Work-family conflict among women in higher learning institutions in Malawi: A case study of Malawi University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated work-family conflict among women in leadership positions at the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). Work-family conflict in higher learning institutions can be understood within the social work framework, as it encompasses the intersectionality of professional responsibilities and personal obligations. The demands from the work domain and family domain may create burnout, including fatigue, and loss of focus, hence rendering one domain suffer at the expense of fulfilling the demands of the other domain, affecting employees' social life and welfare. Recently, the Malawi government has emphasised the need to empower women by appointing them to different leadership positions, and the Malawi University of Science and Technology in its quest to respond to women empowerment has seen more women assuming different leadership positions within the institution. The study used a qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews guided by an interview guide. The study found that women in leadership positions face multiple challenges including burnout and fatigue as the demands of work subsume the family demands. The study recommended that the working policy at the institution should be realigned thereby taking into account the wellness and mental health of women in leadership positions.

Keywords: burnout, higher-learning institution, leadership, social life, welfare, work-family

Introduction
Working in higher-learning institutions is one of the social and human service work, and is frequently depicted as demanding and stressful (Lambert, Pasupuleti, Cluse-Tolar, Jennings & Baker, 2006). Among various stressors, role conflict and role ambiguity have received considerable attention, especially concerning job satisfaction among social and human service staff. In contemporary societies, women are found in careers such as medicine, teaching, law, and administration among others, which were traditionally reserved for men, hence broadening women's social life and promoting the welfare of their families (Cohen & Liani, 2009). Within the education sector, the participation

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of women in the academic workforce has increased significantly as women provide support for their families alongside their husbands (Grady & McCarthy, 2008). Further, women's involvement in the education sector contributes to their families' income, hence mitigating the social welfare of their families (Markwei, Kubi, Quao & Attiogbe 2018).

The notion of work-family conflict has been discussed by different theorists, taking different standpoints. For instance, in their analysis of work-family conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) theorised that work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually non-compatible in some respect. Further, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that work-family conflict occurs when participation in the work or family role is made more difficult by participation in the family or work role. Within the realm of social life and social work, the framework proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) presents a valuable lens through which to understand this phenomenon as it highlights the inherent challenges faced by women who strive to balance their roles in the workforce and within their families. When one domain demands greater attention or resources, it often comes at the expense of the other, leading to a conflict that can impact both personal and professional spheres.

Ajala's (2017) examination of inter-role conflict further underscores the significance of this issue, revealing a growing concern over the challenges faced by employees as they navigate the competing demands of work and family roles. Also, Duxbury and Higgins (1991), looked at work-family conflict through a gender perspective and highlighted the experiences from both male and female managers and professionals. In their study, Duxbury and Higgins revealed that society's perceptions of the work domain as being more important for men, and family as being the domain for women, have prevented the redistribution of family responsibilities causing employed women to become overburdened. Further, a study by Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991), revealed that the more number of hours spent in a domain (work or family) may result in more conflict in the other area, and they also found an effect of gender roles in their study as women reported greater work interferes-with-family conflict relative to men, even though women spent the same amount of time in paid work as men.

According to Lee and Phillips (2006), work-family conflict is associated with poorer marital adjustment for dual-career couples. However, this effect is mediated by perceived spousal social support and fairness in distributing household duties. Lee and Phillips (2006), further noted that compared to men, women reported a stronger negative association between marital/family stress as well as lack of spousal support and career satisfaction. Similarly, Grandey, Cordeiro and Michael (2007), found that work interfering with family had a

negative association with job satisfaction while controlling for family, personal, and job characteristics in a cross-sectional sample of men and women. However, in their analysis of longitudinal data, Grandey, Cordeiro and Michael (2007), found that work interfering with family predicted negative job satisfaction for women, but not for men.

Voydanoff (2004), examined the role of organisational support and reported that work-family was positively associated with time and strain-based work demands, organisational policies that were supportive of family needs tended to lower work-family conflict. That is, the role of organisations (working institutions) in helping workers to balance their work and family demands has been revealed as paramount. Organisations are key in helping workers to lessen work and family conflicts.

Work-family conflict (WFC) is proposed to be a significant determinant in shaping both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. According to Locke (1976), job satisfaction is a positive or pleasurable emotional state resulting from the evaluation of one's job or job experiences. It is essentially the emotional response of an employee towards their specific role within an organisation, which is influenced by their comparison of actual outcomes with expected, desired, fair, or just outcomes (Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992). Organisational commitment, on the other hand, is generally characterised by loyalty to the organization, identification with its goals, and active involvement in its activities (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). It represents a deep connection with the entire organisation, extending beyond individual job roles or work groups. Nevertheless, work-family conflict experiences might vary due to differences in cultural values, policies, employment opportunities, and family structures. Thus, participation in work and family roles might have different meanings and implications for individuals in different societies (Bagger, Li & Gutek, 2008; Bagger & Li, 2012; Carr, Boyar, & Gregory, 2008; Yang, 2005).

Work-family conflict can profoundly impact women's social lives, introducing various challenges and disruptions to their relationships and social well-being (Stier, Lewin-Epstein & Braun, 2012). Juggling the demands of career responsibilities alongside obligations to family and household duties can leave women with limited time and energy for social interactions. As a result, they may experience decreased participation in social activities, reduced availability for friendships, and difficulty maintaining connections with their broader social networks. The strain of managing multiple roles can also lead to feelings of isolation, as women may find themselves withdrawing from social engagements to prioritise essential tasks and manage stress. Additionally, work-family conflict can strain relationships with partners, friends, and extended family members, as women navigate competing demands and struggle to fulfill social commitments (Brough & Kelling, 2002).

Also, working women may battle between the demands of work and family. When work and family demands are not compatible, conflict occurs between the two domains (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008). As a result of conflict, consequences are reflected in both organisation and domestic life, including social life. For instance, in the work domain time is a limited resource, and such conflict means disillusionment; dissatisfaction and strained relations; lower standard of work performance; and disregard of organisational goals. Meaning that greater time committed to work detracts from the amount of time available for the family domain (Ajala, 2017; Asiedu, Annor, Amponsah-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah, 2018).

Work-family conflict in higher learning institutions within the social work framework encompasses the intersectionality of professional responsibilities and personal obligations within a broader societal context (Kalliath, Hughes & Newcombe, 2012). In academia, employees often face demanding workloads, long hours, and high expectations for research, teaching, and administrative duties. Within the context of higher learning institutions, where the pursuit of knowledge and advancement intersects with the complexities of work-family conflict, the principles of social work add significance as they emphasise the importance of addressing systemic barriers to social justice and promoting individual and family well-being (Openshaw, 2008). Thus, the recognition of work-family conflict as a pervasive issue among faculty and staff within academia aligns closely with social work's emphasis on addressing the structural and institutional factors that perpetuate inequality and hinder well-being. As such, acknowledging the challenges faced by individuals juggling academic responsibilities with family obligations, higher learning institutions can apply a social work lens to develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms. This involves not only implementing policies that promote work-life balance and flexible work arrangements but also fostering a culture of inclusivity and understanding that values the diverse experiences and needs of faculty and staff. Moreover, by prioritising the well-being of individuals and families within the academic community, higher learning institutions can demonstrate a commitment to upholding the principles of social justice and equity in all aspects of their operations.

Since Malawi gained democracy in 1994, the government has emphasised women's empowerment and encouraged that to take various leadership positions in various sectors of the government as well as private sectors, as a means of promoting the social welfare of women in the country. As a response to this call, various institutions have been promoting women to take leadership positions such as Member of Parliament, Speaker of the National Assembly, administrative duties, and other office-demanding duty portfolios. The Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), in response to the call to

promote women into leadership positions, has seen an increase in the number of women taking different leadership positions within the institution such as Vice Chancellorship of the university, Deputy University Registrar, Head of Department(s), Liaison Officer, just to mention a few. Apart from these women having taken up leadership positions within the institution, they have family roles to play within their families as spouses.

Interrogating women's experiences at MUST about work-family conflict underpinned the philosophical investigation for this study. The researchers thought that understanding women's experiences is critical to have informed knowledge of what women face and the method should include listening to or interrogating women in leadership positions to fully understand their experiences. Furthermore, researchers observed that there is little or no research examining work-family conflict among women in leadership positions in Malawi, particularly women in higher learning institutions. Despite the recognised importance of understanding the interplay between work and family roles, the exploration of how these two domains can synergistically contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of women has not received extensive scholarly attention in higher learning institutions of Malawi. The researchers of this study, therefore, investigated work-family conflict among women in higher learning institutions in Malawi, using MUST as a case study area. Specifically, this study sought to: (i) explore the role salience of women in leadership positions at MUST, (ii) examine work-family enrichment among women in leadership positions, and (iii) identify strategies that can be put in place by MUST in addressing work-family conflict among women in leadership position.

Methodology
Research design
In conducting this study, researchers meticulously adhered to a well-defined methodology that guided every stage of the research process, from the initial collection of data to the final reporting of findings (Creswell & Clark, 2018). With a clear understanding of the research problem at hand, the researchers made deliberate decisions regarding the methodology, opting for a qualitative approach coupled with a case study research design. This methodological choice was driven by the recognition that a qualitative inquiry would afford a nuanced understanding of the complex experiences and perspectives of women occupying leadership positions (Ansah, 2020; Subedi, 2016).

The qualitative approach was deemed particularly suited for this study as it enabled researchers to delve deeply into the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by women in leadership roles. By adopting a qualitative lens, the researchers sought to move beyond surface-level observations and quantitative metrics, instead focusing on capturing the richness and depth of

participants' narratives. Moreover, the case study research design was selected to provide a holistic examination of the phenomenon within its real-life context, allowing for an exploration of the intricacies and contextual factors shaping women's experiences in leadership positions.

The rationale behind this methodological framework stemmed from the belief that interrogating women in leadership positions would yield valuable insights into the underlying dynamics and complexities of their roles. Drawing on existing literature and scholarly discourse (Ansah, 2020; Subedi, 2016), the researchers recognized the importance of centering the voices and experiences of women leaders in academia. Through qualitative inquiry and case study analysis, the study aimed to uncover the multifaceted nature of women's leadership experiences, shedding light on both the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to navigate the complexities of their roles. Overall, the methodological approach adopted in this study underscores a commitment to rigor, depth, and reflexivity in understanding the lived realities of women in leadership positions.

Study area, population, sample size, and sampling procedure
The selection of Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) as the study site was primarily based on convenience, driven by the accessibility and willingness of potential participants to engage in the research process. Given the logistical considerations and the availability of individuals fitting the desired criteria, conducting the study at MUST offered a practical and feasible approach to gathering data on the experiences of women in leadership positions. This approach facilitated efficient recruitment and data collection, streamlining the research process while ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives from within the institution.

The study population comprised women occupying leadership roles at MUST, reflecting the specific focus on exploring the experiences and challenges faced by this demographic group. By targeting women in leadership positions, the research aimed to gain insights into the unique dynamics and complexities inherent in balancing professional responsibilities with personal obligations within the context of academia. The deliberate selection of this population allowed for a nuanced examination of the intersecting factors influencing work-family balance and the implications for individual well-being and organizational dynamics.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit participants, with a deliberate emphasis on including women in leadership positions to ensure relevance and depth in data collection. This method enabled the researchers to select individuals who possessed the requisite knowledge, experiences, and perspectives relevant to the study objectives. By purposively targeting

participants based on their roles and responsibilities, the study sought to capture a diverse range of viewpoints and experiences, enriching the depth and validity of the findings.

In adherence to ethical principles and guidelines, the research obtained clearance from the Malawi University of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (MUSTREC), ensuring that the study adhered to established ethical standards and safeguarded the rights and well-being of participants. This ethical clearance underscored the researchers' commitment to conducting the study in an ethical and responsible manner, prioritizing the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, and privacy throughout the research process. The referenced ethical clearance number (P.05/2023/047) serves as a testament to the rigorous ethical oversight and compliance observed in the conduct of the study, instilling confidence in the integrity and credibility of the research outcomes.

Data collection procedure
In this study, a comprehensive data collection approach was employed, consisting of six (6) in-depth interviews conducted with six (6) key informants who are women holding leadership positions and are married. This purposive sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed relevant insights and experiences pertinent to the research focus. The utilization of in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method allowed for a deep exploration of participants' perspectives, providing rich and nuanced insights into their lived experiences (Smith, 2016).

Throughout the in-depth interviews, a dialogical approach was fostered to facilitate meaningful interactions and elicit detailed information from participants. This dialogical approach was characterized by open-ended questioning, active listening, and responsiveness to participants' narratives. Researchers skillfully engaged in dialogue with participants, probing for further information, seeking clarification, and requesting examples to elucidate key points related to the subject matter. By adopting a dialogical stance, researchers created a collaborative and dynamic environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and the co-construction of knowledge (Smith, 2016).

The dialogical nature of the interviews enabled participants to express themselves freely and reflect on their experiences in depth. Researchers actively encouraged participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and insights, fostering a sense of trust and rapport. This facilitated the emergence of rich, detailed accounts that captured the complexity and nuances of women's experiences in leadership positions while balancing marital responsibilities. Through iterative questioning and exploration guided by the interview guide, researchers ensured that all relevant aspects of the research topic were

thoroughly explored, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

By adhering to the principles of dialogue and active engagement during in-depth interviews, researchers were able to capture the multifaceted nature of participants' experiences and perspectives. The dialogical approach facilitated the collection of rich, contextualized data, enhancing the depth and validity of the study findings. Overall, the use of in-depth interviews guided by a dialogical approach exemplifies a rigorous and reflexive approach to data collection, aligning with the aims of the study to provide a nuanced exploration of women's experiences in leadership positions within the context of marriage.

Data analysis and presentation
After collecting data from participants, it underwent transcription, sorting, and organisation, aligning with established practices in research methodology (Babbie, 2012). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology as advocated by Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Gehrke Walters and Appunn (2016) was adopted. This approach allowed an in-depth exploration of individuals' personal and lived experiences, aligning with the perspectives articulated by Eatough and Smith (2017). Through a rigorous and iterative process, themes from qualitative data were developed. These thematic outcomes were then thoughtfully presented, offering a holistic understanding of work-family conflict among women in leadership positions at the institution.

The thematic presentation approach was employed to convey the study's findings. This method involved the identification, organisation, and elucidation of patterns of meaning, known as themes, within the dataset, as described by Smith (2016). By directing attention toward the exploration of meaning across the dataset, thematic presentation enabled the researcher to discern and comprehend shared or collective meanings and experiences, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012, p.54). Furthermore, the thematic presentation did not merely remain at the level of data analysis but served as a conduit to link empirical findings with broader theoretical or conceptual underpinnings, thereby providing a methodological bridge, allowing the researchers to connect the empirical insights to the larger theoretical framework within which the research was situated (Braun and Clarke (2012, p.58). In this manner, thematic presentation contributed to the scholarly depth and academic rigour of doing research, demonstrating a commitment to sound methodological practices.

Results
The study constituted six women in leadership positions at MUST. These women apart from being in leadership positions, have other duties as spouses in their respective homes. This section is divided into three sections, namely

role salience, work-family enrichment, and role of MUST in mitigating work-family conflict.

Role salience

The participants were asked about their inclinations, thus whether they are family or work-oriented. The responses given revealed divergent views on which domain they are more inclined to and highlighted family priority, work-life balance, burnout, and the need for support. For Amma, between family priority and work-life balance, she said that

> when it comes to which one comes first in my life, family and the motherly role comes first. Despite the busy schedule I have here at work, taking into account my position in this university, still, my family and taking care of the kids come to mind first. However, there are times when the spouse has complained, most especially with my travels. My work at times demand travelling to different places, and most of the times I am not at home.

Unlike Amma who is family-oriented, Afua indicated that

> mmh… even though I am family-oriented, I find myself more inclined in work, and this, somehow affects the family. For example, looking at my position, there are times I carry office work home, and work till late mid-night. This I find affects the time I give to my family. I can say, I sacrifice time of my family for work.

Similarly, Akosua reported that

> hmmm…even though work is challenging, I try to balance work and family demands. But there are times when I sacrifice time of my family for office work while at times I can sacrifice work for the interests of the family. But I have to admit, holding a leadership position is challenging with family demands.

Inquiring further whether they experience burnout and feel the need for a supportive environment, in the course of interviews, Adwoa said that

> as my work is demanding, at times I get home tired, yet I have to perform some family duties such as cooking for the husband, taking care of kids, and even assisting kids with their assignments. To lessen the burden, I employed a housemaid to help with some other household chores, such as the washing of kids' clothes and cooking food.

Emphasizing on burnout, Abena said that

> work and family have created at times burnout in my life. Sometimes I find myself cooking for my family when I'm tired. And this gives me

> physical pain and insomnia. Sometimes I have slept in the office for some
> time. And driving to work has been hard.

Further, Afua underscored the prevalence of an 'always-on' work culture that
perpetuates stress, burnout, and diminished quality of life for employees, by
saying that

> at times we are given work from the office which require short time
> responses. And you see, here at work, women in leadership positions are
> few, and at times women in leadership positions move from one meeting
> to another, just to represent the gender aspect, which is not healthy at
> times.

Arguably, the emerging responses on the role salience of women in leadership
positions at MUST surrounding the prioritisation of family and work
responsibilities shed light on the complex interplay between professional roles
and personal obligations, particularly within the context of social life and the
welfare of women in leadership positions. The accounts provided by
participants underscored the challenges faced in balancing career aspirations
with family duties, revealing divergent viewpoints and experiences. While
some participants prioritise family above work, others find themselves more
inclined towards their professional roles, leading to tensions in effectively
managing both domains. These conflicts between work and family demands
result in stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout, as exemplified by the experiences
shared by the participants. Moreover, these narratives reflect broader gender
dynamics, with societal expectations placing additional pressure on women to
fulfill traditional caregiving roles alongside their professional pursuits.

Work-family enrichment
Researchers further interrogated participants' instances of work-family
enrichment. The concept of work-family enrichment encompasses both work-
to-family enrichment (WFE) and family-to-work enrichment (FWE),
highlighting the bidirectional relationship between work and family
responsibilities. The discussion on work-family enrichment revealed multiple
dimensions of enrichment. In the course of interviews, Amma said that

> the way I handle issues at home, has helped me to develop good
> relationship with workmates. You know, the family demands patience,
> understanding, and support from the spouse. Learning these values at
> home, I have applied them at work, hence working closely with
> workmates.

Similarly, Mamesi in the course of interviews brought about a dichotomous
view by saying that

> apart from the salary and other financial benefits I get from work, I think
> the work domain hasn't impacted much on my family. You know, I am

a mother and a wife. I have other responsibilities to look after, including extended families. So, the work has in one way or another excluded me from other social life, for example, taking part in group village bank gatherings. I feel that as a woman, here at work I have to be treated differently with men taking into account extra work women do at home.

The emerging responses to the investigation into work-family enrichment among women in leadership positions at MUST revealed an understanding of various facets of enrichment and, thus the dynamics between professional responsibilities and family duties. The affective dimensions of WFE and FWE delineate the generation of positive emotions stemming from active involvement in either work or family commitments, thereby enhancing an individual's efficacy in fulfilling their respective roles. WFE encapsulates the psychosocial dividends accrued within the workplace, facilitating improved efficacy in family roles, while FWE efficiency fosters heightened focus derived from family responsibilities, bolstering professional competence. However, amidst the discourse on work-family enrichment, dichotomous viewpoints emerged, highlighting the complex trade-offs inherent in balancing professional commitments with social connections, and also unveiling the gendered expectations and treatment within the workplace, underscoring the imperative to gender-sensitive policies to foster inclusive environments conducive to gender equality.

Role of MUST in mitigating work-family conflict
The researchers delved into interrogating participants whether the institution has put in place mechanisms that help them balance the work and family conflict such that one domain does not suffer. On her account, Akosua said that,
> despite that the university provides recreation time, once a year, which is famously called MUST ladies day, where all working women are invited to relax and have fun, much more has to be done. I think there should be more women in leadership positions. This is so as women in leadership positions are few, hence doubling or multi-tasking other duties which would be done by other women if women were more in leadership positions.

On the other hand, Amma said that,
> there are no mechanisms at work that help to balance the family demands. We are generally unfairly treated in the same way as our male colleagues. I wish some considerations would be put in place such as Frequent Teaching Equivalence (FTE) for women. You should also note that women are affected by the birth control pill/mechanisms, it manipulates their hormonal functionality hence the need to consider them. And that if women are breastfeeding they cannot function in the same way as

everyone else, hence need to consider them. Setting up a nursing space for them would be better.

Inquiring further about what can be done by the institution to reduce work-family conflict among women in leadership positions at the institution, Afua said that

our institution can put some deliberate efforts tailored towards women such as providing recreational facilities where women can relax and refresh their minds. Further, mental well-being is important. I wish the university would put in place a wellness therapist to help women who undergo burnout.

The emerging responses on the role of MUST in mitigating work-family conflicts and supporting the welfare of female employees revealed multifaceted aspects. While initiatives, such as 'MUST Ladies Day', offer recreational opportunities for working women, there remains a pressing need for further support mechanisms tailored to address the specific challenges faced by women. Suggestions include increasing the representation of women in leadership positions to distribute responsibilities more equitably and implementing measures like Frequent Teaching Equivalence (FTE) to provide flexibility in teaching duties. Additionally, the provision of recreational facilities and access to mental health resources, such as wellness therapists, are proposed to promote relaxation and mental well-being among female employees.

Discussion

Among women in leadership positions at MUST, there are divergent views in terms of role salience. For instance, from Amma's account, it can be argued that the family and motherly role are important above professional responsibilities, even though she holds a significant position at the university and a demanding job that requires frequent travel. This indicates a strong commitment to family and a recognition of the importance of fulfilling her roles as a parent and spouse. However, another perspective comes, suggesting potential challenges in balancing work and family life, particularly when the demands of the job conflict with the needs of the family. The mention of complaints from the spouse about her frequent travel highlights the tension that arises between career obligations and family responsibilities.

Further, it can be argued that both Afua and Akosua expressed instances where their dedication to work affects their ability to fulfill family obligations. This conflict between work and family demands leads to feelings of guilt, stress, and dissatisfaction as they struggle to allocate time and energy effectively between competing priorities. Also, Akosua mentions the challenges of holding a leadership position while managing family responsibilities, suggesting that

leadership roles entail increased workload, responsibility, and time commitments, which exacerbate work-family conflicts and necessitate careful prioritisation and time management skills. Nevertheless, although not explicitly stated, the accounts given by Akosua and Afua also reflect broader gender dynamics in the workplace and family spheres. Women, in particular, often face societal expectations to prioritise caregiving roles, even as they pursue professional ambitions (Hatchman, 2009). The expectation for women to fulfill traditional gender roles, such as cooking and caregiving, alongside their professional duties, reflects pervasive gender norms. These expectations place additional pressure on women in leadership positions and contribute to the complexity of the work-family conflict they experience.

Work-family conflict creates burnout. Barriga Medina, Campoverde Aguirre, Coello-Montecel, Ochoa Pacheco, and Paredes-Aguirre (2021), revealed that among working women, burnout is inevitable as the conflict between work and family is high. From Adwoa's account, it can be deduced that women in leadership positions at MUST face demanding work schedules that often leave them feeling tired and drained by the time they get home. The demanding nature of their work requires long hours, intense concentration, and frequent engagement in professional responsibilities. Also, there is limited time for family responsibilities, which in turn creates conflict between their professional and personal lives. As a result of the conflict, there is role strain and stress, leading to exhaustion and burnout.

Again, Abena's mention of at times feeling sleepy in the office, indicates a struggle to find restful sleep at home due to the demands of work and family life. Resorting to alternative sleeping arrangements highlights the challenges of maintaining a work-life balance and finding time for adequate rest. This results in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment from chronic workplace stress and inadequate support (Muasya, 2013). As such, the prevalence of burnout among women in leadership positions highlights the need for supportive work environments within academic institutions like MUST. By providing access to mental health resources, offering flexible work arrangements, and fostering a culture of support and understanding, MUST can create environments where employees feel valued and empowered to prioritise their health and wellness.

Again, there are observed detrimental impact of work on personal relationships among women in leadership positions at MUST. For example, there is work spillover into personal time, depriving individuals of quality time with their families. Furthermore, the demanding nature of work environments, where employees are expected to be constantly available and responsive, even outside of regular working hours is evident. For instance, Afua's acknowledgment of few female leaders and the additional burdens placed on women in leadership

roles to represent the gender perspective in decision-making processes highlights the persistent gender disparities and inequities within the workplace. This underscores the importance of addressing systemic barriers to gender equality and creating inclusive environments where women can thrive and advance into leadership positions without facing undue burdens or obstacles (Zhang, Xu, Jin & Ford, 2018).

Regarding work-family enrichment, arguably, Amma's reflection underscored the profound influence of family dynamics on professional relationships, emphasising the transferability of values cultivated within the home to the workplace. Recognising the fundamental importance of qualities such as patience, understanding, and support in family interactions, suggests that the skills and attitudes honed within the family context can serve as a foundation for fostering positive workplace dynamics (Heskiau & McCarthy, 2021). Moreover, acknowledgment of the reciprocity between family experiences and professional interactions underscores a deeper understanding of interpersonal dynamics. Through navigating the complexities of family life, one can develop a nuanced appreciation for empathy, communication, and collaboration, qualities that are equally essential in fostering harmonious relationships within the workplace.

Again WFE/FWE demands the value of self-awareness and introspection in personal and professional growth. Recognising the influence of the family on interpersonal relationships enables the leveraging of strengths and mitigates potential challenges in the workplace. This introspective awareness not only enhances effectiveness as a team member at the workplace but also contributes to a culture of continuous learning and self-improvement within the organisational context. In essence, embracing the lessons learned within the family unit and applying them to the workplace, exemplifies the capacity for personal growth and adaptation in navigating diverse social environments.

Among women in leadership positions at MUST, the concept of work-family enrichment underscored the potential for positive synergies between professional responsibilities and personal relationships. As social workers, women in leadership positions equipped with a holistic understanding of human behaviour and development can leverage these synergies to enhance their overall well-being. By recognising and building upon the skills and values cultivated within the family context, these women can cultivate resilience, empathy, and effective communication skills that are essential in both personal and professional domains. As such, identifying and capitalising on opportunities for work-family enrichment can help them to navigate the complexities of balancing competing priorities and fostering a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in both spheres of life.

The role of MUST in mitigating work-family conflicts among women in leadership positions is paramount, and women as social workers can serve as advocates for change within the institution. Akosua's statement suggests that while the university organizes a yearly event called 'MUST Ladies Day' to provide recreation time for working women, more initiatives are needed to support women in the workplace, including increasing the representation of women in leadership positions within the university. This comes as a result that there are few women in leadership positions, leading to few available women shouldering additional responsibilities or tasks that would ideally be distributed among a larger number of women leaders. Similarly, from Amma's perspective, several concerns regarding the lack of support for women in balancing their family responsibilities with their work commitments are evident, including mechanisms in the workplace to assist women in managing the demands of their families. Amma proposes the implementation of mechanisms such as Frequent Teaching Equivalence (FTE) for women, which would likely provide additional time or flexibility in their teaching responsibilities to accommodate their family needs (Ademuyiwa, Dahunsi, Adetunji & Adeniran, 2022).

Again, Afua's statement suggests that there is a need for the institution to implement specific measures aimed at supporting women in maintaining their well-being and managing stress. Firstly, she recommends providing recreational facilities where women can relax and refresh their minds. This implies creating spaces or opportunities within the institution where female employees can take breaks, unwind, and engage in activities that promote relaxation and mental rejuvenation. Additionally, Afua emphasises the importance of mental well-being, particularly for women who may experience burnout due to the demands of their work and personal responsibilities. This will involve hiring a wellness therapist to provide support and assistance to women who are struggling with burnout or other mental health challenges (Zheng & Wu, 2018).

Arguably, within the realm of social work, the exploration of work-family conflict among women in leadership positions at MUST shed light on the intricate interplay between professional responsibilities and personal obligations. As social workers in higher learning institutions, these women are tasked with supporting families in navigating complex life challenges in parallel with office work demands. The narratives shared by participants underscore the importance of recognising the impact of societal expectations and gender roles on work-life balance. Women in leadership positions at MUST as social workers can leverage this understanding to advocate for policies and practices that prioritise employee well-being, challenge traditional gender norms, and promote a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities within families.

Drawing from these insights, it is evident that MUST plays a pivotal role in mitigating work-family conflicts and supporting the well-being of women in leadership positions. Initiatives such as 'MUST Ladies Day' provide recreational time, but more comprehensive measures are needed to address systemic barriers and promote gender equality within the institution. Recommendations include increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, implementing flexible work arrangements, and providing support mechanisms such as Frequent Teaching Equivalence (FTE) and wellness therapy to assist women in managing their professional and personal responsibilities effectively. As social workers, women in leadership positions at MUST can advocate for these changes, leveraging their understanding of societal dynamics and organizational structures to foster a culture of support, inclusion, and well-being for all employees.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that women in leadership positions at MUST revealed the complexity of balancing professional responsibilities with family obligations, reflecting divergent views on the significance of role salience. While some prioritise family roles above professional duties, acknowledging the importance of fulfilling parental and spousal responsibilities, others express challenges in reconciling work and family demands, leading to feelings of guilt, stress, and dissatisfaction. The prevalence of work-family conflict among these women contributes to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and strain on personal relationships, underscoring the need for supportive work environments and systemic changes within MUST. Furthermore, the findings highlight the influence of broader gender dynamics on work-life balance, emphasising the importance of addressing societal expectations and promoting gender equity in leadership positions to alleviate undue burdens on women.

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