

The Roller Coaster Ride: Lived Experiences of Teacher-Mothers In The Department of Education

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This qualitative study has deeply looked into the situations of five teacher-mothers from Candoni, Negros Occidental, who are public secondary school teachers, and raising multiple children. These women are teachers in the public secondary school, and at the same time they are mothers of many children. On the basis of the Theory of Role Balance by Macdermid (1996) and Role Theory by Michaelian (2005), the paper queries the ways in which the evoked competition among demands has affected these women's power to hold at bay over both family and work lives. The study used a qualitative-phenomenological design and the purposive participants were selected, located, and elicited for their experiences through semi-structured interviews, and then they were conscientiously interpreted by Creswell's method. The results of the study show that the women's went through the events not as separate problems but as interconnected occurrences of the same thing—structural and personal challenges—time management problems, overlapping role expectations, dislocation, and resource limitations, which deepen role strain. Still, these limitations simultaneously opened up the adaptive nature of the practice, as teacher-mothers creatively utilized the available coping mechanisms such as purposeful role negotiation, prioritization, and a more pronounced sense of both professional and familial commitment. This paper sheds light on the way systemic and individual forces influence the performances of multiple roles, thus, presenting worker-families' interaction with the topic of work-familiy balance in rural educational contexts of the Philippines.</p>	<p>Keywords: <i>Teacher-Mothers, Lived Experiences, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Phenomenology, work-life balance, role conflict</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Parents and teachers have an important collaborative role in a child's education (Casenio, 2021). Parents are seen as important partners who are essential allies and collaborators for educators (Parents in Partnership; Ministry of Education, 2019). Therefore, it is acknowledged that a positive working connection between parents and teachers is necessary for a child's educational achievement.

According to Albert (2013), teachers in public schools in the Philippines are overworked (based on a high student-teacher ratio, daily and annual teaching hours). Teachers are unlikely to have the time, energy, or opportunity for professional development and lesson preparations due to extended work hours and increased class sizes, especially given how frequently the curriculum changes. These experiences essentially have an impact on the overall performance of the teacher who is performing her dual roles, which is being a mother of several children and as a teacher. Their dual function frequently includes conflict, tension, and uncertainty that led and posed a significant challenge in managing their personal life and professional career (Claesson & Brice, 1989).

As a result, the present researchers developed an interest in conducting a study on the real-world experiences of teaching moms with several children in the chosen research location to emphasize these mothers' experiences while also examining their true status in handling their life's challenges. With the available information, the researchers felt that it is important to focus on these aspects of the human sphere and to collect information that will be useful to all teaching mothers and soon-to-be parents who are trying to juggle various responsibilities.

Objective of the Study

This study explored, described, and analyzed the lived experiences of teacher-mothers from the public secondary school in Candoni, Negros Occidental. Specifically, it aimed to answer the question: What are the lived experiences of teacher-mothers who have several children balancing her roles both at school and home?

Theoretical Framework

This study will be anchored to Macdermid's Theory of Role Balance (1996) and Michaelian's Role Theory (2025) which are both believed to provide a clearer understanding of how multiple roles intersect, conflict and at times harmonize.

Macdermid's framework essentially disputes the traditional idea that a balanced life means that the character of the time or the division of work should be the same for each of the roles. What it does, instead, is to declare that individuals will be in balance when they can combine roles in such a way that the stress is reduced to a minimum and personal meaning and satisfaction are maximized. Thus, the mother-teacher concept leads us to focus on how rethinking, rescheduling, and reprioritizing can help these women to turn teaching demands into parenting obligations. The theory, hence, is not only identifying their fighting but also telling how they "succeed" in balancing is not the same as the ability to be continuous and to keep on well-being even though the role demands are non-symmetrical.

On the other hand, Michaelian's Role Theory offers a very interesting perspective, which helps us to understand how the subjective interpretation of these multiple roles occurs. In this model, conflict is considered a feature of the role system mix, where role expectations contradict each other and individuals feel that they have to do more than they are actually capable of. By implementing the model, the research can now delve into how these mothers-teachers are perceiving the institutional expectations vs. familial responsibilities conflict. This study not only unveils the stress sources but also the stress release ways that they use for conflict reduction through negotiation, prioritization, and adaptation.

Being concerned with teacher-mothers who mediate between conflicting expectations, the study moves beyond documenting experiences into critically examining ways in which potential stress becomes opportunities for resilience and agency. Such an analysis enriches the discourse on work-life balance by embedding teacher-mothers' coping mechanisms into broader theories regarding role negotiation, stress management, and professional identity formation. The theoretical foundation thus enhances the contribution of the study in addressing the interplay between gender, work, and family in the Philippine educational setting.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on understanding the lived experiences of teacher-mothers in public secondary schools within the District of Candoni, Negros Occidental. Specifically, the research sought to explore their strategies in balancing professional responsibilities and familial duties, employing a phenomenological qualitative research design. By using in-depth interviews through the Key Informant Interview (KII) method, the study captured the participants' perspectives, motivations, and coping mechanisms in navigating their dual roles.

The scope of the study was limited to five (5) teacher-mothers employed at Quirico G. Manzano Memorial National High School. The selection criteria ensured that the participants were married, had a minimum of five children, and were willing to engage in the research process until its completion. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants who had firsthand experience of the phenomenon being investigated. The study employed a researcher-made interview guide, validated by experts, to facilitate data collection.

However, the study had certain limitations. First, the findings were derived from a small sample size, which, while appropriate for phenomenological research, may not be generalizable to all teacher-mothers in the district or beyond. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal biases or social desirability. Another limitation was the reliance on qualitative analysis, which, while rich in detail, may be subject to the researcher's interpretative lens. Despite these constraints, the study provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of teacher-mothers, contributing to a deeper understanding of role balance in educational settings.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative- phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of teacher-mothers in public secondary schools in Candoni, Negros Occidental. The research aimed to understand how individuals perceive and interpret their multiple roles through in-depth interviews, discussions, and participant observations. Phenomenology focuses on subjective experiences, challenging assumptions and uncovering deeper meanings (Lester, 1999). The Key Informant Interview (KII) method was used to collect data, ensuring confidentiality and ethical compliance. Participants' identities remained anonymous, with pseudonyms used in presenting their narratives, maintaining integrity and privacy throughout the research process. Moreover, informed consent was secured from all of the participants to provide both an ethical safeguard and a methodological necessity together with participants' voluntary participation was considered. In the absence of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or a formal ethics review board in the institution, it was ensured that various ethical safeguards were seriously taken and considered to not harm the human participants.

RESULTS

Upon review of the Key Informant Interview (KII), the following themes have been drawn based on the objectives:

Challenges of Teacher-Mothers.

Theme #1: Time After Time: A Challenge in Managing Time

Participants of the study were having a hard time managing their professional life as well as performing their roles as parents to their respective children, for instance teacher- mother 1 said that... "the most challenging part is the division of time between your home and at school... she added "I have been struggling with this for quite so long and I can't really attend to the needs of my family given that I am also considering the profession that I have which serves as our bread and butter for us to eat day and night."

Teacher-mother 2 supported this statement by saying..."its really hard to manage time considering that [you] need to balance your professional and parenting role as an individual. She further said that... dealing with time has been [my] constant problem and I hope I can be as effective as others, balancing their homes at the same time jobs effectively."

Teacher-mother 3 also shared..."I am in struggle now on how I am going to balance and make use of my time... I have five children to attend with at the same time I have students who are waiting for me at school

and all of them have different needs to be addressed with. I can't help but to sometimes compromise the quality time I have for my family or for my students. [It's] a difficult choose by the way."

Teacher-mother 4 expressed...."dividing time between family and work in school is a very difficult task, I even compromised my Saturdays and Sundays for work that's why sometimes I have this bad feeling towards myself for not spending quality time with my husband and kids at home."

Teacher-mother 5 emphasized that...."[my] challenges are on managing time [especially in] executing of works both in school and at home... she added 'difficulty in managing time in teach[ing] the children while making instructional materials and other teaching and [learning] resources [to be used] in letting my students to learn.'" This is supported by Casenio (2021) stating that people, specifically with parental obligations are struggling with the shortage of time. Parents must work to maintain the financial standing of the family and to always support the needs of their children in varying aspects. Therefore, it can be inferred that in the research locale, teacher-mothers are having significant issues in balancing and managing their time to address personal and professional obligations.

Theme #2: Navigating Role Demands: Balancing Professional and Familial Obligations

It is understood that teachers who happened to be a mother were having issues and struggles when it comes to work, and roles performed both from school and at home. For example, teacher-mother 1 shared..."one of those challenges [I've encountered] is being a wife and a mother of six children and being a second mother of the children at school where [I have to deal with] children with varying upbringing." She added "the teacher vs. parent dynamic is real for many teachers. Juggling the responsibilities of raising their own children while raising other people's children is not an easy task."

Teacher-mother 2 added..."multiple responsibilities are the problems that I have encountered along the process. One must foster strong relationships with their children and their students, and this can only happen through open and honest communication. [One] should also educate [her] spouse about the difficulties of being a teacher and a mother at the same time. [One] should talk with her partner to build a system of togetherness that works for everyone."

Similarly, Teacher 5 said..."being a teacher at the same time a mother to my 5 kids is not an easy job. I found it very challenging to cope up with my obligations [as] a bread winner of my family and a mother at the same time performing my duty [at school]. Say for an instance, [while] work[ing] with my learning activity sheets and modules, my children especially those ages 7 and 8 who are on the grade 2 and 3 who are not able to understand difficult terms in their modules, should be entertained. I must answer their queries that sometimes I had to reprint my modules in several copies [since errors were committed] due to destructions." She added..."most of the time I came home late since I have cope with my schoolwork due to the reason that I was not able to do it at home attending to my children's needs [as] support [in] their studies."

This is supported by Honda, et al (2015), stating that having multiple roles such as worker, mother/ father, and caregiver for elderly parents may lead to role conflict. Also, people who engage in several roles may experience role conflict, overload, and strain, resulting in poor well-being of an individual.

Theme #3: A Thousand Miles: Distance of Home from School

After a series of interviews with the participants, teacher-mother 3 shared, "working far from home is one of the challenges [that] I am struggling right now since I cannot personally take care of my children and I cannot [even] guide them and see their daily activities and progress. Furthermore, it is very hard since my children are not old enough to take care of themselves and become independent with their actions and decisions in life."

Teacher-mother 5 added that... "as a mother, I want to guide them throughout the journey, and I want them to always feel supported, but this limits me sometimes since I need to go to duty and to work for our living. Distance sometimes separates me from my children and family."

This is supported by Peteros, et al (2022) that school being far or close to the home can affect the student and even parents in many ways. And there are pros and cons for everything. For the student living far from the school, the long commute every day is physically and mentally tiring. Similarly, parents are also struggling to be far distance to their family and loved ones.

Theme #4: Resource Constraints: Challenges to Finances and Other Resources

Financial resources and others are vital in the operation and process. This refers to the institutions and teachers' assets that increase production and work performance. These resources may refer to money, gadgets, materials, technology, time, energy, etc.

Teacher-mother 1 said that... "teacher-mothers who spend their whole day around kids have a tough time managing their time and energy." She added, "I've also been struggling and having difficulties in dealing with my financial resources, since as a teacher you have to spend your personal money for school purposes while addressing the same concerns and needs at home. It can't be denied, and it is really happening to us teachers in DepEd."

Teacher-mother 5 also shared that... "finding ways on how to acquire finances while working at school is one of the big problems I have in mind. Sometimes you have to lose focus as you discuss topics in the classroom. But it's a reality that maybe everyone might encounter."

This is supported by Casenio (2021), who states that financial woes are frequent issues observed with public-school teachers. This is one of the major concerns individuals face today since all services, commodities, and products are achieved through the help of money and financial resources.

Coping Mechanisms of Teacher-Mothers.

Theme #1: Family and School Work Balance

Family serves as a source of strength, joy, and happiness, and most of the time is described as someone's everything. On the other hand, schoolwork is important for a teacher, for it is her core. Both family and schoolwork should be given enough time to attain a progressive professional life, at the same time, become a caring and loving mother/wife to her family.

Teacher-mother 1 said that... "I enjoyed every challenge I've met as a mother, wife, and teacher. It taught me how to deal with my own kids. It gave me the firmness needed and the flexibility where necessary. As a professional teacher, at the same time a mother of several children it is necessary to balance both roles to avoid role conflicts and other problems that may arise along the way."

Supportive of this, Teacher-mother 3 said that... "prioritizing my family and on the other hand, balancing my work-like doing schoolwork at school and finding time to be with my children after working hours, Saturdays and Sundays."

This is supported by de Sousa, et al (2024), stating that families can help people cope with stress and related problems and emphasizing as well that family members can also be an individual source of stress.

Theme #2: Profound Dedication to Work

Dedication to work is basically defined as the devotion of someone to their career or current job. This also includes setting aside personal transactions for the greater good and greater purpose of something. Based on the transcriptions made, teacher-mother 1 said that "being dedicated to work helped me to cope with the different challenges and problems I encountered at school and even at home. Also, this helped me to look for the brighter side of my career as well as my role as a mother to several children.

Similarly, teacher-mother 3 said that... "in my thirty (30) years of teaching in the Department of Education, I can say that I have been so dedicated to my work as well as being passionate to everything that I do. The teaching profession had taught me as well that being in this profession helped me to share and take part to students' lives, especially to their academic lives. Lastly, as [a] teacher, I believe that the only thing that will make you love your work as well as your students is to become dedicated to it. Love it and take care of it. Embrace your profession since no one will do it for you."

This is supported by Fathima, et al (2020), asserting that job dedication teaches an individual the discipline, passion and time management which are vital to success. These ideas keep individuals focused on important issues and take their work seriously to make it the best it can be.

CONCLUSIONS

Challenges are ongoing issues that teaching mothers and everyone else in the modern period face. People ought to be open to change because these facets of life are common. It just depends on how we approach the search for solutions to these issues. Teachers who are also moms of many children must exercise extreme caution and wisdom in carrying out their duties, more especially, in acting in the capacities of professional teachers who are also mothers or parents to their children and wives to their husbands.

In addition, teacher-moms managed their time, careers, and jobs as professional instructors at schools while also being mothers or parents in their own homes despite the numerous insurmountable hurdles, issues, and uncertainties they had faced. Teachers are also capable of handling these issues head-on with the aid of the many coping skills they have learnt and developed through time.

Locally and in the case of the identified research locale, teaching moms have faced significant challenges but have shown strengths and courage through their coping mechanisms, enabling them to do and perform their jobs and roles with ease and confidence, defining the true essence of a strong modern woman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusions made, the following recommendations were advanced to:

Department of Education. At the policy level, the Department of Education should institutionalize structured support systems for teacher-mothers by integrating work-life balance policies within existing teacher welfare and professional development programs. This may include flexible workload arrangements, wellness audits, and capacity building initiatives that emphasizes investment in employee overall well-being to maximize productivity and long-term organizational sustainability. DepEd's management framework ensures that the well-being of teacher-mothers is not only recognized but also systematically monitored, evaluated, and aligned with educational quality standards.

School Principal. School principals should adopt transformational leadership practices that emphasize empathy, recognition, and inclusive decision-making. Beyond symbolic celebrations like Teachers' Day, Family Day, and etc. schools must implement structured employee engagement programs and participatory management models that allow teacher-mothers to express their needs in organizational planning.

Teacher- Mother. Teacher-mothers should be encouraged to actively participate and engage to professional learning communities (PLC) and peer support networks that enhances collaboration and resilience. Adopting self-leadership strategies and engaging in reflective practices, teacher-mothers can transform their lived experiences into opportunities for leadership and innovation in the workplace.

Students. Students must be socialized into a culture of reciprocal responsibility, where respect and support for teachers and parents are seen as a vital component of character formation. Embedding this within values-based education frameworks reinforces social responsibility, aligning 21st-century education paradigms that emphasize holistic development, civic engagement, and ethical responsibility. By recognizing the interconnectedness of their roles as learners and family members, students contribute to a sustainable ecosystem of shared accountability in education.

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