



Balancing Life: The Struggles of Working Mothers with Children 5 Years Old and Below in Benguet State University, Philippines

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Abstract

The study documented the struggles of working mothers in balancing their daily lives between family and career. Using snowball technique, the study purposively sampled 25 working mothers employed in Benguet State University. Results showed that financial and personal development drive the working mothers to engage in paid labor. Along with these are the challenges and struggles centered primarily on childcare. Their status as 'absentee mothers' cause qualms in terms of their emotional bond with their children and affect the behavioral development of the child. Hence, these mothers employ some mechanisms to fulfill their childcare duties to include spending quality time with their child or children and from time to time requesting child care from relatives, hired nanny, or child care center. With these situations, enhancing the existing policies and additional practical support including the possible establishment of child-minding center inside the university were seen to significantly assist the working mothers. Provision of emotional and practical support from the immediate family and workplace are also essential factors in attaining and maintaining work-life balance among these mothers.

KEYWORDS

work-life balance
working mothers
time spent
child care
alone time

Introduction

With women actively involved in the labor force, a significant implication on the work-life balance of working mothers becomes an issue. Work-life balance, as defined by Terol (2016), is a scale that forces one to weigh at least two competing, but important, elements in life, mainly work career and family responsibilities. Work-life balance acts as a boon for working mothers which enables them to balance between work (career and ambition) and life (family, leisure, pleasure and personal development) (Maiya &

Bagali, 2014). Working moms will agree that there comes a time when work and family roles come in conflict with each other and that fulfilling the demands in one domain makes it difficult to fulfill the demands of the other (Ilac, 2012).

In the Philippines, there is a gradual upsurge in the number of mothers entering the labor force. It is now becoming common to see families where the mother is the major breadwinner or a major contributor to the family's financial resources. Yet multiple roles of women were shown to be undervalued and unrecognized as shown in the

study in farming communities in Benguet (Batani et al., 2015). There is a large disparity of time utilization across genders especially on unpaid work, in this case domestic work. Both genders spend their day in farm work but it is the women who perform paid and unpaid work simultaneously. This is consistent with the findings of Osteria (2014) showing women's contributions to development are undervalued, their working conditions are ignored and their own needs are neglected.

Work-family conflict has been defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family role demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands on the other domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Higgins & Duxbury, 1992 as cited in Ortega & Hechanova, 2010). A local (Philippine) study by Ilac (2012) and Ortega & Hechanova (2010) revealed that having more hours at work likewise affect family life. Obviously, the more hours the Filipino worker spends at work, the less time he or she has with the family. This means less quality time spent with one's spouse and children as well as less time for household duties and responsibilities.

These issues on work-life balance and work-family conflict has significant implication on the child's development. Familial responsibility is harder for women particularly mothers whose role is doubled or even multiplied brought about by their multiple roles. Being a mother requires emotional and physical responsibility to the people surrounding her, most importantly to her dependent children aged 0-5 years old. This is critical since the brain of a 0-5 years old child is constantly creating new connections. This is the time at which the brain is developing at the most rapid pace it will ever be in a person's life, before it begins to stabilize at age 6 (Tan-Zubiri, 2013). This is the reason why it is so important for parents to take advantage of this period to allow their children to develop and learn as much as possible while their brains absorb everything like a sponge. Since childcare still plays a big role in the lives of mothers, the success of the child is usually attached onto how they are being raised by their parents, especially, how effective the mother is. Of which, childminding or home-based childcare not only offers a specialist type of service as family support, especially for vulnerable families, but

also provides a form of pedagogical approach to children's developmental and educational outcomes that is distinct from any other types of early years care (Ang et al., 2017).

Now that women are caught in an "ever-tightening tangle of commitments", it is therefore important to know how these mothers balance their work and family as well as to know how they are coping up with such. From these, appropriate institutional policy recommendations can be drawn. It is against this backdrop that this paper aims to contribute; that while gendered literature exploring the marginality of women has been increasing, this study would serve as an important ethnographic insight into the complex dynamics of paid and unpaid work besetting working mothers in a university setting. This study is also a timely contribution to the discourse on 'feminist studies' with focus on equalizing opportunities while at the same time answering specific gender needs. This study also argues for a second look at 'work' not as a neutral category but which calls for concrete positive policy actions that are 'gendered.'

Specifically, the study aimed to: ¹⁾ capture the profile of the informants with focus on the experiences and the problems arising from prioritizing family matters and career obligations in terms of childcare/parenting, marriage, work-related and alone time; ²⁾ identify the approaches of working mothers who have 0 to 5 years old children in allocating their time in the family and career; ³⁾ recognize the coping mechanisms/solutions employed by the working mothers, who have 0-5 years old children; and, ⁴⁾ determine practical support mechanisms in the workplace.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Benguet State University (BSU), Philippines. Informants in the study are women employees, permanent and non-permanent, who have children aged 0 to 5 years and were selected through the snowball technique. Since accessing the updated Personal Data Sheet of the personnel is confidential, the exact number of working mothers in the university was unknown. Hence, the researchers resorted to non-probability sampling technique.



The data gathering started by identifying and interviewing first the women employees who are known to have child or children aged 0 to 5 years. At the end of the interview, the informants were asked to recommend another employee who met the criteria. This cycle was repeated until the researchers arrived at 25 informants.

Majority of the informants were interviewed face to face except for the few who refused and preferred to answer the questionnaire which includes open-ended questions. The informants were given a maximum of one week to answer the questionnaire as it is quite extensive. The data gathered from the survey questionnaire and personal interviews were then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Also, the use of pseudonyms for the protection of the informants was employed.

Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the informants are presented in Table 1. These informants represent 0.07% of the university's overall female employees at the time of the data gathering. These informants declared that they have children with ages ranging from 0 to 5 years. Interestingly, four (4) of the 25 informants are solo parents, which shows that the university provides equal opportunities to women regardless of status.

Mothers Reason to Work

As of August 2018, BSU data disaggregation show that there are more women workforce at 56.14% than men. Some of them are in the

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents

		Frequency Count	%
Civil Status	Single	3	12.0
	Married	21	84.0
	Separated	1	4.0
Years Married	Less than a year	1	4.0
	1-5 years	7	28.0
	6-10 years	8	32.0
	11-15 years	5	20.0
	not married	4	16.0
No. of children with 0-5 years old	1 Child	23	92.0
	2 Children		8.0
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	12	48.0
	Vocational	1	4.0
	Masters Degree	9	36.0
	Post-graduate	1	4.0
	Doctorate Degree	1	4.0
	Not mentioned	1	4.0
Employment Status	Permanent	15	60.0
	Non-permanent	10	40.0
Household Monthly Income	20,000.00 and below	9	36.0
	20,001.00 – 30,000.00	3	12.0
	30,001.00 – 40,000.00	9	36.0
	40,001.00 – 50,000.00	1	4.0
	50,001.00 and above	3	12.0



executive and leadership positions. It should be noted that not too long ago, these positions are where the men deemed to dominate. The conventional thinking that “women should stay at home” is now gradually changing. As to the question ‘Why women choose to work?’, financial stability and career growth are the two most compelling reasons. For the former, family’s financial status or even the job status of the husband are the specific concerns expressed; for the latter, emotional needs and practical support from the family are the main motivators. Among the informants, three (3) are single parents and one (1) is separated implying that these women are the main, if not the sole, providers for their children. The financial support which the child’s biological father provides is not enough to cover all their financial needs. Likewise, there are informants whose husbands are currently unemployed mainly due to difficulty in finding a job. In other informants, the role of the wife as the breadwinner is a common decision by the couple due to the job stability and salary grade of the wife, leaving the husband to care for the children.

In cases where both husband and wife are working, the women informants declared that leaving their work is not an option, as they still need to help financially their husband while building their own career. Their decision to work is strongly supported by their husband and was discussed deliberately during and, in others case, even before the marriage. These working mothers added that having a job before marriage made it easier for the husband to adjust and adopt the working condition of the wife. In addition, there are also two cases where the husband encourages the wife to continue working despite having a stable job and is very much capable of providing for the family. This decision is anchored to the foreseen future set-up of their family once the children are all grown up. *“The struggles and juggling responsibilities of child care while working will eventually pass,”* said Mary (personal communication, 2018). This is based on their notion that when the children grow up and requires only minimal care, the mother could go back to an existing work, rather than quitting from work and taking time to care of the child before looking for another work. By this time, it would be difficult for the mother to find a job since most working institutions nowadays prefer ‘young’ employees.

Struggles of Working Mothers

Challenges on time management. Regardless of their reasons as to why they are engaged in paid labor, it always comes with consequences. Hence, issues on conflicting roles are common among women engaged in paid labor. This is seen in the time distribution to various activities of the working mothers in BSU (Table 2).

Working mothers spend most of their time on their work at an average of 8 hours and 32minutes. This does not include the time spent for breaks. For domestic works, an average of 2 hours and 45 minutes for doing household chores; 3 hours and 24 minutes for child care; 1 hour and 54 minutes for self; 1 hour and 30 minutes for caring for other family members; and only 6 hours and 54 minutes for sleeping. The figures show that the activities listed are not being performed alone but are simultaneously done with other activities; exceeding the 24 hours spent in a day. For example, the informant performs household chores but is taking care of her children at the same time. What is called as “me time” is actually spent on childcare while watching TV or even while cooking. Another scenario could be while she is working in the office, she is also taking care of her child, which is a common sight in the university. The data also reveal that working mothers experience inadequate hours of rest/sleep that usually compromises the next days’ physical well-being.

Although the data showed that 3 hours and 24 minutes is allotted for their children, informants admitted that only at least 30 minutes is quality time during weekdays. Accordingly, 30 minutes in a day is excessively short to have quality time to bond with their children. Take for instance the case of one informant, before she goes to her workplace, she has to juggle housework and childcare for about two and a half (2.5) hours every morning. Aside from her paid work, she is also a law student. After office hours, she has to run to attend to her class which takes up two (2) hours of her time every day. Once home, she has to do household work while simultaneously taking care of her toddler. However, her day does not end there as she still has to take care or manage her online business.

Unavailable child care and assistance. Many childcare options are available for parents to



choose from to take care of their children while they are away or not available. These include relative care, hired babysitter, neighbors, and bringing their child to child-minding centers. Finding the right childcare suitable for the family, however, is arduous to the parents primarily due to issues on trust, quality care, and monetary obligations. Situating and comparing these options sometimes takes time to decide and requires practicality and smart decisions for the parents. Further, other factors such as the socio-economic background of the family may heavily affect their decision in choosing childcare options.

In the study, majority (56%) of working mothers seek the help of their relatives to take care of their children (Table 3). The most compelling reason is due to the additional financial

burden if they would employ other options. It is interesting to note that 'relatives' actually refer to mothers or grandmothers who do not usually require payment as they claim that it is their right to watch over their grandchild. Informants say that they just give 'any amount', which is usually way below the hired nannies' salary. Aside from additional financial obligation when hiring a nanny, there are also issues in finding a trusted and capable one to look after the children. And if they find one, most will not stay for long. An informant stated that most of the babysitters nowadays prefer to work at restaurants, malls, and other business establishments since they are not bound with long working hours.

Another interesting finding is the involvement of husbands in care work. Data revealed that 16% of the informants claimed that their husband

Table 2

Time Use and Time Distribution

Activities	Declared time spent (hr: min)			
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation
Household chores	2:45	1:00	5:00	± 1:08
Care for children	3:24	2:00	6:00	± 1:00
Care for other members of the family	1:30	0:30	4:00	± 0:55
Paid activities related to work	8:32	8:00	11:00	± 1:48
Paid activities related to other works outside BSU	1:50	1:00	2:00	± 0:24
*Leisure activities "me time"	1:54	0:30	6:00	± 1:23
**Sleep	6:54	5:00	10:00	± 1:16
Social Related activities	1:28	0:30	4:00	± 0:54

**Sleep is usually not continuous to cater for their child's needs

Table 3

Child Caregiving While Mother is at Work

	Frequency Count	%	Rank
Father	4	16.0	2
Relatives	14	56.0	1
Relatives, hired nanny, and child care center	1	4.0	5
Relatives and Hired babysitter	1	4.0	5
Hired babysitter	3	12.0	3
Children Center	2	8.0	4



looks after their children. Nowadays, this set-up is no longer unusual. The term ‘househusband’ was even coined to refer to them. This situation came about because the husband is not able to find a job or the father is a home-based online and/or freelance worker, which makes sense in terms of practicality. Literatures also showed that in some parts of the Cordillera Administrative Region, fathers caring for their children is not unusual – as it is cultural. However, wives still perform the domestic work after her paid work including childcare and other household concerns. Concern on the security and safety of the children are the common reasons why working mothers prefer their husband and relatives to take care of their children. There are even cases where the in-laws or parents volunteered to take care of the children instead of other people, “my mother believes that my baby will receive more care if she, as a grandmother, will look over our baby compared to hired nannies,” stated Joanna (personal communication, 2017). Moreover, some of the informants are living with their parents or in-laws.

Opting to other options such as hired nanny or child minding facilities comes only in the absence of the husband or relatives to take care of the children. One working mother whose husband is working overseas and has no relatives to take care of her child opted to bring her child in a child-minding center located near the university. She currently has a house helper but is not capable of taking care of the child. She then decided to bring her son in a child care facility where she eventually discovered that such facility does not only help her child academically but it also helps in diverting her child’s attention from playing too much electronic gadgets. Such facilities in La Trinidad do not simply offer “child minding” services but also tutorials and providing avenue for the children to socialize with other kids. She even emphasized the advantage of putting her child in such facility because it surprisingly improved the child’s English communication skills. The only downside is the distance of the facility from their house. Since her family lives in Baguio City and she is working in La Trinidad, she chose to put her child in a child minding center near her workplace. She then has to bring her child all the way from Baguio City to La Trinidad and vice versa every weekdays.

Meanwhile, other informants choose to hire helpers to take care of household chores and

other errands while the child care is entrusted with their relatives. One informant stated, “at least my baby is taken cared off plus I won’t need to do all the household chores.” In terms of the payment, hired nannies are being paid by the informants an average of Php2,000 to 5,000 per month. On the other hand, family members who take care of their children are not being paid although most of them give “allowances” which they usually refused. “*Huwag ninyo akong bayaran. Karapatan kong mag-alaga ng mga apo ko*” (Don’t pay me, it is my right to take care of my grandchildren), stated by one of the informant’s parents. Thus, what usually happens is that, the mothers would just share in the expenses in the house or sometimes bring out and treat them outside. For child minding centers, the cost ranges from Php2,000 to Php4,000 a month.

Feelings of guilt and doubts. Despite the assurance that their children are being taken cared of, working mothers still feel guilt and insecurity associated with the lack of time spent with the children. Majority (76%) admitted feeling guilty and doubt their effectiveness as mothers. Additionally, these mothers instinctively blame themselves whenever an unpleasant event happens to their children. They usually associate the negative event with their lack of quality time and the divided attention to their children.

“When my daughter got sick in her first two (2) months, I felt so guilty and irresponsible; I think it was my fault that she got ill. I was supposed to fully breast feed her in her first two months but then we opted mix-feeding instead so that I could report back to work.” - Mary

“It feels like as if I have no quality time for my baby plus letting her stay with a nanny is really scary.” - Joanna

“Sometimes my son would ask me to watch him in a school activity but I cannot go because of my work. After the event I could feel the disappointment by the way he talks” - Janneth

Meanwhile, 24% of the informants confidently claimed that they are effective mothers despite the shortcomings. It should, however, be noted that these informants have different backgrounds which may have affected their claim. One informant is newly married, life experiences as



a mother and as a wife are still new and exciting for her. Her baby is only 6 months old and still could not talk and express her emotions in an explicit way. She believes that she is giving her best to have quality time with her baby. Likewise, the other four (4) informants guarantee that, together with their husbands, are giving quality care to their children. For instance, before putting their children to bed, they play and converse with them. On weekends, they are personally taking care of their children. Another working mother even shared that she read books on how to become an effective parent in between her breaks at work.

But to other informants, it appears that 'feeling guilty' is not really an option particularly for the mothers who are the breadwinners of the family. According to one informant, she would feel guiltier if she cannot provide her child's needs.

Concerns on children's upbringing.

There are also concerns on the effect of their set up to the behavioral development of the child. One of these is the upbringing of the children while being cared by others. The fact that mother informants are 'absentee mothers,' there is a feeling of insecurity in the way their child is being disciplined which might not be what they want. This comes with the view that the 'mothering role' will have a great influence on a child's upbringing. According to Moges and Weber (2014), parenting style plays a role in a child's temperament which, in turn, plays a role in the child's emotion regulation. Children prone to negative emotions or episodes of anger are deeply affected by the hostile and neglectful parenting, often leading to even more behavioral problems. Difficult temperaments can become a bidirectional problem that evokes even more negative emotions from the parent if not monitored.

Accounts of some working mothers showed that some negative behaviors or attitudes of their children are already starting to manifest. Some say that their child becomes clingy, becomes possessive of the mother, tantrum attacks, hot temperedness, and child answering disrespectfully back to their parents when being corrected. The informants think that these behaviors shown by their children are associated with them being at work most of the time. They observed that the children are becoming clingy because they want to maximize the time they can have with their mothers.

These mothers do make efforts to make up with the loss time with their children but they oftentimes fail to act since they are already exhausted from work. Other informants also have other responsibilities at home aside from attending to their children. One respondent shared that aside from her work in the university, she has to manage a transient business. When she gets home from work, she posts advertisements on the internet and answer queries of her clients while her son is beside talking to her. Then her son, sensing that she is distant, would grab her mother's face to get her attention.

"When he grabs my face it makes me realize that I am not giving him my attention and that he is still aware that yes, I am physically beside him but is not fully present. I made sure then to stop what I am doing and cuddle him". – Janneth (personal communication, 2017)

This is consistent with the observation of Moges and Weber (2014) that just by being physically present is not enough. Parents that may be nearby but are not emotionally invested or responsive tend to raise children that are more distressed and less engaged with their play or activity. Moreover, a study showed that parent's investments does matter and affects the outcome of their child's emotional competence and regulation (Volling et al., 2002).

On the other hand, other informants claimed that the personal development of the child is not only dependent on who is taking care of the child but also on the type of environment the child is being raised. Moreover, the outcome of the children also depend on what they see, hear, and read. It is just that childcare has always been associated primarily to the mother.

Ang ugali ng bata ay maganda kung maganda din ang pakikitungo mo sa kaniya. Kahit bantay halimbawa ang magtuturo ng kagandahang asal sa bata, magiging kaaya-aya pa din ang asal ng bata. Depende sa nag-aalaga at sa mga taong nasa paligid nito. Depende sa nababasa at nakikita nila. Naging kaugalian lang kase natin na ang nag-aalaga sa mga anak ay ina. Kaya naman kung hindi kaaya-aya ang ugali ng bata, ina na agad ang sinisisi – kesyo busy daw sa work ganyan – pero ang totoo, depende sa paligid/kapaligiran ng bata ang magiging ugali nito.



Isa pang halimbawa, ang nanay hindi marunong magbasa, hindi ibig sabihin na hindi rin marunong magbasa ang bata. May ama na pwedeng magturo," stated Danica (personal communication, 2017). (The behavior of the child reflects how you deal with them. It's just that our culture dictates that the mother should take care of the child which is why if the child has bad behavior we blame the mother immediately. But the truth is the child's behavior depends on the environment he/she is exposed with. Another example is that if the mother doesn't know how to read, it doesn't mean that the child cannot read too, because the father can teach him/her. In short my point is, every member of the household have important role in the personal development of a child, not just the mother.)

Mother-child relationship. Another concern is the emotional relationship with their children. The worst fear of the informants is not being recognized and be loved as the mother of their child which is even fuelled by having to battle for the child's attention. Informants had already observed that their children are becoming much closer to the one they spend more time with regardless of who. For instance, one informant shared that sometimes, she feels envious of the attention her child gives to her husband since it is her husband who takes care of their children while she is at work. Their children seems to be much closer to her husband than her, as their mother.

Another mother also expressed her worries on this issue. She shared that her first child is much close to her father compared to her. When she gets home, the child still looks for her father even if she seeks her attention. She has just given birth a months ago and her current setup makes her upset at times.

"My 6-month old son is closer to me than his father because I am the one who takes care of him, however, my first child is very close to her father, sometimes I think she does not need me anymore since he has his father taking care of her. Maybe in the future, my 6-month old son would also get closer to his father like his sister when he grows older". – Monica (personal communication, 2017)

To cope up with this, these mothers would seize every opportunity to spend quality time with their children; as they say make up with the lost time, *'bumawi sa anak'* even in simplest ways. For one, they would tag along their children with them to run errands or to meet up with friends. These simple ways give them a bit of assurance of being recognize and be loved by their children.

Challenges on Marriage. Another major theme that the study tried to capture is the marriage aspect of the couples. The testimonies of working mothers are diverse pointing out the real conditions and arranged structures of the family. Results showed that their working set-up is not just detrimental to the mother-child relationship but also to their marriage.

Majority (13) of the mothers believed that they do not have ample time together with their husband. Take note that three (3) respondents are not married and/or separated, thus, this concern is not applicable to them. Two scenarios has to be considered here: one is that the husband is working overseas; and second, most of them feel exhausted at the end of the day. In the first scenario, one informant explained that they bridge the distance through chat or video call. However, in most instances, the communication fails due to difference in time zone. Either one has a dwindling energy to talk because the husband calls at day time in his time zone, while she is already at bed thinking of sleep since it is past midnight or vice versa. Another working mother admits that there were times she cannot file a leave to be with her husband when he comes home from working overseas. She wanted to take the chance while her husband is with them even for a short period before he returns abroad.

In the second scenario, working mothers are most often already tired at the end of the day. One informant stated that her husband complains whenever she cannot show enough attention or affection to her husband after her work since she is already exhausted and just wanted to lie down, sleep and not be disturbed. Almost half of the informants admit that the issue of not having enough time together with their husband is real and usually these problems are not being discussed immediately. Nonetheless, it was expressed that 'if they have time together, they make sure that they would have quality



bonding time as a family.' For some, they are always with their children but they are quick to claim that these do not create any issue.

"Homebody talaga ang asawa ko, hindi siya mabarkada, minsan ako ang nagsasabi na mamasyal naman tayo. Pero gusto talaga niya na apat kami na magkakasama, dapat andoon ang mga bata kung manonood kami ng sine o lalabas. Kapag dalawa lang kami sa Baguio ay gusto maglakad-lakad o mamasyal na dalawa lang kami, iisipin niya yung mga bata na naiwan, ganun siya." (My husband is a homebody. His does not go out with his friends. Sometimes when I invite him to go out like to watch a movie or just stroll around, he always insists that we go out together with our children. When we stroll around Baguio, he always thinks about our children we left at home.) – Hana (personal communication, 2017)

Another informant whose husband is working overseas says, *"...that we know we have to be emotionally strong which is what my husband always says. This consoles me and in turn I console him if he needed it."*

The other nine (9) informants claimed that they spent ample time together with their spouse as supported by their outlooks in life and identifying their priorities. *"I just focus on him while I am at home even if I am supposed to rest or read for my subjects,"* explained by one informant. Another working mother explained that, *"I believe that work is not everything, that there is life after office hours. I try to leave the office on time to spend more time with my husband and baby."* In another case, one informant chose to sacrifice her graduate studies to make sure that she has time with her husband.

The mindset, attitude, and maturity of the husband is also highly influential in managing their marriage life. Having a supportive and understanding husband as well as open communication between the couple are the keys in maintaining and improving good marriage. These results showed that the highly traditional patriarchal authority culture is still practiced by Filipinos, but with the mother working, it is shifting to a more egalitarian and consultative families. She becomes highly influential in making big decisions in family matters, her opinions

and suggestions are important and are being considered. This is opposite of the old traditional thinking that women have no opportunity to be heard and voice out their opinions, predicaments, and perceptions of things.

No proper time for self. The study also documented the "me-time" of the working mothers. These mothers are already struggling between work and family, however, there is also "the self" that they have to think of. But basing on their responses, it is not new to find that many of the informants neglect their own needs and put themselves at the bottom of their priorities. This even includes sacrificing the idea of pursuing graduate studies, *"when I become a mother, I already gave up the idea of getting a bar exam,"* stated Pia (personal communication, 2017). For some of the informants, pursuing advanced higher education already means lesser time for the family. The time distribution of the working mothers is already stretch, exceeding 24 hours a day. The inclusion of another activity in her time distribution means she has to deduct time spent from other activities; most probably, time spent for the family, and "the self". Their time distribution already showed that on average, they could only allot 2 hours a day for themselves which includes preparing for work, changing clothes, maintaining hygiene, and such, and these interval are not always spent on relaxation and luxury. Moreover, this 'alone time' is also done simultaneously along with the other duties. The time spent for 'social related activities', which is an hour and 28 minutes, is actually spent at workplace with their co-workers during breaks. Additionally, 96% of the informants are also working overtime during weekends and holidays. Whatever time left during weekends and holidays are spent with the family.

Work Issues. When the informants were asked on certain situations in their workplace, all situations were rated as 'slightly to moderately agree' with job flexibility to meet both needs of work and personal life having the highest average rating (Table 4). Though the informants have supportive and understanding supervisors and co-workers, they still have reservations when asking 'favors' such as work leave and tagging their children with them. Sympathetic colleagues at work would lead to flexible time to fetch their child during office hours and being tardy in unexpected circumstances.



Table 4

Workplace Factors Affecting Work-life Balance of Working Mothers

Workplace Factors	Average	Descriptive Equivalent
My job gives me flexibility to meet the needs of both my work and personal life	4.8	Moderately Agree
I feel comfortable asking for a time off for family emergencies or events	4.75	Moderately Agree
My organization supports the lifestyle I desire as a working mother	4.56	Moderately Agree
Considering the value I bring to the organization, I feel I am paid fairly	4.12	Slightly Agree
The University helps me balance my work responsibilities with my personal life	4.0	Slightly Agree

Scale adopted from Kugler (2015):

5.50-6.00 = Strongly agree;

4.50-5.49 = Moderately agree

3.50-4.49 = Slightly agree

2.50-3.49 = Slightly agree

1.50-2.49 = Moderately agree

1.00-1.49 = Strongly disagree

The workplace is another important variable in the study. Informants were asked about how they locate themselves in the university vis-a-vis their condition as working mothers with very young children. About 68% of the informants claimed that their contributions to the university are being valued. However, each informants have different perspective on the word 'valued' but it may seem that most of them said 'yes'. As used in this study, the definition of the term 'valued' varies from monetary incentives to high performance rating to sympathetic understanding by the supervisors on the working mother's situation. Interestingly, there are also informants who feel valued just by being paid by the university.

However, the other six (6) informants outrightly said that they are not being valued. This most due to lack of support and motivation from the University. According to one, being a non-permanent employee, she does not feel any support from the university in terms of encouragement or motivation. Likewise, another one confessed that she did not feel valued by the university because she did not receive support to continue her higher academic study.

Work-life balance. From these accounts, one can already draw a clear picture of the daily lives of these mothers. When asked if they have a balanced work-life, 68% claimed affirmative but

16% claimed otherwise. This, however, should be noted to be based solely on the mothers' understanding of the term 'work-life balance'. But if their situation is assessed from an 'outsiders' point of view, these mothers clearly do not have a well-balanced work-life. Rendon (1991) claimed that work-life balance is achieved when there is a good relationship between work and family.

The informants were also asked to rank the factors that contribute in the attainment of their work-life balance (Table 5). Results showed that support from family members is the most important factor while more flexible hours in terms of work and support from their supervisors/colleagues comes 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

Coping Mechanism of Working Mothers

With the abovementioned challenges encountered by working mothers, several coping mechanisms are being adopted to help them in situations where they are unable to attend to their child or families need due to work. These include the following: ^(a) making sure they spend quality time with the family; ^(b) getting used with the situation with positive attitude and mindset; ^(c) having 'alone time' and performing interests and hobbies; ^(d) support from supervisors and co-workers; ^(e) emotional and child care support from relatives and husband; and, ^(f) spouse taking part in childcare



Table 5

Important Factors in Balancing Work and Life

Factors	Average	Rank
Time off during school holidays	4.36	6
Work at home	4.14	5
Time off during emergencies and events	3.65	4
Support from supervisors/colleagues	3.57	3
More flexible hours	3.00	2
Support from family members	2.13	1

and household responsibilities. Except single parents and those with husbands working overseas, almost all of the informants stated that their husbands are taking part in the childcare while they are away and are taking part in household concerns. Those with unemployed husbands, childcare and household concerns are the husband's main role. One respondent said, "*Hindi kami naniniwala sa gender stereotype na kapag babae siya dapat ang mag-alaga at gumawa ng gawaing bahay. Siya din gumagawa ng mga household chores para maka-contribute siya while ako nagtatrabaho sa amin*" (We don't believe in gender stereotype wherein females are to take care of the children and do the household chores. To help, he also do household chores while I am at work.) Another informant said, "*when he is at home, he is the one who cares for our baby. If not, he is the one who does the household works like cooking, washing clothes and washing dishes.*" However, two informants claimed that their husbands do not take part household chores because they are also engaged in paid labor. This shows that after coming home from work, child care and household concerns are passed on to the wife; making the juggling of schedule and obligation at home exhausting.

Filing for a leave for a day or several days is another mechanism. This can not be avoided since 'care' role is still largely handled by mothers.

Support Mechanism Provided and Needed by Working Mothers in BSU

As of now, the informants observed no parenting support from the university aside from the maternity and special privilege leave they receive in a year. However, some are still reluctant to take leave. From all the stories and experiences

of these working mothers, the following are recommended which they believe could help and lessen the struggles of being a working mother in the university.

Child Minding Center. All of the respondents agreed that a child minding center within the University premise would be greatly beneficial not only for them but also for the student mothers. The principle of the system is to leave the child to a childminder who could be a mother or a trained person for the task. Childminders are defined by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) (2010) as "a person who is registered to look after one or more children to whom they are not related on domestic premises for reward".

One respondent claimed that it will be best if a child minding center be put up in the University so that she will not be distracted at work and will be at ease since she can just check the child during her break time. It would also reduce their absenteeism and will be more optimistic and productive at work. Another respondent observed that it is common for employees to bring their child in their offices which make them less productive since they have to do two tasks at a time – their work and looking after the child.

"Kadaming bata sa opisina. Pagkagaling nila sa school ay ginugulo nila ang table ng mga magulang nila. Lahat na lang ng nakikita nila ikinakalat nila. Ang iba naman dahil walang palaruan ay sa opisina sila naghahabulan at nagiging maingay sila kaya tuloy napapagalitan pa." (Children are all-over the offices. After school, they are playing on the working table of their parents and some are running and shouting on the offices that makes



their parents scold them" – Pat (personal communication, 2018)

In addition, all of the informants are willing to pay minimal amount whenever the child minding center will materialize. However, it should be lower than the prices of day care centers around the area. Also, they are willing to let students do the task as long as there is one or two permanent supervisor to oversee the operation.

Decrease Work Hours or Flexible Working Hours. Another recommendation by working mothers is to decrease the working hours wherein employees will work only 4 times a week of regular working hours or have flexible working hours where employees will work 10 hours a day from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. 4 times a week. At the moment, the House Bill No. 6152 or the compressed work week addressing this concern has been transmitted to the Senate for reading.

No activities during holidays. University activities should not be scheduled during holidays to make sure that there will be rest days for the working mothers.

Programs for mothers. The university should conduct trainings and activities that are related to parenting and balancing-life and work.

Additional leave credits. There should be an additional leave credits from the original leave credits. Also, the 78 days leave for caesarean should be implemented with proper orientation on maternity leaves.

"If may buntis, bago mag maternity leave or mapirmahan ang clearance i-orient sila sa mga anung dapat gawin after giving birth before going back to work at rights while working. Hindi ko alam na may 40 minutes break pala para pwede magpasusu buti nalang mabait si boss naalala niya 1 month after ako magreport". (Before a pregnant will go on a maternity leave or sign the clearance, there should be an orientation or reminder on what to do if they return to work. I don't know that there is a 40 minutes break rule for mothers that I can use to breastfeed my child. I'm glad that my boss reminded me of the policy a month after I reported.)
– Mina (personal communication, 2017)

At present, an increase of maternity leave in the Philippines has been proposed. House Bill 4113 and Senate 1305 or the "105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Law propose to increase the maternity leave period to one hundred five (105) days for female workers in the government service and in the private sector and grants an option to extend for an additional maternity leave of thirty (30) days without pay.

Retain lactation period and Enhance breastfeeding policies. The university has the 30-minute break each in the morning and the afternoon for lactation, which is good and needs to be maintained although some would like it to be extended to 1 hour. This is to give ample time for traveling to and from the office. The university also has a breastfeeding/lactation room which was located before beside the University of Business Affairs Office and now transferred at the administration building. It has also a refrigerator where breastmilk can be stocked, however, this facility is known only to employees working in the administration building. As explained by one working mother, *"May facility tayo pero hindi alam ng marami mas lalo ang teaching sector. Dahil siguro din sa malawak ang university at tago ang area."* (We have a facility but others don't know it especially in the teaching sector maybe because the area is far and not easily seen.) This then resulted into certain comments of respondents who are not aware of this facility, *"Sana may pwede kami pag-pump an para hindi kami nag pa-pump sa bodega or comfort room. Sana may refrigerator na pwede kami magstock ng breastmilk."* (I wish that there is an area where we can pump milk comfortably instead of doing it in the stock room or comfort room. Also, there should be refrigerator for us to stock the breastmilk.)

A widespread information dissemination about the existence of the lactating/breastfeeding room should be conducted. There is no use of having such facility in the university if most lactating mothers are not aware of it.



Conclusions

Financial needs and personal development are the leading factors why working mothers engage in paid labor. Performing simultaneous tasks and stretching their time to accommodate all their roles are very common among them. Relative care is still the most preferred and trusted means of childcare. Support from relatives, supervisors, and colleagues as well as flexible working hours are perceived to help improve the work-life balance of these working mothers. There is no visible parenting support coming from the university.

Recommendations

Putting up a child minding center in the university is seen by these working mothers as a significant help. Nonetheless, these working mothers still claim that they have work-life balance through time management. An enhancement of the flexible working hours policy be reviewed such that it does not require replacement of time use for child care for the working mothers should be considered by the university.

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