

Exploring the Work–Life Balance of Elementary Educator-Mothers in the Second and Third Districts of Masbate

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Abstract

This study examined the work–life balance of elementary educator-mothers in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts, focusing on their management practices, influencing factors, and encountered challenges. Anchored on Role Theory, Work–Family Border Theory, and Conservation of Resources Theory, the research employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational design. Data were collected from 47 educator-mothers through a validated researcher-made questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, weighted mean) and inferential analysis (Pearson r at 0.05 level of significance) were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that most respondents were married, aged 26–30, pursuing master’s degree units, and had 6–10 years of teaching experience. The respondents demonstrated strong work–life balance practices, particularly in time management, coping strategies, involvement in school-related activities, and participation in family responsibilities. Despite these strengths, they experienced significant challenges, including workload demands, conflicts between school and family responsibilities, financial pressures, limited personal time, and feelings of exhaustion. The study also found a weak but statistically significant relationship between demographic profile and perceived work–life balance, indicating that demographic factors slightly influence role management. The study concludes that while educator-mothers effectively manage their dual roles through adaptive strategies, institutional and contextual challenges persist. It recommends enhanced institutional support, including manageable workloads, wellness programs, flexible arrangements, and policies responsive to teachers’ demographic conditions. This study aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by addressing teacher well-being, gendered role expectations, and working conditions in the education sector. It contributes to sustainability by informing institutional and educational practices that support teacher welfare, improve instructional quality, and promote balanced socio-economic roles among working mothers.

Keywords: Coping Strategies; Demographic Profile; Educator-Mothers; Work–Life Balance; Workload; Role Conflict

1. Introduction

Work–life balance is a critical concern among educator-mothers who simultaneously manage professional teaching responsibilities and family roles. Increasing workload, role conflict, and socio-cultural expectations intensify the challenge of maintaining balance. This study examines how elementary educator-mothers in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts manage work–life balance, the factors influencing it, and the challenges they encounter.

1.1 Work–Life Balance among Elementary Educator-Mothers in Masbate: Background and Influencing Factors

Work–life balance refers to the ability to effectively manage work and family demands while maintaining well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2021). In teaching, responsibilities such as lesson preparation, assessment, administrative tasks, and extracurricular involvement increase work demands, often leading to role conflict (Allen, French, Dumani, & Shockley, 2020). Demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, educational attainment, and teaching experience influence teachers’ ability to manage responsibilities. The Job Demands–Resources framework explains that personal and work-related factors affect coping capacity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2022). Studies show that younger teachers and those with caregiving roles experience greater stress and work–family conflict (Aguinaldo & Ballesteros, 2021). Effective time management and coping strategies are essential in maintaining balance. Structured scheduling and clear boundaries improve productivity and well-being (Kim & Asbury, 2020), while support systems and emotional regulation help manage stress (Simbulan & Bautista, 2022). However, workload demands, including administrative and extracurricular tasks, extend working hours and reduce personal time (UNESCO, 2023; DepEd, 2022). Family responsibilities further intensify challenges, as women often bear primary caregiving roles (Craig & Churchill, 2021), leading to emotional and physical strain (Adisa, Aiyenitaju, & Adekoya, 2021). High workload and limited institutional support contribute to burnout and stress (Collie, 2021; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020).

1.2 Work–Life Balance Management Strategies and Influencing Variables among Educator-Mothers

Literature consistently identifies key factors influencing work–life balance among educator-mothers: time management, coping strategies, workload, family responsibilities, demographic characteristics, and institutional support. Time management reduces stress and improves balance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Dizon, 2021), while boundary-setting enhances well-being (Wang et al., 2021). Coping strategies such as emotional regulation, social support, and resilience are critical in managing stress (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Labrague, 2020). Workload remains a major challenge due to administrative tasks and extended hours (OECD, 2020; Viac & Fraser, 2020; PIDS, 2019). This often leads to burnout and reduced job satisfaction (Toropova et al., 2021). Family responsibilities, particularly among women, intensify work–family conflict due to unequal distribution of household labor (Shockley et al., 2021; Reyes, 2021). Cultural expectations further amplify these challenges in the Philippine context (Garcia & Torres, 2022). Organizational support, including leadership and policies, plays a crucial role in improving teacher well-being (Kraft et al., 2020; Bernardo et al., 2020). Demographic factors also shape experiences, with younger or less experienced teachers facing greater difficulty (Klassen & Chiu, 2021; Alon & Camello, 2021).

1.3 Work–Life Balance of Educator-Mothers in Global, Philippine, and Masbate Contexts

Globally, teachers experience increasing workload, emotional demands, and role conflict, intensified by recent educational transitions and pandemic-related challenges (UNESCO, 2021; WHO, 2022). These conditions contribute to stress, burnout, and work–life imbalance. Nationally, Filipino teachers face similar challenges, including heavy administrative workload and extended responsibilities (DepEd, 2023; PIDS, 2021). Cultural expectations place additional pressure on women to fulfill caregiving roles, intensifying work–family conflict (Tuason et al., 2019). Locally, in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts, educator-mothers operate within resource-constrained and rural settings, where institutional support and access to resources may be limited. These contextual factors highlight the need to examine work–life balance within this specific environment.

1.4 Theoretical Foundations of Work–Life Balance among Elementary Educator-Mothers

This study is anchored on three theories. Role Theory (Merton, 1957) explains that individuals perform multiple roles with competing demands, leading to role conflict. This is evident among educator-mothers balancing teaching and family responsibilities. Work–Family Border Theory (Clark, 2000) emphasizes managing boundaries between work and family domains through strategies such as scheduling and prioritization. Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) explains that stress occurs when resources such as time and energy are threatened, and individuals use coping strategies to conserve them. Together, these theories explain how educator-mothers manage roles, boundaries, and resources to achieve work–life balance.

1.5 Research Gaps on Work–Life Balance among Rural Elementary Educator-Mothers in Masbate

Existing studies highlight the challenges of work–life balance among teachers; however, limited research focuses on elementary educator-mothers in rural Philippine settings such as Masbate. While literature identifies key factors such as workload, coping strategies, and demographic influences, there is insufficient context-specific evidence on how these variables interact in local environments. Findings suggest that although educator-mothers employ effective strategies, they still experience challenges such as workload, time constraints, and role conflict. The observed relationship between demographic characteristics and work–life balance remains underexplored, particularly in localized contexts. This study addresses these gaps by examining the experiences of educator-mothers in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts.

1.6 SDG Alignment of Work–Life Balance among Educator-Mothers in the Education Sector

This study aligns with several SDGs. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) is supported by addressing stress, burnout, and mental health among teachers. SDG 4 (Quality Education) is addressed by improving teacher well-being, which directly influences teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is relevant as the study highlights gendered responsibilities and challenges faced by educator-mothers. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is reflected in promoting healthier working conditions and work–life balance for educators.

1.7 Multidisciplinary Sustainability Contributions of Work–Life Balance among Educator-Mothers

This study contributes to socio-economic, educational, and institutional sustainability. It supports educational sustainability by improving teacher well-being, which enhances instructional quality and student outcomes. It contributes to socio-economic sustainability by promoting balanced roles for working mothers, improving productivity and family well-being. It also strengthens institutional sustainability by informing policies that reduce workload and improve support systems for teachers. Overall, the study provides evidence-based insights that can guide policy development, workplace practices, and support mechanisms to promote sustainable work–life balance among educator-mothers.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational research design to examine the work–life balance of elementary educator-mothers. The descriptive component focused on identifying the respondents’ demographic profile in terms of age, civil status, educational attainment, teaching experience, and teaching assignment or grade level, as well as describing how they manage work–life balance through time management, coping strategies, involvement in school-related activities, and participation in family and household responsibilities. It also identified the challenges encountered in achieving work–life balance. The correlational component determined whether a significant relationship exists between the respondents’ demographic profile and their perceived level of work–life balance. This allowed analysis of how demographic factors relate to variations in managing professional and personal responsibilities. Quantitative descriptive and correlational designs are appropriate for describing existing conditions and examining relationships among variables without manipulation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Ary et al., 2019). This design enabled objective data collection and statistical analysis to generate empirical evidence relevant to teacher well-being and policy development.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts, located in the Province of Masbate in Region V (Bicol Region), Philippines. Masbate is an island province situated near the center of the Philippine archipelago, composed of several municipalities and characterized by both urban and rural communities. The selected districts include public elementary schools where educator-mothers are employed, providing a relevant setting for examining work–life balance within a specific educational and socio-cultural context.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 47 elementary educator-mothers teaching in public elementary schools in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts. They were currently employed teachers who also had active family responsibilities. Their inclusion ensured that the study captured authentic experiences related to balancing teaching duties and motherhood.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized census or total population sampling, wherein all qualified elementary educator-mothers in the identified districts were included. Census sampling enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling error when the population is manageable and accessible (International Journal of Science and Research, 2022). All 47 identified respondents participated in the study, resulting in a 100% retrieval rate of questionnaires. This complete enumeration strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings by ensuring that the data reflected the entire population under study and minimized sampling bias.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, researcher-made survey questionnaire developed based on the study objectives, related literature, and relevant frameworks on work–life balance and teacher well-being. The instrument was organized into three main parts: the first gathered demographic information; the second measured work–life balance management in terms of time management, coping strategies, involvement in school-related activities, and participation in family and household responsibilities; and the third identified challenges encountered by educator-mothers. A four-point Likert scale was used to quantify responses, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to administration, the instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Revisions were made based on feedback to improve the structure and wording of the questionnaire. The structured format ensured consistency, objectivity, and suitability for statistical analysis.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a systematic procedure. Initially, the research proposal was developed and approved, followed by the construction and validation of the research instrument. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Masbate Province. After approval, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents, providing clear instructions to ensure accurate responses. All questionnaires were retrieved on the same day, ensuring completeness of data. The collected responses were then encoded, organized, and prepared for statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. The weighted mean was applied to determine the level of work–life balance practices and challenges encountered. Pearson product–moment correlation (Pearson r) was used to determine the significant relationship between the respondents’ demographic profile and their perceived level of work–life

balance. All statistical analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of Elementary Educator-Mothers

3.1.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

The results show that most respondents were aged 26–30 years, followed by those aged 31–35 years and 41 years and above, while a smaller proportion belonged to the 36–40 age group and none were aged 20–25. This indicates that the majority are in early to mid-adulthood. This age distribution suggests that respondents are in a stage characterized by professional stability and active engagement in responsibilities. This finding is supported by Day et al. (2017), who noted that teachers in this stage are typically more stable and motivated, and by Huberman (1995), who explained that early- to mid-career teachers demonstrate increased competence and commitment.

3.1.2 Civil Status of Respondents

The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were married, with only a small number being single or separated, and none widowed. This indicates that most respondents have established family responsibilities, which may influence their work–life balance. This is consistent with Greenhaus and Powell (2017), who emphasized that married individuals often experience greater family demands affecting their work–life balance and decision-making.

3.1.3 Educational Attainment of Respondents

The results indicate that most respondents had earned units in a master's degree, followed by bachelor's degree holders, with only a few completing master's or doctoral degrees. This suggests a strong inclination toward professional development and continuous learning. This finding aligns with Department of Education (DepEd, 2020), which promotes graduate education among teachers, and OECD (2019), which highlighted that advanced studies enhance instructional competence and career growth.

3.1.4 Teaching Experience of Respondents

The findings show that most respondents had 6–10 years of teaching experience, followed by those with 11–15 years and more than 16 years, while only a few had less than five years. This indicates that most respondents are in their mid-career stage, having developed competence and familiarity with teaching roles. This is supported by Huberman (2015), who described this stage as a period of stabilization, and OECD (2019), which reported that mid-career teachers demonstrate higher effectiveness and adaptability.

3.1.5 Teaching Assignment or Grade Level

The results show that most respondents were assigned to Grade 6, followed by Kinder, with fewer assigned to other grade levels and none in Day Care. This suggests that respondents handle diverse developmental levels requiring varied teaching strategies. This is supported by UNESCO (2021), which emphasized adapting teaching strategies based on learners' stages, and Piaget (2016), who explained the need for differentiated instruction across developmental levels.

3.2 Work–Life Balance Management Practices of Educator-Mothers

3.2.1 Time Management between Teaching and Childcare

The findings indicate that respondents strongly practice time management strategies, particularly in planning daily schedules, prioritizing tasks, balancing responsibilities, and allocating time for family activities, although some expressed only moderate agreement in having sufficient time for both roles. This demonstrates effective organization and prioritization of responsibilities. The results support Greenhaus and Allen (2015), who emphasized that structured scheduling and role prioritization are essential in achieving work–life balance among working parents.

3.2.2 Coping Strategies for Stress and Workload

The results show that respondents strongly utilize coping strategies, particularly maintaining a positive mindset, organizing tasks, practicing stress-relief techniques, seeking support, and taking breaks. This indicates resilience and effective stress management among educator-mothers. The findings are supported by Lazarus and Folkman (2016), who explained that both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies help individuals manage stress effectively.

3.2.3 Involvement in School-Related Activities

The findings reveal that respondents are highly involved in school-related activities, including attending meetings, collaborating with colleagues, and participating in programs, while still attempting to balance family responsibilities. This suggests strong professional commitment despite competing roles. This aligns with Day et al. (2017), who stated that committed teachers actively engage in school activities to improve student outcomes.

3.2.4 Participation in Family and Household Responsibilities

The results indicate that respondents strongly participate in family responsibilities, particularly in decision-making for their children, sharing household tasks, and maintaining family bonding. This reflects active engagement in family roles alongside professional responsibilities. This finding is supported by Clark (2000), who emphasized that individuals maintain work–life balance by actively managing both work and family domains through boundary-setting strategies.

3.3 Challenges Affecting Work–Life Balance of Educator-Mothers

The findings show that respondents strongly experience multiple challenges, particularly conflicts between school activities and family events, heavy workload, financial pressures, and interference of school demands with family responsibilities. Other challenges include limited personal time, exhaustion, lack of support, and feelings of being overwhelmed, although childcare affecting teaching focus was rated slightly lower. These results indicate that educator-mothers face significant dual-role pressures. This is supported by Hochschild (2016), who described the “second shift” experienced by working mothers, and UNESCO (2021), which reported that workload stress and role conflict negatively affect teachers’ well-being.

3.4 Relationship Between Demographic Profile and Work–Life Balance

The findings reveal a weak but significant positive relationship between demographic profile and perceived work–life balance, indicating that changes in demographic factors slightly influence how respondents perceive and manage balance. This suggests that while demographic variables play a role, they are not the sole determinants of work–life balance. This is supported by Voydanoff (2015), who found that demographic factors such as age and family structure influence role management, though other factors also contribute to overall balance.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that most elementary educator-mothers in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts were married, aged 26–30 years old, pursuing master’s degree units, and had 6–10 years of teaching experience, with many assigned to Grade 6 and Kinder. The respondents strongly demonstrated effective work–life balance through time management, coping strategies, active participation in school-related activities, and engagement in family and household responsibilities. Despite these positive practices, they also experienced significant challenges, including conflicts between school programs and family events, heavy workload, financial pressures, limited personal time, and overlapping responsibilities. Furthermore, the findings revealed a weak but statistically significant relationship between demographic profile and perceived work–life balance, indicating that demographic factors slightly influence how educator-mothers manage and perceive their professional and personal roles.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school administrators consider teachers’ demographic characteristics when designing programs and support systems, particularly for educator-mothers in early to mid-career stages. Teachers should continue practicing effective time management and coping strategies, while schools may provide seminars, wellness programs, and professional development opportunities to strengthen work–life balance. Institutional support should be enhanced through manageable workloads, supportive environments, flexible arrangements, and family-friendly policies. Additionally, future programs and policies on teacher welfare should be aligned with demographic factors to better address the specific needs of educator-mothers in balancing their professional and family responsibilities.

The study is limited to 47 elementary educator-mothers in Masbate’s Second and Third Districts during the School Year 2024–2025, focusing only on selected demographic variables, work–life balance practices, and challenges. It does not include teachers from other regions, non-mothers, or private school educators, and does not directly measure other influencing factors such as socio-economic status, organizational policies, or psychological well-being; therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable beyond the study context.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with the procedures described in the research methodology. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Masbate Province prior to data collection, and the research involved the administration of a structured questionnaire to elementary educator-mothers within the identified districts.

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