This study employed the agency theory, in support of the work-family theory, to explore challenges facing working mothers (agents) in fulfilling family and job responsibilities. The theory complements the work-family border theory since it considers the fact that balancing work and family is something that can be controlled by an individual alone without organizational support. In this way, the theory assisted in identifying individual's strategies used in family and at work, allowing the examination of social experience for mothers who are in formal employment.

Working Mothers and Domestic Roles

The process of socialization that informs men and women on their roles and responsibilities and how to meet them depends on a society's culture and norms. When a mother has additional work outside the normal routine of a society or family, in this case employment, she may face difficult situations because society does not exclude her from fulfilling households' chores she is supposed to perform within the identified time as per society culture (Ijiff, 1990). Otiso (2013) and TGNP (1999) assert that the socialization process in Tanzanian society is gendered. Boys are trained by their fathers and grandfathers to be effective fathers, providers, and protectors of their families; while girls are trained by their mothers and grandmothers to be successful mothers, wives, and nurturers. Otiso further explains that these gender norms of socialization move on to define the position of a mother (ibid: 2016). This does not exclude the working mother from a non-working one: all are normally expected to attend to their responsibilities regardless of their different social responsibilities.

In many societies, especially in Africa, women in general—and mothers in particular—were not allowed to perform paid jobs, but were glued to housework that remained their primary responsibility (Lansky et al., 2017). Currently, however, this is different for some mothers who are educated and employed in formal paid jobs. Thus, various challenges confront working mothers, particularly the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities (Okojie, 1998; Ajala, 2017). As Okojie asserts, "... mothers' relationships with their husbands are likely to suffer because of the overall increase in workload and the inherent conflicts which often do not leave much energy for social and emotional life" (Okojie, 1998: 140). He argues that there is a necessity to make improvement on works done by mothers at home and those in industries. He suggests that industries must restructure household units of production that will in turn lower working mothers' inputs at home. However, Okojie (1998) recognises that women's responsibilities at home still remain; hence the modern mother in the wage-earning population finds herself in a situation that, although her function as a producer of goods has largely been transferred to the factory/industry, a bigger part of her job still remains in the home.

The Tanzanian government has taken several efforts to address the needs of working mothers in their working places. These efforts include enacting policies that allow working mothers to have breastfeeding breaks, maternity leave, and maternity benefits (URT, 2004; ILO, 2014; URT, 2017a). However, these efforts have not been able to completely curb the challenges facing these mothers. Similarly, the Employment and Labour Relations Act of 2004 reforms made on working conditions are insufficient to address workers and family issues in Tanzania (ILO, 2009). Although the regulation provides 84 days of paid maternity leave for a mother who gives birth to one child, or 100 days for more than one child, it is silent on a mother who has a premature child. Moreover, after maternity leave the law has no clear provision of time of the day for breastfeeding, something that causes friction between breastfeeding mothers and their employers.

Women, and specifically working mothers, are disadvantaged relative to men on every global indicator related to economic opportunities (WB, 2014). In Tanzania, about 57 percent of women are in the working age population (URT, 2017b: 37). Although women's rate of participation in the labour force in Tanzania is close to 90 percent, much of the work done is in lower paying jobs and sectors, "... subsistence based, insecure, and lacking in basic protections" (WB, 2014: 17). Some fathers and husbands put off "... women from working in jobs where they would interact with men" (ibid: 35). According to the ILO (2009), there have been several improvements pertaining to the conditions of working mothers worldwide, including in Tanzania. However, despite of these improvements through laws and policies, the reality on the ground is minor.

For instance, Lansky et al. (2017) contend that there is still an urgent need for labour policies that would ensure that women are better protected and, most importantly, well paid. In particular, more efforts are needed to ensure that women are guaranteed participation in discussion and bargaining processes so that their concerns about wages, working hours and the reconciliation of work and family life are considered. The ILO (2009) argues that there will be an automatic improvement in the working conditions of mothers that will curb the challenges they face both at home and at work if there are laws and policies to this effect. However, this may not be the case: laws and policies alone may not be enough just because those currently providing for the better performance have not functioned due to social and cultural barriers. According to Otiso (2013: 161), for instance, rapid socioeconomic changes in Tanzania have produced a generally inharmonious society that has to a big extent called for traditional revivalism.

Methodology and the Study Location

This is a qualitative study involving participants who are working mothers and staff members with leadership position at the PPF Pensions Funds. Working mothers included in the study were professionals and with young children of up to 10 years: some needing to be nursed, and all needing the supervision of an adult. A total of 36 staff—both male and female—were purposively recruited to get wider perspectives on working mothers. These comprised of 2 directors (1 female and 1

male), 2 male managers and 7 supervisors (6 male and 1 female), as well 25 working mothers. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data. The study also utilised PPF documents to gain more information to compliment interviews.

The PPF is a nationwide social security fund established in July, 1978 (PPF, 2014) to provide pensions and other benefits to members and/or dependants upon different contingencies in the formal and informal sectors. This study focused on the PPF headquarters located in Ilala district at the centre of Dar es Salaam city.

Challenges at Work and Coping Strategies

The following findings show that mothers have had several challenges. At workplace mothers experience individual, societal, and organizational challenges, and have adopted various coping strategies as explained hereunder.

Individual Challenges

Insecurity Due to the Lack of Self-confidence

Working mothers lack self-confidence, which leads to feelings of not belonging and deserving the work they do. Moreover, working mothers are not ready to take roles requiring appearance in public; normally they leave men to take such roles. This relates mostly to positions that require one to stand and speak in front of public or fellow workers. Some of the working mothers thought they could not compete with men in this, indicating the lack of trust in their abilities. This emanates from societal and cultural norms developed towards women, and mothers in particular. As one working mother explains:

It is true that women cannot compete with men, but we have to try. Most of us feel guilty and inferior before a man that is why many men and our husbands treat us like children (Working Mother 15).

On the other hand, one of male manager had the following comment:

The problem of some working mothers is having inferiority complex, which results from, and leads to, the lack of confidence. Women have a notion that men can do all things; forgetting that men are human beings like women (Manager 1).

The findings verify what Al-Sammerai et al. (2011) and Onsongo (2004) say: that some women leaders show lack of self-confidence, which is rooted in traditional social values. As seen in the narrations above, working women in this study indicated inferiority complex and the lack of confidence to take up work requiring standing and communicating before a big audience; leading to the inability of developing assertive behaviour. This was also noted by Bahiru and Mengistu (2018) among women leaders in Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, some working mothers have created means to cope with the lack of self-confidence by forging confidence, bearing in mind that what they do is legal according to organizational policy and work regulations. As one working mother respondent commented:

The only thing to understand and follow is work regulations. But if you do not use rules/regulations-confidently, it becomes difficult (Working mother 17).

Furthermore, maintaining confidence enabled some working mothers to compete with men and other women in various positions. Chilimba's (2015) study on female heads of schools has a similar finding that: "... adhering and insisting on rules and regulations could be one of best mechanisms to handle challenges facing women heads of schools and other women in different organizations." By building confidence, working mothers can contribute to various discussions that can bring positive impacts in their organizations.

Societal Challenges

Mistrust of Working Mothers

The study ascertained that working mothers are mistrusted in working places, something that is associated with cultural values. Working mothers explained that these values are rooted in some workers' minds, some of whom are not ready to change. Such workers think that these working mothers would devote more time for motherhood responsibilities and concentrate less on work responsibilities.

... some of our fellow workers do not trust us in handling some responsibilities under the assumption that we may concentrate more in good motherhood instead of work (Working Mother 17).

In support of this, one of the managers gave the following comments on the issue of mistrust towards working mothers:

Some of supervisors and managers do not trust women including working mothers because of their multiple responsibilities. It is common to see a supervisor giving all responsibilities to males or non-mothers (Male Manager 2).

Thus, we can observe from the above that the mistrust of working mothers, apart from being associated to social and cultural practices, is also linked to the perceived work performance of working mothers by employers and/or other employees: that working mothers cannot fully perform their duties as mothers and employees as they would lean more on motherhood responsibilities.

Another issue raised against working mothers is the inability to accomplish their responsibilities during and after giving birth, which leads to hindering organizational development, as remarked by one female supervisor:

The challenge we faced in this department was dealing with working mothers' issues, starting from pregnancy and after giving birth. Four of female workers were pregnant at the same time. As you know, you cannot avoid issues like vomiting and tiredness (Female Supervisor 2).

Regu (2011, cited by Lucas, 2012), noted a similar thing: that handling pregnancy issues at workplaces is perceived as disconcerting by administrators. To deal with such reservations, some working mothers raise hard working spirit with the hope

that co-workers and administrators will appreciate and possibly change their attitudes towards them. Although this may help working mothers to gain trust and remove negative feeling towards them, this coping strategy might not be enough in situations where, due to numerous responsibilities, a hard-working mother fails to keep pace with other workers who do not face the same situation. As Williams (2010) suggests, if we acknowledge that "... women's load of family work often interfere with their ability to perform as ideal workers," we need changes in regulations and policies to recognize and address the differences to solve these issues. In this regard, measures of work performance would take into consideration the role women have as mothers.

Gender and Cultural Stereotypes

Another challenge facing working mothers in the PPF is gender and cultural stereotypes. Some societal and religious values give different labels and values to working fathers and working mothers. Working mothers are less valued and respected than their male counterparts. The study established that this tradition develops not only at homes but also at work places. Gender and cultural stereotypes discourage working mothers from attending their duties effectively because they give a definition of who is a good mother, and who is not. Mothers want to be good mothers, and at the same be good workers. Nevertheless, balancing multiple roles and responsibilities bring challenges related to performance at work. Moreover, some male managers and supervisors with paternalistic perspectives do not give room for women to advance in managerial positions. As well, where patriarchy is still strong, wives may lack support to work from their husbands. One manager said:

Some of the women and working mothers are competent, trustful, hardworking, and careful and less arrogant as compared to some men... The problem is the negative attitude developed towards women. It is common to see a woman leaving her job saying that her husband told her to choose between employment and marriage (Male Manager 2).

Hence, cultural stereotypes still hold back women's public presentation as equal actors in employment arenas. According to Humphries and Rubery (1995: 22) "... men and women will never be able to compete on equal terms in the labour market so long as women continue to bear most of the responsibilities for childcare, housework and other caring work within the family." Yet, in the study, some working mothers—especially single mothers—were the sole breadwinners of their families; while many others claimed to play dual roles in their families: being both mothers and workers. These mothers have proved that although they are suppressed by patriarchal systems, they can still manage dual roles despite it being challenging.

Strategies used by mothers to deal with gender stereotypes include the use of family friends, home-helps, domestic workers, exercising, patience and belief in the hope that things will sort themselves out, involving administration in problem-solving, and resigning from work to end their strain. Furthermore, most women explained that they nurture hardworking spirit with a determination to succeed and influence positive attitudinal change at workplaces and the society at large.

Discrimination and Disparagement at Work

Some working mothers explained that they are not consulted, acknowledged, and involved in some matters by both their bosses and fellow staff. To them this a result of being discriminated and ignored because of being a mother. Working mothers said they were often considered incompetent to take up certain jobs because of their feminine dispositions, and because of their reproductive roles. Some working mothers complained that they were excluded from work trips just because of their situations. This hampered their career developments and benefits incurred from work-related travels. One of the respondents explained:

When you are pregnant or have young children, most bosses and fellow staff do not consider us in work-related trips. There are some mothers and pregnant women who can still manage travelling, yet they are not consulted, instead people assume that you cannot (Working Mother 8).

Some working mothers emphasized their ability to perform their duties regardless of their situation. The tendency of valuing men and regarding women as caregivers and home caretakers impinges on the ability of working women to fully exercise their professions and career growth. According to Saher et al. (2013), organizational environment and attitude of colleagues and supervisors have a significant impact on the motivation of employees and performance, and can play an important role to manage work and family life. Thus, challenges facing working mothers are somehow exacerbated by social norms, organizational culture, and national legislation where women are labelled as caregivers, and men as breadwinners (O'Connor & Wright, 2013).

Furthermore, it was noted that working mothers were ignored, unacknowledged, and not actively involved in making decision on matters that touch them at work places. Here, recognition meant being rewarded, motivated, and verbally appreciated. As already remarked, working women wish to move career-wise at the same pace as their male counterparts, but they are constrained in some ways by factors beyond their capabilities. Additionally, according to the ILO (2010), women in their reproductive ages are sometimes seen as 'undesirable' employees due to the fact that there is little communal support for reconciling paid and unpaid work, and because employers are reluctant to bear the cost—in terms of time and finance—associated with maternity leave and any provisions for child-care and family responsibilities associated with women. Nevertheless, working mothers are not just passive victims of this situation: they struggle to cope with it by working harder to fulfil both maternal and employment duties.

Organizational Challenges

Sexual Harassment

Most of the working mothers interviewed said that they were sexually harassed. This kind of harassment in the PPF falls under the quid-pro-quo sexual harassment type, whereby a co-worker, supervisor or a manager requests/demands sexual favours in

exchange for some employment benefits (Bravo & Cassedy, 1992). Such favours include, for example, giving a female worker trips, training, and adding more credit to her while she cannot perform. Some male workers sexually harass female co-workers when the latter needs assistance, as one working mother explained:

I have faced male co-workers wanting physical intimacy. When I refuse, they delay assisting me on work matters (Working Mother 20).

Sexual harassment has a negative impact on individual career growth since those who do not acquiesce are denied their rights. Ramsaroop and Parumasur (2007:25) showed that sexual harassment is as a serious encroachment on the rights of employees. Victims are forced to deal with repulsive and embarrassing experiences, often resulting into emotional and psychological trauma.

To cope with this situation in the PPF, some of the working women reported incidences of sexual harassment/violence to supervisors and/or managers, while others reported to have handled such incidences without making any formal accusations. Since the PPF does not have a sexual harassment policy, reported cases are left to the discretion of administrators to solve.

Shorter Maternity Leave

The study findings revealed that most working mothers complained that the maternity leave given is not enough, especially to mothers who deliver twins. This was a problem because such a mother goes back to work before she is fit health-wise. A working mother explained:

Maternity leave is not enough for me at all because twin babies are not the same as one baby; they need much more care and attention (Working Mother 5).

One of the managers supported the above mother's perceptions thus:

To deal with working mothers' issues requires humanity, for example, to those mothers who deliver twins...It happened in my department and I just gave her one extra month after maternity leave. However, this depends on the whims of the supervisor, manager, or director because this is not mandatorily applicable to other departments (Male Manager 2).

Working mothers commented that they did not get enough time to breastfeed their children due to limited maternity leave. Even though there is a government policy that allows mothers to breastfeed children during working hours, sometimes mothers are forced to wean their newly-borne early as the working day time is not friendly to allow them breastfeed during this period. According to Marinelli et al. (2013) enough maternity leave is very important to establish milk supply and improve breastfeeding outcomes.

Unwanted Family Planning

The findings further established that working mothers were forced to make family planning decisions on child spacing and the number of children to protect their employment. It was evident that due to the hectic nature of being both a mother and a worker, some working mothers find it difficult to have many children.

According to them, frequent childbirths meant negative impacts on their employment opportunities. This is a situation facing employed women who have children at short intervals or later in life due to the discriminatory regulation restricting paid maternity leave only to those who have children after every three years (ILO, 2009). One of working mothers gave the following experience:

I wish I could have another child but I cannot for now because I am afraid of jeopardizing my employment opportunity. I have to control myself by child spacing. (Working Mother 18).

Although family planning is viewed by working mothers as unnecessary in life, employers are forced to use it as a strategy to follow labour regulations. In this case, some of the working mothers do not like to use family planning methods because they fear surpassing their reproductive age, while their husbands and the community expect them to give birth as culturally/religiously expected. When working mothers use family planning, it benefits the organization by reducing number of female staff on maternity leave. While this is positive for the organization, it was unwanted and negative to several employed mothers who would wish to have more children.

According to the national labour laws, female employee has a right to 84 days paid maternity leave after delivery within three years. If one gets pregnant before the three years elapse at the PPF, maternity leave is informally at the discretion of one's supervisor. Women get a very shortened maternity leave with dual responsibility albeit challenging health conditions. The study findings showed that most working mothers at the PPF could not take time off through extended maternity leave due to the fear of losing their jobs/positions and financial hardships. Therefore, they are forced to use family planning to keep up with the conditions of maternal issues provided by the labour laws.

Failure to Understand Situations of Working Mothers

Some supervisors did not understand the peculiar working situations of mothers when they had family problems, which sometimes led to misunderstandings. Mothers claimed that supervisors concentrated solely on the accomplishment of work duties without considering their family predicaments. Related to the management failure to understand the situations of working mothers was the pressure they get from young female supervisors who, since they have no children, do not understand the situations of mothers. Working mothers found this very disrespectful, making them feel unappreciated. One woman gave the following comment to explain such a situation:

My female boss is young and did not understand my situation, especially when I was asking for exemption from duties due to my child's sickness. I remember one day I was late because I took my son to a hospital, and she told me that I have to choose either my job or my child (Working Mother 24).

One of the directors also shared his experiences in dealing with working mother's issues. He said:

Misunderstandings between supervisors and mothers concerning clinic time are common, for example, when a mother is supposed to attend a clinic in the morning but a supervisor wants her to go during the afternoon...As a director I sometimes intervene by consulting supervisors to allow mothers to attend clinics (Male Director 4).

From the above citations, we note that there are some supervisors who understand working mothers' situations, while others do not. Here, it shows that supervisors act as 'border keepers within work sphere' (Allen et al., 2014:102). Thus, working mothers must cope with different working environments depending on the understanding of a supervisor. Moreover, we note from the above that some working mothers do not recognise their rights, as illustrated by Working Mother 24, who could have requested compassionate leave to look after her sick child (URT, 2004). This problem is compounded by the fact that the law in Tanzania does not provide extra postnatal days for those with premature babies and for clinic attendance. Similarly, the law has no clear provision of time for breastfeeding during the day, leading to conflicts between mothers and their employers. Additionally, some administrators were not aware of the regulation for 100 days of maternity leave for a mother with more than one child.

The work-family border theory (Allen et al., 2014) postulates that everything is all right provided the border of events between work and family is maintained through regulations, which is at times impossible due to different experiences of the situations among actors, thus leading to conflicts. Hence, the "... demand from one role (usually at home) affects one's ability to meet the demands associated with another role in another domain (usually at workplace)" (Ajala, 2017). For instance, within the homestead, activities such as taking care of children with special needs frequently impinge on a working mother's attention and job performance. A dedicated working mother may plan well and follows work rules and regulations to avoid unnecessary conflicts with her employer. However, this does not automatically remove home responsibilities, a debacle that faces many working mothers in Tanzania. Working mothers must decide for themselves what strategy will work best for them, and actively self-monitor their actions. A sense of personal control for working mothers is important to navigate and negotiate between work and home responsibilities.

Challenges at Home and Coping Strategies

The findings indicate that challenges facing working mothers at home can be grouped into three main categories: social, economic, and psychological.

Social Challenges

Limited Time for Socialization with Family and Community

The findings show that socialization with family and community at large is a significant challenge that working mothers face: they spend much of their time

attending work matters to the extent that they do not have enough time for their children and partners. Working mothers recognised that it is pertinent for them to raise their children in acceptable family and societal values. A mother stated:

It is difficult to follow my children's performance at school. I get back from work tired and fail to supervise their homework (Working Mother 9).

The above narration indicates that mothers experience a gap between their role as parents and employees. Apart from coming back home late, and being tired due to traffic jams, sometimes they are also forced to continue with work using their computers or/and phones to complete work assignments of the day when they reach home. Moreover, they may also be compelled to use their weekends to complete office errands at home. All this alienates them not only from their immediate families, but also from friends, neighbours and relatives, something that is important for social capital.

We note from the above narrations that working mothers experienced time-based conflicts. These findings are in line with those of Ahmad (2008) and Hochschild (1997) (cited by Wharton 2005) on problems of 'time-based conflict' and 'the time bind'. Ahmad (2008: 58) describes time-based conflict as a conflict that arises when the time devoted to one role makes it difficult for an individual to participate in the other role. As noted from working mothers, this might be where they have conflicts on supervising children's homework with completing work assignments. As cited by Wharton (2005:109), Hochschild's (1997) concept of 'the time bind' argues that the work-family conflict is caused by shortage of time, which is a serious problem for working mothers. Because of increased demands and rewards available to people in paid workplaces, families face a time deficit. As people spend increased time at work, they are forced to be more efficient and time-conscious at home. Bahiru and Mengistu's (2018) study on women leaders of business organizations in Ethiopia indicate that longstanding cultural expectations put pressure on women's work as they may receive less assistance from husbands at home. Therefore, husbands act as 'border keepers within home domain' (Allen et al., 2014). Thus, assisting women with household duties will avail them with time to complete work-related responsibilities.

It is a fact that there can never be a replacement of a mother's role in the upbringing of children. Mothers are important to their children in terms of health, affection, and psychosocial development (Ering et al., 2014; Singla et al., 2015). In this study most working mothers abandon their parental roles to house girls. This most likely leads to negative impacts on children in various areas such as in social skills and behavioural development. As a coping mechanism, working mothers at the PPF spend whatever little time they can spare—especially during weekends—to teach important social values to their children. Working mothers also cope with the situation by hiring domestic workers/nannies, and in desperate times they said they even forged sick leaves to get permission to stay at home and take care of their children that needed special care.

Limited Time for Social Events

Related to the above, the findings indicate that the engagement of working mothers in social activities and community social events was hampered due to limited time. Working mothers had little time to engage in funerals, weddings, religious events, initiations, neighbourhood meetings, and similar events. In Tanzania society, like many other African societies, a mother stands as a symbol of unity in social gatherings. The lack of time to fulfil this responsibility is a concern to them, as well the general society. Some working mothers faced isolation and disregard in their own society because of missing social gatherings. A mother explained:

In the Tanzanian context when it comes to social events, especially funerals, people do not care about your work. What they care about is your involvement and attendance... However, due to the nature of my work it is difficult to attend all social events (Working Mother 19).

At the PPF most people are hypothetically willing to accept the idea of women being professionals, but practically they are not willing and ready to consider the roles they have at home as mothers, indicated by the inability of the bosses to accept this fact. Working mothers are required to fulfil their role at work irrespective of demanding motherhood responsibilities. Working mothers were viewed as social deviants in the family and society as they fail to fulfil their motherly roles. To cope with the situation, working mothers used the same mechanisms adopted in dealing with limited time for socializing with the family and community.

Balancing Family and Work Place Roles

The findings show that managing family and work roles at the same time is a problem for many working mothers. Many found it impossible to balance the two roles without jeopardizing one. For instance, there is the scenario of single working mothers who live with their children. These single working mothers stand as fathers and mothers in their families, and at the same time as workers. As one single working mother argued, it next to impossible to balance the three roles:

I am both a mother and father to my child, and I am also an employee. Managing these three roles is hard. Being a mother requires going an extra mile... I provide care and support to my child, as well as managing my time to fulfil the demands of work (Working Mother 2).

Another scenario is that of married working mothers. At home, cultural stereotypes make some husbands unhelpful to their wives in attending family chores such as taking care of children, cooking, washing utensils, and cleaning the house: adding to their burden of family responsibilities. According to one working mother:

Although my husband is educated, he does not help children with their homework even when he returns home earlier than me. I have to do it myself (Working Mother 21).

Some societies have values that create problems for working mothers by encouraging husbands to be non-supportive of their wives. Studies by Quaye (2011), Abid et al. (2013), Zinyemba (2013) and Shava and Ndebele (2014) found similar problems for working mothers at home. To balance family and work

responsibilities, working mothers were stuck to identified plans for each day, hiring house helps; and depending on husbands, friends, and family to assist with house duties. Others opted to sending children to boarding schools. The fact that women report early for work and close late limits time spent for household responsibilities. Nevertheless, some of the working mothers at the PPF reported to have support, assistance, and tolerance from their spouses. Some working mothers have resorted to religious beliefs to get strength from God. A working mother said:

I remember two weeks before the end of my maternity leave I worried a lot about how was I going to leave my daughter with a nanny. My mother encouraged me to trust in God. I started praying (Working Mother 16).

Another working mother explained:

In 2014/2015 I got the best worker award. This would not have been possible without the support of my husband. He looks after the children during some of the weekends that I come to work. He drops me at my office and picks me after work hours. Now that I am pregnant, he wakes up very early and prepares the children for school (Working Mother 7).

Economic Challenges

Limited Time to Find an Additional Income

It has been a practice in Tanzania—and probably in other developing countries—that workers must look for alternative income-generating activities apart from formal employment. These activities are important because salaries are always not enough to take care of extended families. Some of the activities at the PPF included running kiosks/shops, doing consultancy work, and other informal activities that usually generate extra income like farming, livestock keeping, raising poultry, etc. However, the study found out that working mothers had difficulties in undertaking additional income-generating activities due to time constraints. As such, in this they are also disadvantaged, rendering life much harder compared to their counterparts. In this respect one working mother commented:

I tried to open a restaurant near my home for an additional income but it failed because I had little time to manage it (Working Mother 6).

Nevertheless, the study noted that despite time limit, a few working mothers still tried to carry out extra income-generating activities.

Conclusion

This article presented challenges facing working mothers at work and home, and how they tried to cope with them. It has shown that mothers working at the PPF face problems at work that are individual, societal, and institutional; while at home they have social and economic challenges; exhibiting contradictions in the expected equilibrium between work and family roles (Clark, 2000). Using the agency theory, the study has shown how social actors may monitor their own actions and apply them in new and different contexts (Long, 2001). In this context, working mothers have devised various means to deal with the challenges facing them at work and

home. Generally, the study has contributed to knowledge on the challenges that working mothers encounter due to work and family responsibilities; and how they manage and negotiate to cope with the domains.

Also, the study has revealed that these challenges emanate from socio-cultural practices that project a mother as the sole person responsible for child-rearing and undertaking other household chores, while at the same time being formally employed. Moreover, the working environment encompasses rules, regulations, and policies that do not consider mothers' unique situations that differ from other workers, resulting into conflicts with employers, thus compounding challenges facing working mothers.

Furthermore, there were challenges hindering women to work efficiently to pursue their career developments, which could be grouped at personal, institutional, and societal levels. At the personal level, the issues included the lack of confidence and low level of assertiveness. This lack of confidence results in insecurity, which ultimately leads to failure to meet personal and organizational goals, failure to participate in decision-making, isolation, poor performance, and dismissal. At the society level, the socialization process is also a source of lack of confidence to many women, especially in societies where men—who are more valued than women—control decision-making. In this case, a wrong perception towards working mothers at the individual and society levels can also influence the perception at the institutional level; further undermining working mothers' career developments. Thus, generally working mothers must deal with differing degrees of border interruptions that impact the ease with which they can deal with competing work and family demands.

Working mothers are vulnerable to gender and cultural stereotypes, discrimination and disregard, sexual harassment, unawareness of work-related conventions, lack of confidence, unwanted family planning, mistrust by other staff members, and administration issues. At home, working mothers encounter difficulties in not having enough time to engage in social events, manage family and work roles, and earn additional income. To cope with work challenges, mothers have resorted to nurturing confidence, developing hardworking spirit, reporting sexual harassment, following work regulations and instructions, and using family planning methods. At home working mothers are assisted by their husbands, relatives and hired domestic workers; and by planning their activities and sending children to boarding school to cope with challenges encountered.

To improve the situation of working mothers, employers need to provide special rooms for breastfeeding babies by organizations and day-care centres by the government will enable mothers to breastfeed during working time. Work quality for working mothers relate to conditions of work, therefore undiscriminating legal and regulatory measures responding to working mothers' needs should protect them by identifying minimum breastfeeding breaks. Finally, the government should work with non-state actors to end socio-cultural perspectives that entertain stereotypes and inequity at workplaces.

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