

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Effects of Multiple Roles on the Psychosocial Well-being of Working Mothers in Ghana

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Introduction and Background: Increasingly, women's role as wives, mothers and paid employees is becoming a global phenomenon. As a result, over the past three decades, a rising stream of research on the relationship between women's multiple roles and well-being have sustained the interest of researchers due to the fact that a lot of women are performing these roles simultaneously (Green & Russo, 1993; Lahelma, Arber, Kivelä, & Roos, 2002; McBride, 1988; Tang & Tang, 2001). While women have taken on more masculine work roles, they still continue to bear much of the responsibility in their homes (Hochschild, 1989; Tang & Tang). Some professionals, especially mental health professionals have therefore become concerned about women's health and raised questions about whether they can handle the demands of multiple roles without negative consequences (Barnett, 2004). Nonetheless, the effects of multiple roles on women's well-being remain controversial because it is not clear whether the effects are favorable or harmful (Arber, 1991; Aber, 1997; Avison, 1995; Maclean, Glynn, & Ansara, 2004; Waldron, Weiss & Hughes, 1998).

Extant research suggests that whether combining employment, marriage, and motherhood is good or bad for women's health and well-being, the real worry is less about the multiple roles and more about the stress that married women with children experience when they become paid employees (Barnett, 2004; Lahelma et al, 2002; Rubery, Smith & Fagan, 1997). As women continue to be multiple role holders, they may feel strained as they struggle to play these roles perfectly. Consequently, the constraints that are generated as working mothers combine

employment with parenthood and marriage may negatively affect their psychosocial well-being. We use the term psychosocial well-being to refer to the absence of worry, confusion, sadness, guilt and ability to participate fully in social events. This study therefore sought to examine the relationship between multiple roles and the psychosocial well-being of non-academic female staff of a Public University in Ghana. To accomplish this, we focused on childcare responsibilities, household chores and marital bond duties and three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level.

Hypotheses:

H₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between childcare responsibilities and the psychosocial well-being of working mothers.

H₂: There is no statistically significant relationship between household chores and the psychosocial well-being of working mothers.

H₃: There is no statistically significant relationship between marital bond duties and the psychosocial well-being of working mothers.

Design: A quantitative research method was used for the study.

Methodology: Data was collected from one hundred non-academic female staff from various departments of the University via self-administered questionnaires. To be recruited for this study, a participant should be married with a child or children below 12 years old. The data was analyzed using descriptive and correlation statistics.

Results: The ages of respondents ranged from 25 to 57 years with a mean age of 41.16 years. Majority (96%) of the respondents had attained tertiary level education and four percent had

attained secondary level education. With regard to the number of children below the age of 12 years that the respondents had, 35.0% had one child, 32.0% had two children, 19.0% had three children, 12.0% had four children and 2.0% had five children. Since the respondents were recruited from different departments, they represented various professions. Twenty-six percent were teachers from the University Primary School, 35% were administrative assistants, 17% were nurses and doctors, 10% were secretaries and 12% were made up of clerks, caterers and accounting assistants.

The results revealed that helping child with homework ($p = 0.02$), preparing child for school ($p = 0.03$), escorting children to school ($p = 0.05$), picking child from school ($p = 0.01$), and preparing food for children ($p = 0.01$) had a statistically significant negative relationship with the psychosocial well-being of working mothers in the study. Activities that did not have statistically significant relationship with the psychosocial well-being of respondents because the p values were greater than 0.05, included sending child to health care facility ($p = 0.49$), preparing child to sleep ($p = 0.71$), dressing child up for events ($p = 0.27$), and administering prescription drugs for child ($p = 0.10$). Household chores that had a statistically significant negative relationship with the psychosocial well-being of working mothers were, going to the market for foodstuffs ($p = 0.04$), washing clothes ($p = 0.03$), cooking ($p = 0.008$) and sweeping and mopping ($p = 0.01$). Other household chores did not have statistically significant relationship with the psychosocial well-being of the respondents and these were, ironing of clothes, cleaning bathroom and lavatory, washing dishes and dumping of refuse with associated p values of 0.09, 0.15, 0.35 and 0.08 respectively. While the marital bond duties did have a negative relationship with the psychosocial well-being of the respondents, the relationships were not statistically significant.

Conclusions and Implications: Evidence from extant research, including this current study indicates clearly that the effects of multiple roles on women's well-being remain divisive. There is a general agreement that juggling multiple roles could have both beneficial and harmful effects on working mothers' health and well-being. In this study, although the findings indicated an inverse relationship between working mothers' psychological well-being and childcare responsibilities, household chores, and marital bond duties, some activities did not have statistically significant effects on respondents' psychosocial well-being. These findings suggest not only the need for specific interventions, but also interventions that consider cultural differences because some activities might be stressful for working mothers in particular cultures.

Although juggling multiple roles often results in role conflict, women can be successful as wives, mothers and paid employees if they are supported with family friendly policies and structures. Social support from spouses, extended family members, friends, governmental and non-governmental organizations will go a long way in enhancing working mothers' psychosocial well-being. Specifically, if working mothers are offered flexible work schedules, affordable childcare services and assistance with household chores they will be healthy and can contribute effectively to the development of their families, communities and nations.

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