

## The Implication of Mothers' Full-Time Labour Force Participation on Early Childcare and Outcome: A Case Study of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

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### Abstract

*In the last two decades, in Tanzania, female labour force participation outside the home has grown significantly along with their male counterparts challenging the traditional view that women are reproducers and producers in the home-based economy. Full-time employment leads to higher levels of self-esteem, autonomy, and independence, which may influence sensitivity in caregiving. Many mothers also participate in multiple roles which might limit exclusive time for childcare necessary for the development of healthy children. Qualitative methods were used to collect data both from workplaces and homes. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify 42 full-time working mothers with children under the age of five. In-depth interviews, non-participant observation and documentary reviews were used to gather data which was then analysed thematically. The findings indicate that employment imbues women self-esteem, autonomy and independence which improve sensitivity. Children gain from improved nutrition, health services, and access to better secondary care services. However, balancing family demands was difficult, and this affected the nature of maternal care of children. Work-family conflict demands were the main source of stress in mothers, which was detrimental on children's wellbeing. The study recommends that families should devise mechanisms for investing quality time with children, and develop crèches for early childcare in order to mitigate the rising challenges of working and raising healthy and secure children in an urban setting.*

**Keywords:** labour force participation, childcare, work-family conflict, child development

## **Introduction**

In Tanzania, the number of women with young children entering the paid labour sector has increased dramatically in recent years (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2018; Idris, 2018; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2014, 2020). Female full-time labour force participation (FLFP) refers to a societal transformation in which women who were previously seen to be producers and reproducers in the home-based economy are now employed or seeking employment outside the home (Fox, 2016). Women may grow, expand, and utilize their potential through LFP to boost family income and contribute to the national economy (ILO, 2021).

The FLFP results from government's considerable efforts to increase women's agencies to foster higher participation in social-economic development, poverty reduction, and right to employment, for national building (Lambin, et al., 2022; Krogh et al., 2009). Such efforts among others include the provision of increased female access to education, empowerment, and skills training (Lokina et al., 2017; NBS, 2020). The Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS, 2016) reports consistent growth in FLFP from 48.6% in 2012/13 to 71% in 2016-2017. By 2022 the FLFP had grown to 78.9% (World Bank, 2022). Such participation in Tanzania is higher in urban settings (Idris, 2018; Meena, 1996) with the majority being of the reproductive age, most probably with young children who need the care and support necessary for survival, and healthy development of their full potential (WHO, 2004; Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007). These trends indicate a significant social and structural change phenomenon whose implications on childcare need a better understanding of how these impact a child's development.

Several arguments have been advanced about the relationship between mothers' employment and their crucial role in the care of young children (Waldfoegel et al., 2002, Fox, 2016; Crenna-Jenings, 2019; Narea, 2014; Mkenda, 2014). Those in favour of mothers' employment claim that the main mechanism through which the benefits of economic growth can be redistributed and social justice promoted is through female employment. In this case, female employment goes beyond monetary purposes of needs, and it is based on multidimensional benefits such as achieving individual self-esteem, identity, purchasing and provision power, autonomy, and social inclusion (ILO, 2021). Maternal employment can benefit children through the possibility of providing better nutrition, access to health care, better living conditions, access to good schools, purchasing caregiving services compared to stay-at-home mothers (Waterhouse & Bennett, 2023; Nobel, 2015; Fox, 2016, Reynolds et al., 2016). Other benefits are associated with modelling, particularly for girls, and control in relation to unemployed mothers.

Other studies contend that maternal employment is detrimental to children under three years as such children need consistent and reliable maternal caregiving for the healthy development of various milestones. These might be limited for working mothers (Waldfoegel et al., 2002). Such studies claim that close relationship with mothers has both long- and short-term impact on the holistic development of children. Negative impact of maternal employment is associated with maternal mental health challenges such as depression, stress, and tension. Such challenges may limit the level of sensitivity and warmth needed by children (Crenna-Jenings, 2019).

African literature asserts the great importance of mothers' role as primary caregivers of children, including childrearing with the support of extended intact families (Narea, 2014; Mlama, 1979; Amos, 2014). Traditionally, mothers spent long periods of time for nurturing and mentoring their young children (Amos, 2014). Extended time with children promoted self-confidence, imbued cultural values, shaped behaviour, and socialization skills in children. The

communal child-rearing style through the extended family provided a secure system for child development and a sense of belonging for young children as well as a secure system of managing possible maternal absence (Narea, 2014; Amos, 2014). This way of raising children has been challenged in households with working mothers, where extended family support might be limited in urban settings (Mlama, 1979; Amos, 2014).

In Tanzania, mothers participate in multiple roles such as in networking, offering care for the sick and the elderly, socialization and doing domestic work. These chores limit the time the mothers require for the health development and well-being of their young children (Samman et al., 2016; Mkenda, 2014). In this respect, warm and supportive caregiving is regarded as the parents' ability to provide responsive and affectionate interactions in response to their children's specific needs and expectations. Further, maternal closeness increases self-confidence and learning, self-regulation, social competence sharing and conflict resolution, and self-development (Miller & Commons, 2010). Such caregiving behaviours need ample time with children, which may be limited for working mothers (Boivin & Giordani, 2013).

Contrastively, Western studies on FLFP and childcare have yielded conflicting opinions. Studies in support of FLFP find a number of benefits for women as they are given an opportunity to show their talents and abilities across sectors through a paid workforce, particularly for the single-parent or at-risk workforce families through the provision of social and economic resources that foster healthy growth of children (Halim et al., 2021; Percovitz, 2014). Correspondingly, a study conducted by Baskin (2023) among children of working parents indicated that children felt proud when their mothers and fathers were working because they were able to access all necessary needs.

Trustworthy early childhood care, according to psychological research, is a crucial aspect of children's holistic healthy growth and welfare for integral development at all stages of life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The manner of caring impacts the interconnectedness of a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development prospects, regardless of the child's culture, socio-economic situation, or gender (Saarni, 2011). This is the result of the child receiving consistent attention, sensitivity, and unswerving availability from a primary carer in whom the child has trust (Huston & Aronson, 2005). Quality care and time spent with children are more important throughout the child's first 0-3 years of life (Thompson, 2018).

In developing countries where poverty is deeply entrenched, FLFP is strongly encouraged due to its potential to alleviate poverty (Fox, 2016; World Bank, 2019). Urban poverty and excessive life stress are sources of deprivation that not only cause abuse to children but have worse effects on children than physical abuse, such as beating and wounding children (Brody (1983). This is because deprivation of resources assaults children emotionally, which has the worst impact on them. Due to this deprivation, maternal employment may alleviate these impacts through access to resources in which children are primary beneficiaries (Huston & Aronson, 2005).

Based on the dialectical views of various studies about maternal employment and its implications on childcare, this study sought to find out the nature of childcare in households where mothers were on full-time paid work in an urban setting.

### **Theoretical Consideration**

The study incorporated concepts from Greenhaus and Beutel's (1985) work-family conflict (WFC) viewpoint, which originated from Katz and Khan (1978). The role conflict describes

the inherent tension that arises while balancing family and work and family obligations. The idea illuminates the role conflict that occurs when mothers' concurrent demands from work and family become incompatible, with the possibility of producing problems with time, strain, and conduct in mothers (Sigh & Greenhaus, 2004). According to this viewpoint, demands from both sides can influence attitudes, emotional disposition, and time usage, which can have a detrimental impact on interactions with people in the home and workplace (Sigh & Greenhaus, 2004).

According to Waterhouse et al. (2017), mothers may feel a bi-directional conflict connected to job and engagement in many activities, and role enhancement allows them to provide resources to their children. The influence on children, on the other hand, will be determined by their ability to balance numerous responsibilities as well as the availability of a support structure (Waterhouse et al., 2017; Paduval & Paduval, 2009). Balancing different responsibilities may give employed mothers stimulation, which can provide them with the capacity to enable healthy relations with children while gaining economic flexibility, which adds value to motherhood and a sense of wholeness as a mother. Greenhouse and Beutel's (1985) WFC perspectives provided insights to this study regarding multiple roles, e.g. family caring and full-time work, and how employed mothers experience the two opposing sides and how they balance family responsibilities and work.

## **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Dar es Salaam, Kinondoni Municipality due to its potential to provide information from various respondents, job locations, and regional variations of purely urban and semi-rural characteristics. Its residents range from higher, middle, to lower incomes (NBS, 2013). Among the five districts of Dar es Salaam Region, according to the 2022 census, Kinondoni District hosts 982,328 inhabitants with a large number of industries, skilled and semi-skilled labour-force, various organizations and international offices, social services such as big hospitals and markets providing a lot of employment opportunities (Kinondoni Municipal Council, 2018; NBS, 2013, 2022). The abundance of social economic activities and heterogeneity of its inhabitants could suggest the possibility of higher female unemployment and a variety of caregiving arrangements. Qualitative data was collected from 42 married mothers with children under five years, on full-time paid employment outside the home. It aimed at collecting first-hand information on experiences of combining employment and raising young children. Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse data after carefully recording it verbatim, and carrying out transcription, and analysis. In-depth interviews and observation in the households were used to establish the link between concepts and themes in relation to the replicated data (Kigera & Varpuro, 2020).

## **Findings and Discussion**

This part presents the findings and discussion on the phenomenon of combining LFP and childcare. It presents experiences of juggling work and raising young children. The findings and discussions explore mothers' employment opportunities and challenges, in raising young children.

### **Mother Employment and Childcare Opportunities and Challenges**

The study explored the benefits and challenges of maternal employment in child care and family wellbeing. Despite the challenges that were identified, women expressed satisfaction with the benefits such as resource provision, increased self-esteem, networking, better living conditions, and capacity to juggle multiple roles. Earning money reduces dependency on spouses and alleviates poverty, as explained by a respondent, thus:

*I work as a manager in a big company, and earn handsomely... this makes me happy, self confident and well-respected both at work and family. I can very well provide for our family and other people comfortably. My children have access to social services, good schools, and good nutrition, and have good health insurance (KII, mother, manager, 2019, Ilala).*

Similar to view expressed above, employment was shown to benefit women and their families. Some benefits included increased self-confidence, improved purchasing power, autonomy, and social inclusion (ILO, 2021). Employment also guaranteed children of better nutrition, access to health care, better living conditions, access to school, and caregiving services (Nobel, 2015; Fox, 2016, Reynolds et al., 2016). The study showed that mothers were also involved in other income-generating activities such as running small businesses which augmented their incomes through resource accumulation. This paved access to various opportunities such as better living conditions and access to resources, although these resulted to limited time for childcare and closeness to children.

Despite access to and accumulation of resources, mothers in the households also held multiple roles such as care roles, socialization, carrying out family projects, and managing domestic chores which limited the availability of exclusive time with their children. Yet, mothers felt child caregiving was their primary responsibility although they needed the support of secondary caregivers. The double-demand created role conflicts in mothers. Almost all mothers used home-based care under domestic workers or a mixed care home and institution for children above three years. Combining work and family was associated with different issues which were challenging for families. The most common challenge was related to the struggle of finding reliable and protective caregivers for infants and toddlers, who could provide necessary protection and support while mothers were working. Lack of reliable caregivers was a source of tension and anxiety affecting mothers' peace, children welfare, and job quality. The anxiety was higher in mothers with infants as admitted by the following respondent:

*.... After three months of maternity leave, follows the most difficult time for a mother, when she has to leave her infant child in the care of a domestic worker, often not known too well..... to any mother, this is a source of anxiety and tension; so I make sure I employ two house helpers - one for the older children and the other for the infant child. I am very glad that I can afford to pay for any service I need (IDI, mother, accountant, 2019, Masaki).*

The findings indicated that mothers spent long hours at the workplace which left them too exhausted and overburdened to provide their children with the warmth and emotional support they needed. Mothers' long absence and lack of affective attention on young children had a negative impact on developmental milestones such as social, affective, behavioural dimensions as suggested by other studies (Singh, 2018; Howard et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2009). These studies suggest that very long absence and unsupportiveness may lead some children perceiving it as rejection or parental disinterest. Consequently, children might start seeking emotional support elsewhere which could render them vulnerable to abuse or other protection challenges (Mbatta, 2022). Studies on child development indicate that quality of childcare depends on the caregiver's disposition, experience, and skills, which influence the caregiving behaviours and outcome of children (Singh, 2018; Howard et al., 2011). Mothers in the study differed in their capacity to invest quality time in their children though most had similar work obligations and conditions. Some mothers, once at home, dedicated much time for close interaction with their children while others spent limited time. Children, whose mothers invested quality time and

amicable relationships with them were described as playful, explorative, interactive, attached to their mothers, and successful at school (Mbatta, 2021).

Children belonging to mothers who struggled to balance work and family demands were described as uncontrollable, disruptive, or disinterested in peer relations (Mbatta, 2022). This assertion is similar to the one raised in the global childcare crisis study among working mothers (Samman et al., 2016). Maternal care and unsupportiveness has a crucial role on children's psychological development. In the same vein, Huston and Aronson (2005) contended that positive early child development depends on the quality of childcare, which depends on time and the dispositions of the caregiver. In line with this, a respondent said:

*...my work demands a lot from me everyday, but that does not prevent me from finding quality time with my children and ensuring that they have all they need for their comfort. I feel taking good care of my children is my primary responsibility as a mother...* (Conversation, mother, Lecturer, 2019, Ubungo).

Such comment shows that irrespective of the job and position held by employed mothers, all participants claimed that they spent a lot of time and energy on childcare and family wellbeing, although they had spouses. They felt that raising healthy children was their core responsibility; also supported by Ennis (2014:3-4) who stressed that the "intensive mothering" ideology was based on the culturally based gendered model. This model holds that mothers are expected to spend huge amounts of time, energy, and resources on early child-rearing. This develops attachment that ties parents to children; and this has a biological basis in all primates and rodents (Blair-Gomez, 2013; Lahousen et al., 2019).

### **Balancing Work, Family, Social Roles and Childcare**

It was important to find out how working mothers managed to go to work and at the same time provide early childcare in the household. It was agreed that balancing work, family, social demands and finding adequate time for the provision of support and affection of children was difficult for all working mothers due to limited time. It was even more difficult for mothers with leadership positions and for academic staff working in higher learning institutions who had to publish and do research for their promotion.

The severity of gender-based division of labour in households was noted to be higher in low-income households with young employed mothers than in middle-income households. Middle-income earners had smaller families and had easier access to resources and could pay for services, while low-income earners or young women just employed suffered higher economic constraints. Some lived in family inherited houses left behind by their parents while others lived in low-cost rental homes far away from the workplace to save some money. This prolonged the time they had to stay away from their children.

Participation in multiple roles at work and at home results in work overload for some mothers which consequently leads to time- and strain-based conflict. This finding was similar to findings by Charkarbi et al. (2016) and Greenhaus and Beutel (1985), who found out that higher work-family conflict in low-income mothers arose from their inability to hire extra household support to assist them with household chores. The combination of multiple roles was stressful and draining on mothers, which often left them too exhausted to provide adequate time for close interaction with their young children as they would have wished. The house chores were usually done very early in the morning, and late after formal working hours, consuming a lot of time. In relation to this, a young librarian mother, commented as follows:

*I live in my in-law's family house with many household members and I am the youngest and employed, so I have to carry out most of the house chores. Commuting between work and home takes me about two to three hours and when I arrive home the routine begins. I spend some time with the child then start the domestic chores again..., once done, I begin selling small, small things outside the house until late at night. This leaves me with very limited time to spend on my son; but I hold dear on to my job regardless, and hope one day I will have my own home (IDI, mother 20/06/2019, Kinondoni).*

However, it was noted that despite the challenges this young mother, was facing in carrying out multiple roles in the household, she still found much satisfaction and hope in her employment. The job offered her hope for a better life in the future, such as having her own home.

According to studies based on functionalist principles, work-family conflict (WFC) is created by conventional female responsibilities such as caring for children and the elderly, cooking, fetching water, and maintaining social networks (Dillip et al., 2018; Singh, 2018). It is suggested that these many duties constitute a source of WFC. Our point of view was echoed in the experience of many mothers in our research. This was echoed by a mother of four children, who said:

*... I like my work and I am struggling to balance my work and the multiple tasks I have to do in the home and community. I am an active participant of many social and church groups which take a lot of my time. Participation in multiple roles is affecting my time with children; I am unable to develop a close bond with them and manage close family relations (IDI, mother, social worker, 02/05/2019, Makuburi).*

### **Childcare among Working Mothers**

Analysis of full-time employed mothers in Dar es Salaam established that efficient childcare arrangements were crucial for families with infants and toddlers. Home-based childcare was the most prevalent, preferred for its affordability, availability, and relief from household obligations. Factors influencing childcare arrangements included the child's age, mother's income, caregiver experience, and family support.

According to the findings, domestic workers (DWs) helped parents with childcare and household management. These DWs did a variety of duties in the homes and cared for children, including feeding them, ensuring proper hygiene, preparing children for school, accompanying them to and collecting them from the school bus, washing their clothing, and, in many cases, sharing with them the same bed or room. This kind of attachment could have either positive or negative effects on the children. Abuse in most families has been an outcome of overreliance on domestic workers. In other cases, these caretakers, for better or worse, serve as role models and maternal surrogates for children, and they become major abusers of children in the absence of mothers. When children develop deep attachment with their secondary carers, they confide in them so much so that they start sharing their secrets. The following is a part of a story narrated by a five-year old daughter to her mother:

*.... our nanny loves us very much.... she does everything for me and my brother, cooks good food, prepares us for school, and teaches us good things. We talk and play together. I want her to be our real sister... we love her very much. Mother, do not yell at her too much, she is very good to us, she loves us very much even when you are not there...(Conversation with a child; 01/05/2019, Msasani).*

As previously established, some children had a stronger attachment to DWs and felt more at ease with DWs than their own parents, as a result of their parents' prolonged absence from home. Despite their age and diverse origins, respondents reported that good DWs become mentors and role models for their children in a variety of ways. Children in these situations did not suffer the consequences of protracted parental absence since they were loved and well cared for by their caretakers other than their mothers.

Shirvanian and Michel (2018) argue that disrupting a protective caregiver-child contact is damaging to children and underlines the need of consistent attachment in young children. It affects their capacity to manage stress and anxiety, and it predisposes children to worry about future love and support, which can impede the development of social and emotional skills. Children in the preceding scenario perceived their mother substitutes as loving and protective, showing that when children have a loving and protective maternal substitute, they may not experience as much of the impact of maternal absence since they may build attachment with the secondary carer. The following is another story told by a five-year-old boy:

*... everyday my mother goes to work before I wake up but my nanny is always here ... my nanny is very good, I love her... She feeds my sister and keeps us very clean; she talks and sings with us nicely. She helps me with my homework and carries my sister on her back. When you are with her you feel very nice...my mother loves her too... when mom brings us gifts she also gives some to the nanny. The other day I went with her for a holiday to her home... it was very nice (conversation, 01/05/2019, Mikocheni).*

The narration indicates that children were unaffected by the extended maternal absence due to work if the maternal substitute was good, and had a positive relationship with the children and support from the mother (Mbatta, 2022). This finding appears to concur with Erickson's (1963) contention that if children aged between 0 and 2 years are well nurtured, loved, and protected, they will develop basic trust, a sense of security, and optimism, imbuing in them a lifelong experience that the world is safe, and laying the foundation for secure attachment. Caregiving that is both insecure and unprotected breeds mistrust and insecurity. Children who have had stable care are aware about their surroundings and trust people.

### **Types of Childcare Arrangements in Households with Working Mothers**

This study found that families with working mothers employed three types of childcare arrangements: home-based childcare, institutional childcare, and mixed care. Home-based care under DWs was the most popular among working mothers, with the majority being unskilled female teenagers from rural areas. Other factors that influenced the nature and choice of childcare arrangement were the child's age, experiences with caregiving quality, the mother's time, and the family's financial situation. In households, domestic workers had significant contribution to childcare and relieved working mothers of the daily chores, noting that these women were breadwinners in the household economy (Amos, 2014). It can be concluded that DWs are important contributors to women's economic wellbeing, as women move from working in the family to working as paid employees (Kriener-Althen, 2017).

### **Relative Home-based Childcare Arrangement**

According to studies, raising a child in a family surrounded by loved ones, parents, relatives, friends, and grandparents enables them to develop self-confidence, assurance, and self-esteem. Findings from this study indicate that, in an urban setting, relative caregiving was rare except when there was a relative in the home while waiting for some other form of childcare arrangements. Most families were nuclear with few exceptions. However, whenever possible



extended family caregiving was preferable claiming that it was ideal and protective for children. This form of caregiving was described as sensitive, attentive, supportive, close, and more amicable to children, which imbued in children serenity, joy, and protection. It was more ideal than using unrelated caregivers in some cases. For example, a mother who had a sister-in-law taking care of her child while waiting for university enrolment gave the following comment:

*I feel the handling of the child by his auntie is different from the DWs. She cares for my son with a lot of love and concern. The DWs are too strict with him. He's well-fed... they are very close friends. They play, talk, and sing together, which makes him very happy. Often I come home, to find the child very happy and playful... he is very attached to her... he prefers her to me. This gives me peace to think he is safe under her care (IDI, mother, Lecturer, 07/05/2019, Msasani).*

Early child development, as reflected by Hienrich (2015) shows that if the child's needs are consistently met by caregivers, compounded by positive relationships, children's social and emotional life unfolds. Infants and toddlers internalize the idea that the world is a safe place and that others are trustworthy as a result of a supportive and warm caregiving experience. This can be demonstrated by children being playful and explorative, conversing with the caregiver, and displaying delight. Children will form attachment with these helpful and responsive people who show affection, not necessarily with their biological parents, as Shirvanian and Michael (2018) and Ijzendoorn (2007) proved. According to Samman et al. (2016) relative caring, particularly by grandparents, was best for early caregiving and the general well-being of children in several OECD nations. This study discovered excellent caregiving results in young children who were being cared for by their grandparents with the assistance of DWs or close relatives. Some respondents reported that the presence of the grandmother in the home was very significant in child caring. In relation to this, a respondent made the following comment:

*I find the presence of grandma in the family very helpful as it provides more security and protection to children from potential aggression from DWs or other people (IDI mother, teacher, 04 /05/ 2019, Ubungu).*

Grandparents have an important role in early caregiving, according to Samman et al. (2016). They can be superior mother replacements if they are available and attentive enough to children's needs, so relieving parents of unnecessary concern over child safety and protection (Ijzendoorn, 2007). Shirvanian and Michel (2018) contend that responsive and supportive grandparents can offer dependable adult care while also acting as mother substitutes and attachment figures for children in the absence of parents. But Della Bocca et al. (2014) on the other hand highlights that grandparent caregiving has higher levels of stress, which affects the children's social, emotional, and physical well-being.

### **Neighbours' Home-based Childcare Arrangement**

Another kind of home-based care revealed in this study was through neighbours especially those living in high-density areas. This arrangement was mostly determined by the type of house, the proximity of households to one another, and the carer's familial ties. Such an agreement was also considered inexpensive and did not necessarily entail significant financial commitment because it was viewed as a *quid-pro-quo* ('my turn to return the courtesy will come').

In the case of paid care, work that was done on a daily basis, ranged between TZS 1,000 – 2,000 per day for children between two to five years of age. One of the respondents commented that she believed paid care was good for children as it offered an opportunity for a child to

grow with other children under the supervision of an adult. However, it was argued that children lacked close parental control and supervision which affected children's behavioural development negatively. Such situations were stressful to families as they exposed them to different risks such as sexual abuse and unsafe environment, as reported in Dar es Salaam by Otieno (2018). Informal discussions with the working mothers also revealed similar fears. A young mother residing at Makumbusho who was recently employed and did not have a caregiver, confided thus:

*.... I live in a crowded place with my three children and husband, in a single room. I would have liked to have a domestic worker to care for our children, but I cannot afford to pay for one, ...besides, where will I keep her? It is already risky to sleep in the same room with children.... When I go to work I normally leave my children at my neighbour's home because she works as a tailor... unfortunately children are left loose so they loiter from one house to another... In the neighbourhood I live in, I am really scared, they pick bad behaviour around, and for girls, rape is a real problem in my place. My friend's little daughter was recently nearly raped by mentally challenged boy. The problem of childcare is becoming a real challenge for everybody these days (Informal discussions, mother, librarian, 2019, Ubungo).*

This admission reflects Riggio's (2012) and Otieno's (2018) observations in Tanzania that, despite the many advantages urban children have over their rural counterparts, children living in overcrowded marginalized communities or poor neighbourhoods face numerous protection risks. These challenges, according to Otieno (2018), include increasing child abuse and neglect, violence, and poverty.

### **Institutional Childcare**

Another common form of childcare was through institutions. Typically, institutional childcare consisted of enrolling children in nursery or pre-primary school facilities. These were for children aged between 3 and 5 years. In Tanzania, institutional childcare options are comparable with day-care, also known as baby classes or preschools. In public schools, the official age for starting elementary education is six years. At the age of four to six years, the government mandates at least one year of obligatory pre-primary schooling. (NBS, 2014).

However, findings showed that the overall quality and quantity of services provided to young children depended on the programme offered by these schools. Unlike Mtahabwa (2009) who reported that Tanzanian children were enrolled in nearby pre-schools and spent few hours in the care centres, the findings of this study found a different situation. The study revealed that well-off parents were concerned about the quality of care and teaching provided to children more than the distance from home to school. Therefore, the parents were willing to pay for school buses to pick up and return their children after school despite the distance and the cost. Children spent longer hours in private institutions than in the past. Mtahabwa's experiences were based on public childcare centres where low-income parents enrolled their children. A well-off mother in relation to this said:

*...my son is less than three years old, but we have opted to place him in one of the day-care centres where I pick him around 6.00 in the evening... instead of leaving him with the house girl the whole day... we do not mind the cost but we mind the quality and security of children (IDI, mother, bank manager, 24/05/2019, Oysterbay).*

Long hours of stay in institutional care centres reduced the amount of time children spent with their parents and affected the quality of attachment, and behavioural development. Despite this challenge, mothers considered work as of crucial importance for their families' wellbeing.

They therefore had to depend on the support of domestic workers and other institutional caregiving in raising their young children (Mbatta, 2022). Dealing with a heavy workload was stressful for mothers, resulting in a greater level of work-family conflict in time and strain stress-related issues. Tension was higher when these mothers were required to travel, work longer hours, do without or having a new DW who needed orientation. Such strenuous experience was detrimental to children as claimed by one respondent:

*... sometimes, the work is very demanding and stressful. When I reach home I have to attend to the children, take care of the meals, other home issues and social issues. This is sometimes very exhausting, as it seriously limits the time for nurturing family relationship with the children (IDI, mother, advocate, 2019, Oysterbay).*

Many studies, including Singh (2018) and Heinrich (2014) on maternal stress and children's well-being, Shaw and Burns (2014), and Muhimbula and Issa-Zaccharia (2010) on women's employment, recognize the challenges mothers may face in juggling multiple roles and the potential negative impact on child development. The inability of mothers to manage numerous responsibilities has a detrimental impact on childcare. However, most studies appear to focus on working mothers as sole carers for their children, and not on the contribution of both parents in raising healthy children.

## **Conclusion**

The study findings indicated that childcare arrangements for families with infants and toddlers of full-time employed mothers in Dar es Salaam was a very serious issue which created a challenge in balancing family and work demands. Home-based child-care under domestic workers was the most prevalent and preferred because of its affordability, availability, and relief of mothers from household obligations. Factors influencing child-care arrangements included the child's age, mother's income, caregiver experience, and family support. Maternal employment imbued in mothers increased self-esteem, autonomy and provisional power in the homes as well as stimulation for women. However, FTLF in relation to childcare has shown that, the family, job, and socio-economic responsibilities were incompatible with quality early childcare. However, although time was limited, some mothers were capable of offsetting the effects of extended absence by investing quality time in their children. To allow parents to work, domestic workers played a crucial role in childcare regardless of their age, skills or background. The outcome of childcare among employed mothers varied. Some children developed strong attachments with their caregivers and were serene, happy and growing well; while those with unreliable or inconsistent caregiving manifested challenges in behavioural development and socialization.

The study recommends educating families on the importance of parental care in child development. The government should provide breastfeeding booths and childcare centres at workplaces to allow mothers to be closer to their children as they proceed with their other official/formal duties. Early child caregiver specialists should be trained to support working mothers with young children, to reduce family reliance on unskilled domestic workers.

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