

MULTISKILLED IN MANY WAYS: GHANAIAN FEMALE JOURNALISTS BETWEEN JOB AND HOME

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ABSTRACT:

In Ghana, the feminisation of the journalism profession has become a fact: more girls are entering journalism programmes in the Universities, and the number of women employees are growing in the newsrooms. The problem of balancing work-time arrangements (e.g. irregular and unpredictable work schedules, weekend work and long working hours) with equally important domestic obligations are familiar to most female journalists around the globe. Even in countries with well-developed social support structures, and well-defined labour laws, the current nature of journalism work-time arrangements impedes many female journalists in achieving work-life balance. For most Ghanaian female journalists, the culturally entrenched disproportionate societal power hierarchies amplify the challenges of the gendered journalism environment. This study employs unstructured in-depth interviews with 23 female journalists from various regions in Ghana. The study explores three sets of arrangements and demonstrates their impact on the ability of female journalists to balance their domestic and work obligations. The study revealed that the not-so-successful efforts of combining their multiple domestic and social obligations with professional ones cause emotional stress, guilt and self-condemnation and further revealed, female regional correspondents tend to have higher levels of work-life imbalance.

KEYWORDS:

female journalists, gendered journalism, Ghana, work-time arrangements, work-life balance

Introduction

“... you would want to keep your job and also with the family. You can't downplay the family so getting the right balance is usually the most difficult. Ensuring that your family is well catered for and intact and then the job is the greatest challenge for us. And your editors would usually console you but still get their stories.”¹

The statement above aptly describes the experiences of Ghanaian female journalists in their efforts at balancing the different demands of their profession and domestic obligations. Although the number of women

¹ Remark by authors: Respondent 4.



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in journalism and other professions is increasing,² journalism is still considered a male preserve.³ Though women have moved from the confines of the domestic sphere into the public arena as wage earners, Ghanaian women like most African women are still disadvantaged. African societies still see women as responsible for domestic caregiving and daily housekeeping. Thus, and despite the successes, women have socio-economically achieved over the years, specific socio-cultural norms impede Ghanaian women's efforts at achieving work-life balance.⁴ Davies, among others, argues that balancing work and life obligations involve rigorous attempts to accomplish a 'fit' between competing responsibilities.⁵ Therefore, any attempt at achieving work-life balance must aim at managing time and minimising conflict between competing work and domestic and social obligations. Since work-life tends to complement and regulate social and domestic life, it is vital to consider the tensions and conflicts that may emerge, especially when workers strive to allocate time and effort proportionately for each set of competing activities and social obligations.⁶

Journalism's work-time is not considered family-friendly. Work arrangements for most journalists involve longer work hours and work at non-standard hours which are mostly irregular or erratic.⁷ As Chambers and Steiner stress, journalism's work time arrangements are mostly unsuitable to and often in conflict with women's domestic and social life obligations.⁸ For instance, Adasi and Frimpong⁹ confirm that most Ghanaian female journalists combine these unfriendly work time schedules with other social obligations like religious ceremonies, family socialisation, eldercare and childcare. The combination of these challenging schedules with equally important family obligations tends to stress the marriages of most Ghanaian female journalists.

Furthermore, Ghanaian female journalists like other female workers around the world work 'double shifts', 'second shifts' or 'double days' at home and on unpaid household chores.¹⁰ Though male journalists keep similar time arrangements, socially constructed patriarchy and sex-role arrangements ensure that men can spend more time at work (and thus engage in other work-related activities) than their female counterparts. Thus, journalism work-time and practice are gendered and privileges the priorities of male journalists to the disadvantage of female journalists.

Most related studies adopt gender-neutral analytical viewpoints, disregarding the primacy of socially constructed gender roles and the possible negative implications of work time arrangements on the multiple roles women play in their attempt to attain appreciable levels of work-life balance. By contrast, a gendered framework considers gendered social constructs such as gendered social role relations as fundamental in shaping public-private spheres' segmentations.¹¹ A gendered framework also examines taken-for-granted discriminatory tendencies, mostly emanating from patriarchal attitudes, which generally prevail in journalistic work culture. The approach also pinpoints entrenched gender discriminatory practices and routines based on patriarchal attitudes, which impede the effective integration of women into the profession.¹² Thus, a feminist approach brings

to the fore endemic issues such as 'motherhood penalties' and 'motherhood dilemma' which are consequences of gendered workplace inequalities.¹³ Ghana's *Labour Act 651 Section 57* guarantees and protects the rights of working and expectant mothers. Ghanaian female workers generally have between three to six months of paid childcare leave in addition to shorter working days for nursing mothers. The Act also ensures gender equity in remuneration.¹⁴ However, for most, the reality is different for female journalists working in smaller private media houses. Most private media houses have funding challenges related to the scarcity of advertising revenues¹⁵ and therefore may not afford the additional cost of paid childcare leave for pregnant workers. Besides, the *Ghana Journalists Association* (GJA) is not unionised and legally mandated to negotiate fair remunerations and better conditions of service on behalf of journalists. Working conditions for journalists in Ghana, as in most African countries are mostly characterised by low wages and high job insecurity, which tends to generate gender discriminatory practices based on sexist perceptions in most newsrooms.

Gender analysis of women in the journalism profession emphasises how issues such as 'motherhood penalties'¹⁶ and 'motherhood dilemma' contribute towards career stay or opt - out choices especially when choosing between family and childcare obligations, and journalism work.¹⁷ Griffin further argues that such inflexible work-time arrangements and irregular/erratic schedules invariably impose challenges on women concerning childcare. North reiterates other arguments emphasising the extent to which mothers returning from childcare leave tend to lose out on career progression opportunities since they cannot commit sufficient time to work demands.¹⁸ Consequently, most Ghanaian male news editors tend to use motherhood as an excuse to 'penalize' or discriminate against female journalists returning from childcare leave, in news assignment allocations.

This qualitative study examines 23 Ghanaian female journalists' experiences with journalism work-time arrangements and their efforts at achieving an appreciable level of work-life balance. The article suggests that journalism work-time arrangements consisting of work duration, non-standard work schedules and high work volumes have become normalised, reflecting male dominance and entrenched patriarchal attitudes in the profession¹⁹ which are combined with deep-rooted perceptions of women's obligations as housewives. The ability of female journalists to manage elderly and children's care, as well as the ability to sustain marital and social relationships, are also deeply interwoven with their work time arrangements.²⁰ Though Ghanaian female journalists have equally daunting domestic obligations, lack of institutionalised social security systems, including inadequate gender progressive labour laws impinge significantly on their ability to achieve essential work-life balance. The study poses the question: What are Ghanaian female journalists' experiences associated with journalism work-time arrangements in achieving a balance between work demands, social and family life?

Literature Review

As journalism workplaces become heterogeneous and 'genderised', the need for intensive empirical examination of the relationship between journalism work-time arrangements and the ability of female journalists to balance competing work and life activities become critical. The ability to meet news deadlines and the readiness to be always available for news assignments are considered hallmarks of a competent

2 BADEN, S. et al.: *Background Paper on Gender Issues in Ghana*. Report prepared for the West and North Africa Department. Department for Overseas Development (DFID) UK. University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, UK, Bridge (Development-Gender) Report No. 19, 1994. Brighton, 1994.

3 GADZEKPO, A.: Missing Links: African Media Studies and Feminists' Concerns. In *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 69-80.

4 AMOAH-BOAMPONG, C.: Historicising: The Women's Manifesto for Ghana: A Culmination of Women's Activism in Ghana. In *Legon Journal of Humanities*, 2018, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 26-53.

5 DAVIS, R.: *Work-Life Balance: Measures to Help Reconcile Work, Private and Family Life*. Brussels : Library Briefing - Library of the European Parliament, 2013. [online]. [2019-09-23]. Available at: <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=LDM_BRI\(2013\)130549](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=LDM_BRI(2013)130549)>.

6 CLARK, S. C.: Work Cultures and Work/Family Balance. In *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 2001, Vol. 5, No. 8, p. 348-365.

7 GRIFFIN, A.: *Where Are the Women? Why Need More Female Newsroom Leaders*. Released on 11th September 2014. [online]. [2019-09-07]. Available at: <<https://nicmanreports.org/articles/where-are-the-women/>>.

8 See: CHAMBERS, D., STEINER, L.: The Changing Status of Women Journalism. In ALLAN, S. (ed.): *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*. Abingdon, New York : Routledge, 2010, p. 49-59.

9 ADASI, G. S., FRIMPONG, A. D.: Multiple Roles of African Women Leaders and Their Challenges: The Case of the Presbyterian Church. In *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2014, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 63-68.

10 OPOKU-MENSAH, A.: Hanging in There: Women, Gender and Newsroom Cultures in Africa. In DE BRUIN, M., ROSS, K. (eds.): *Gender and Newsroom Cultures: Identities at Work*. Cresskill : Hampton Press, 2004, p. 105-117.

11 KYUNG-HEE, K.: Obstacles to the Success of Female Journalists in Korea. In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2006, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 123-141.

12 LOHNER, J., NEVERLA, I., BANJAC, S.: *Structural Working Conditions of Journalism in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa: Empirical Finding from Interview with Journalists Reporting on Democratization Conflicts*. McCoDEM Working Papers Series (Unpublished), 2017. [online]. [2019-09-15]. Available at: <<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/117288/>>.

13 NORTH, L.: Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. In *Journalism*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 315-330.

14 *Ghana Labour Act 651*. [online]. [2019-08-21]. Available at: <<http://www.melr.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/LABOUR-ACT-2003.pdf>>.

15 See: AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER: *African Media Barometer: The First Home Grown Analysis of the Media Landscape in Africa - Ghana*. Windhoek : Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) FESMEDIA Africa, 2017.

16 CORRELL, S. J., BERNARD, S., PAIK, I.: Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty? In *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 112, No. 5, p. 1297-1339.

17 LOBO, P. et al.: 'In Journalism, We Are All Men': Material Voices in the Production of Gender Meaning. In *Journalism Studies*, 2015, Vol. 18, No. 9, p. 2-19.

18 NORTH, L.: Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. In *Journalism*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 315-330.

19 See also: CHAMBERS, D., STEINER, L.: The Changing Status of Women Journalism. In ALLAN, S. (ed.): *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*. Abingdon, New York : Routledge, 2010, p. 49-59.

20 CHEN, C. P., JAVID-YAZDI, M.: Career Strategies to Enhance the Vocational Well-Being of Journalists. In *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 2019, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 31-38.

journalist. For instance, Reich and Golder point out that time is a critical element in news production and an indispensable factor in journalism's work culture.²¹

In the African context, studies on the gendered nature of journalism's work-time arrangements are limited. For instance, the majority of studies by African feminist scholars on media and gender focus on micro-level issues relating to women's representations in the media.²² Bosch's extensive review of gender issues in African media confirms this trend.²³ It is also important to acknowledge that some African media scholars like Gadzekpo,²⁴ Bosch,²⁵ Zuiderveld,²⁶ van den Wijngard,²⁷ Irukwu²⁸ and Opoku-Mensah²⁹ acknowledge the essence and incongruity of journalism work time schedules to the social and family lives of African female journalists. For instance, Irukwu discusses the impact of journalism work and its related time arrangements on Nigerian female journalists' effective integration into the profession.³⁰ Van den Wijngard also identifies specific critical socio-cultural roles that impede Senegalese women's effective integration into an already male-dominated profession.³¹ Zuiderveld's study in South Africa finds that South African female journalists cannot achieve or sustain an appreciable level of work-life balance due to the erratic nature of journalism work time arrangements.³²

Some female media practitioners and feminist media scholars in Ghana have highlighted the work-social life conflict engendered by the irregular, unstable and unpredictable nature of journalism work-time for female journalists. There are instances where female journalists report late for work because they had to send a sick child to the hospital. Most female journalists, in such circumstances, may not be available for early morning or evening news assignments. Such a situation confirms North's 'motherhood dilemma' hypothesis, which argues that female journalists who are nursing mothers tend to face difficulties in creating an appreciable balance between work and family life.

In traditional conservative societies like Ghana, most female journalists have additional social obligations, which generally retard their ability to commit to journalism work fully. Newsroom culture also tends to reflect entrenched social patriarchal and generally accepted stereotypical male attitudes. These ingrained mentalities conveniently disregard the multiple and contrasting roles women play outside journalism work. Meanwhile, most male news editors in Ghana are influenced by such traditional notions about women, resulting in 'gendered' mentalities that eventually influence gender relationships in newsrooms.³³ For instance, in Nigeria, male news editors tend to view female journalists as 'appendices' in the profession.³⁴ Other studies on journalism's work-time arrangements outside the African context, including those by Chambers and Steiner,³⁵

Reinardy,³⁶ Creedon and Cramer³⁷ and Robinson,³⁸ support assertions that journalism work schedules are incongruous with personal social life rhythms for most journalists. For example, Reinardy³⁹ claims that the failure to balance time between competing activities tend to have health and well-being implications for most journalists. Consequently, the *Center for Disease Control* (CDC) in the United States ranks journalism as the seventh most stressful profession. The situation is dire for most women in the profession, considering how incompatible journalism work time schedules clash and compete with women's other social life activities and obligations: "The age-old dilemma of a career in journalism vs. a private life with family seems to still be unresolved since most successful journalists find that the only way to be a success is to work at it 24 hours a day, leaving little or no time for personal relationships, marriage, parenting, or anything else that takes time from the seemingly unending professional work."⁴⁰

From a gender viewpoint, a substantial number of female journalists prefer to opt-out of the profession due to inconveniences associated with irregular working hours, long workdays, including the erratic nature of work-time arrangements.⁴¹ For instance, it is pertinent to examine critically extenuating factors the gendered work-time arrangements have in impacting female journalists' ability to maintain and sustain marital relationships. The unfriendly nature of journalism work-time arrangements in addition to long workdays and irregularity of work schedules are significant factors impeding women's career progression in journalism. In some countries, irregular work schedules contribute significantly to the persisting 'invisible glass ceiling' phenomenon impeding women's career progression to managerial levels.⁴² Tsui and Lee⁴³ stress that social and domestic obligations impose extra burdens on women, forcing female journalists to commit more time to domestic duties than to journalism work. Therefore, any attempt by women to shatter the 'invisible glass-ceilings' in journalism work means they must recommit extra time to journalism work rather than to fulfil social and domestic obligations. Such a situation ultimately creates work-life conflict and imbalance in favour of work with potential social consequences for female journalists.

Gendered Dimensions of Work-Time Arrangements

The time-bind metaphor provides a convenient frame for perceiving and analysing workers' bind with work time. The time-bind notion frames its arguments on the relationship between workers and their working time arrangements.⁴⁴ The framework further provides a basis for critical examination of the extent to which worker-worktime bind affects achievements of work-life balance.⁴⁵ As the model suggests, the essence of time-bind becomes obvious when "there are perceived imbalances in work and family/personal obligations due to lack of time to meet both".⁴⁶ It is also essential to consider the idea of work-life balance,

21 REICH, Z., GODLER, Y.: A Time of Uncertainty: The Effects on Reporters' Time Schedule on Their Work. In *Journalism Studies*, 2014, Vol. 15, No. 5, p. 607-618.
22 GADZEKPO, A.: Battling Old Ghosts in Gender and Africa Media Research. In *African Communication Research*, 2011, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 389-411.
23 BOSCH, T.: Gender in South Africa Newsroom Studies. In *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2016, Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 295-304.
24 GADZEKPO, A.: Missing Links: African Media Studies and Feminist Concerns. In *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 69-80.
25 BOSCH, T.: African Feminist Media Studies. In *Feminist Media Studies*, 2011, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 27-33.
26 ZUIDERVELD, M.: Hitting the Glass Ceiling – Gender and Media Management in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 401-415.
27 VAN DEN WIJNGARD, R.: Women as Journalists: Incompatibility of Roles? In *African Media Review*, 1992, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 46-56.
28 IRUKWU, E.: Women in Nigerian Broadcasting: A Study of Their Access to Decision-making Positions. In UNESCO: *Women and Media Decision-making: The Invisible Barriers*. Vendome: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985, p. 66-80.
29 OPOKU-MENSAH, A.: Hanging in There: Women, Gender and Newsroom Cultures in Africa. In DE BRUIN, M., ROSS, K. (eds.): *Gender and Newsroom Cultures: Identities at Work*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2004, p. 105-117.
30 IRUKWU, E.: Women in Nigerian Broadcasting: A Study of Their Access to Decision-Making Positions. In UNESCO: *Women and Media Decision-Making: The Invisible Barriers*. Vendome: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985, p. 66-80.
31 VAN DEN WIJNGARD, R.: Women as Journalists: Incompatibility of Roles? In *African Media Review*, 1992, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 46-56.
32 ZUIDERVELD, M.: Hitting the Glass Ceiling – Gender and Media Management in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 401-415.
33 OPOKU-MENSAH, A.: Marching on: African Feminist Media Studies. In *Feminist Media Studies*, 2001, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 25-34.
34 OYINADE, B., LAMIDI, I.: Media, Gender and Conflict: The Problem of Eradicating Stereotyping of Women in Nigeria. In *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2013, Vol. 2, No. 12, p. 93-107.
35 See: CHAMBERS, D., STEINER, L.: The Changing Status of Women Journalism. In ALLAN, S. (ed.): *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 49-59.

36 REINARDY, S.: Female Journalists More Likely to Leave Newspapers. In *Newspaper Research Journal*, 2009, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 42-57.
37 See: CREEDON, P., CRAMER, J.: *Women in Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, London, New York: Sage Publications, 2007.
38 See also: ROBINSON, G. J.: *Gender, Journalism, and Equity: Canadian, US, and European Experiences*. New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2005.
39 REINARDY, S.: Newspaper Journalism in Crisis: Burnout on the Rise, Eroding Journalists' Career Commitment. In *Journalism*, 2011, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 33-50.
40 See: SALTZMAN, J.: *Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Popular Culture*. California: University of Southern California, 2003.
41 EVERBACH, T., FLOURNEY, C.: Women Leave Journalism for Better Pay, Work Conditions. In *Newspaper Research Journal*, 2007, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 52-54.
42 VAN ZOONEN, L.: One of the Girls? The Changing Gender of Journalism. In ALLAN, S., BRANSTON, G., CARTER, C. (eds.): *News, Gender and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 33-47.
43 TSUI, C. Y., LEE, F. L.: Trajectories of Female Journalists' Careers in Hong Kong: A Field Theory Perspective. In *Journalism Studies*, 2012, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 370-385.
44 TAUSIG, M., FENWICK, R.: Unbinding Time: Alternate Work Schedules and Work-Life Balance. In *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 2001, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 101-119.
45 See: EUROFOUND: *Working Time and Work-Life Balance in a Life Course Perspective*. Dublin: Eurofound, 2012.
46 POULOSE, S., SUDARSAN, N.: Work Life Balance: A Conceptual Review. In *International Journal of Advancement in Management and Economics*, 2014, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 1-17.

described as the ability of “... people [to] effectively manage multiple obligations at work, at home, and in their communities”.⁴⁷

The notion of time-bind also aligns with *Eurofound*'s three-dimension approach to the analysis of work-time arrangements. The first dimension focuses on issues of work-time durations, examining the extent to which long working hours affect work-life balance. The second dimension relates to work time schedules analysing three composite sub-dimensions: a) standard work schedules, b) non-standard irregular work schedules, and c) flexible work schedules – all of which explain the scope and effect of work schedules on achieving work-life balance.

The third dimension examines the essence of workload volumes to achievements of work-life balance. To the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) work-time arrangements that fall outside international standardised guidelines tend to impact negatively on workers' ability to achieve work-life balance. The ILO describes irregular/non-standard work times as comprising “*shift patterns involving night work and weekend work [which] require workers to work outside of the boundaries of the standard workweek*”.⁴⁸ Poulouse and Sudarsan⁴⁹ further examine the inter-related but contrasting nature of work and life. They argue that work and life are two complementary but separate and diverging sets of activities. Although work and life complement each other in real terms, both possess diverging functional elements.

Each set of activity within each sphere may potentially create conflicts or tensions in each other, especially when one set of activity spills over or intrudes into the activities of the other domain.⁵⁰ Consequently, a worker's ability to achieve a balance between work and life activities depends on their ability to apportion time and effort equitably between paid work activities and private family/social life activities.⁵¹ Balancing work and life activities requires a conscious commitment of time and effort in attaining an appropriate ‘fit’ between two or more competing obligations embodied in work and life activities.⁵²

Inserting a gendered social construct perspective into the discourse can help unravel obscured sexist tendencies that create segmentations of roles within work and life (social-domestic) activities.⁵³ For instance, women play multiple roles within the domestic domain in addition to other social expectations that are inherent in patriarchally conservative societies.

These are crucial to any discursive analyses of work-time arrangements and management of work-life balance. Meanwhile, most societies still expect female workers to manage traditional social and family responsibilities; there is also an added obligation for women in the modern era to earn wages and work outside of the domestic sphere. In Africa, women's wages are complementary incomes necessary for regulating the inadequate income earned by men. However, although social expectations have changed significantly to accommodate women's socio-economic roles as wage earners, women are often expected to spend more time on unpaid household chores than their male counterparts.

47 CANADIAN CHILD CARE HUMAN RESOURCES SECTOR COUNCIL. *Workplace Wellness*. [online]. [2020-03-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca/hr-resource-centre/hr-toolkit/workplaces-work/workplace-wellness>>.

48 See: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION: *Guide for Developing Balanced Work Time Arrangements*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2019.

49 POULOSE, S., SUDARSAN, N: Work Life Balance: A Conceptual Review. In *International Journal of Advancement in Management and Economics*, 2014, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 1-17.

50 POULOSE, S., SUDARSAN, N: Work Life Balance: A Conceptual Review. In *International Journal of Advancement in Management and Economics*, 2014, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 1-17.

51 FAGAN, C. et al.: *The Influence of Working Time Arrangements on Work-Life Integration or 'Balance'. A Review of the International Evidence*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2011.

52 GREENHAUS, J. H., ZIEGERT, J. C., ALLEN, T. D.: When Family-Supportive Supervision Matters: Relation between Multiple Sources of Support and Work-Family Balance. In *Journal of Vocational Behaviours*, 2012, Vol. 80, No. 2, p. 266-275.

53 KYUNG-HEE, K.: Obstacles to the Success of Female Journalists in Korea. In *Media, Culture & Society*, 2006, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 123-141.

Research Design

Twenty-three (N=23) in-depth unstructured interviews were carried out with female journalists from four regional capitals. In a recent report, Yeboah-Banin et al. confirm the lack of a comprehensive database that captures the entire population of journalists in Ghana.⁵⁴ The *Ghana Journalists Association's* membership list seems to be the most reliable source today, although not all Ghanaian journalists are members. According to the GJA membership data of 2017, 215 women were registered as active members.⁵⁵ Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of twenty-three female respondents interviewed for the study.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics and media experience of female respondents (N=23)

Age Range	37 – 70 years
Educational Attainment	Bachelors (n = 10); Masters (n = 5); Diploma or Certificate (n = 6); Senior High School (n = 2)
Marital Status	n = 14
Parental Status	n = 17
Work Experience	5 – 45 years
Metropolitan Newsroom	n = 9
Regional Correspondents	n = 13
Private Media	n = 13
State Media	n = 10
Type of Media	Print (n = 8); Radio (n = 5); TV (n = 5); News Agency (n = 4)

Source: Own processing

Interview sessions were conducted between February and April 2016. The sessions consisted of open-ended questions allowing for follow-up questions, which lasted between 40 – 90 minutes and were held in convenient locations for respondents. Interview sessions were audio and video recorded. Over 30 hours of recordings were transcribed, coded and analysed.

Interviewees had erratic work schedules that affected planned interview appointments. In two instances, we went with two potential interviewees on their news assignments to hold in-situ interview sessions. Such challenges created delays, which ultimately influenced the decision to extend the period for fieldwork. To mitigate these challenges, a non-probability, non-random snowball sampling technique, or respondent-assisted sampling technique, was used to extract a reliable sample size.⁵⁶ Respondents were selected regardless of age, work experience, rank, position or educational status. When about 20 interviews were completed, the same topics and problems started to emerge although the respondents had different personal stories.

All in all, 23 interview sessions were conducted. Respondents' narratives were analysed along two broad thematic areas. Figure 1 describes these thematic areas and the various sub-themes derived from work arrangements' dimensions and work-life balance.

54 See: YEBOAH-BANIN, A. et al: *Status of Women in the Ghanaian Media: Providing Evidence for Gender Equality and Advocacy*. Accra: University of Ghana Press, 2020.

55 GHANA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION: *Updated Master List of Eligible Voters for the GJA 2017 Elections*. [online]. [2019-09-07]. Available at: <<http://www.gjaghana.org/images/gjalist2017a.pdf>>.

56 See: OLSEN, W.: *Data Collection: Key Debates and Methods in Social Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publication, 2011.

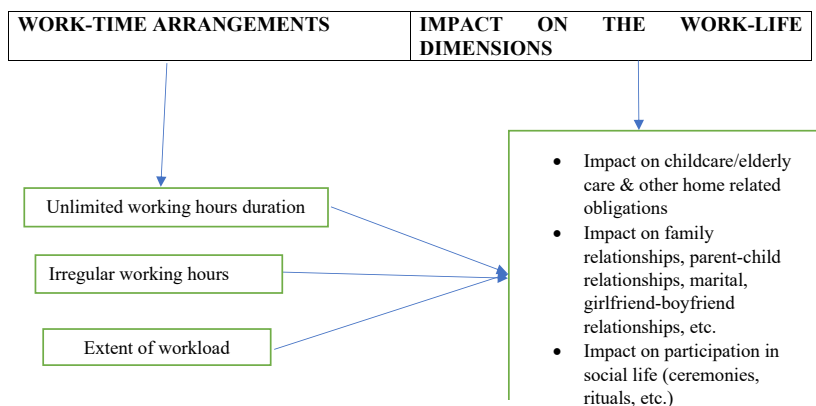


Figure 1: Themes of analysis
Source: Own processing

Results

This section presents the narratives of respondents' experiences. Most respondents narrate the extent to which their working hours, heavy workloads, and irregular and inconsistent time schedules create barriers to achievements of balance between work and life. The narratives reveal that Ghanaian female journalists face a work-life dilemma: whether to prioritise work commitments over family commitments:

“...they asked me to apply for the Assistant editorship and I told them that I will not. It wasn't because I wasn't competent but I think that growing up, knowing many female journalists, the notion and the tag was that female journalists cannot raise families because they are so engrossed with their jobs, they are unable to have a balance between family life and career so you become a poor mother or wife at the expense of your job or you become a fantastic mother and your job suffers.” (Respondent 20)

Though existing labour policies attempt to offer women some flexibility of schedules, the policies are insufficient in helping Ghanaian female journalists to cope with this dilemma. Persisting entrenched cultural and traditional attitudes and beliefs still confine women to the domestic sphere to manage house chores and childcare. Most respondents even felt guilty for their inability to meet domestic obligations.

Unlimited Duration of Work Time

Impact on Elderly Care and Childcare

Most respondents agree with Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming's assertion that journalism work durations are generally unfavourable considering the multiple social/family roles played by female journalists.⁵⁷ Though sections 33 to 39 of *Ghana's Labour Act (651)* stipulate an eight-hour workday or 40 hours working week, most journalists work over and above these hours. Sections 55 to 58 of the *Ghana Labour Act (651)* further guarantee the rights and protection of pregnant and working mothers. The Act guarantees that pregnant

working women take twelve weeks of paid childcare leave including short working hours for nursing mothers. Yet most respondents claim their daily work hours far exceed the legally stipulated hours for working mothers. These claims reiterate similar sentiments expressed by Lebanese female journalists about their work time.⁵⁸ In countries like the U.S., most newsrooms do not have comprehensive paid childcare leave policies for pregnant and nursing mothers.⁵⁹ The lack of such paid leaves forces some female journalists to opt-out of journalism.⁶⁰ Again, most respondents expressed guilt and frustration for their inability to devote sufficient time to childcare. Interestingly, respondents showed less concern for their inability to give sufficient time for elderly care.

Respondent 9: “... when you are working and you have a passion as I do, the family side tends to suffer a lot because I spend more time at work than with the kids and it's quite challenging.”

Respondent 20: “Last week I got home around 9 p.m. A few minutes [away from] the house, I had a call and I picked it; it was my 6-year-old girl. She was like ‘where am I?’ and I told her I was almost home, and she asked me to hurry up. I got to the house and she had nothing to say; we went to bath together, and we were lying on the bed, I was like ‘Ewura, pray and let's sleep’. Then she said ‘I want to ask you a question; can't you tell your boss that you have kids, so you have to come home early? Every day you go to work, you come home at 9 p.m. and we'll only be here; we can't eat with you, we don't see you, who will even help me with my homework?’”

Impact on Relationships

In an online article *Only Unusual Man Can Marry Female Journalist*, the Nigerian blogger Funke Olande highlights challenges Nigerian female journalists face in dating and in sustaining marriages.⁶¹ Most journalists, regardless of gender, attest to the high levels of stress in their marriage, as a result of long and erratic working hours.⁶² The situation is similar to what Vasarhelyi finds in Hungary where journalists tend to experience high rates of divorce or postpone marriage due to constraints imposed by long working hours.⁶³ In Ghana, most regional correspondents report that they experience more stressful relationships due to long work duration and the practice of covering multiple assignments in a day.

Respondent 7: “So, you're leaving home at 6 a.m., you will return around 11 p.m. – midnight. It is 5 months down married life. You're out and you're probably thinking about getting back home, making sure your house is in the best of condition... You need someone who will understand you but the question is how long the person will understand you? Because sometimes you have some complaints arising.”

Impact on Participation in Social Life

To Shelley,⁶⁴ the nature of journalism work is incongruous with the social lifestyles of female journalists. Here, journalism work-time schedules inhibit both male and female journalists to build viable social networks

58 MELKI, J. P., MALLAT, S. E.: Block Her Entry, Keep Her Down and Push Her Out. In *Journalism Studies*, 2016, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 7-73.

59 GOLDSTEIN, K.: Where Are the Mothers? In *Nieman Reports*, 2017, Vol. 71, No. 3, p. 24-36. [online]. [2019-07-09]. Available at: <<https://niemanreports.org/articles/where-are-the-mothers/>>.

60 LUCHT, T.: High on Passion Low on Pay: Women's Job Satisfaction at Iowa Newspaper. In *Newspaper Research Journal*, 2015, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 426-450.

61 OLANDE, F.: *Nigeria: Only Unusual Man Can Marry Female Journalist*. [online]. [2019-09-15]. Available at: <<https://allafrica.com/stories/200703110239.html>>.

62 WARD, B.: *I Almost Let My Journalism Job Destroy My Marriage. Don't Make the Same Mistake*. [online]. [2019-08-19]. Available at: <<https://www.poynter.org/newsletters/2017/i-almost-let-my-journalism-job-destroy-my-marriage-dont-make-the-same-mistake-update/>>.

63 VASARHELYI, M.: Journalism in Hungary. In WEAVER, D. H., WILLNAT, L. (eds.): *Global Journalist in the 21st Century*. New York, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 234-242.

64 SHELLEY, L.: Female Journalists and Journalism in *fin-de-siècle* Magazine Stories. In *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 2009, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 1-15.

57 See: CHAMBERS, D., STEINER, L., FLEMING, C.: *Women and Journalism*. London: Routledge, 2004.

outside the workplace. In Ghana, socio-cultural traditions expect women to play an active and significant role in traditional/cultural rites such as funerals, child naming, puberty rite ceremonies and other religious ceremonies;⁶⁵ yet, as most respondents explain, long working hours restrict them from participating meaningfully in these ceremonies. Most respondents confirm Chen and Javid-Yadzi's assertion⁶⁶ that they have become social outcasts isolated from family and friends.

Respondent 20: "...I don't have a social life; I don't go to funerals, weddings, and all that unless they are very close to me. So, I don't have a social life... If I decide to have a social life, I cannot do my job. So, it is always work, work."

Respondent 9: "I don't remember the last time I went to church. Neither do I remember the last time I had a social gathering of friends. We usually do WhatsApp because I don't have the time. My friends have come to understand it, so they don't complain anymore."

In 2010, the *Nigerian Union of Journalists* (NUJ) recognised the adverse effect of such long working hours on the social lives of Nigerian journalists,⁶⁷ yet like most African journalists' associations, they ignore the impact on the family lives of female journalists.

Respondent 2: "As for having time to attend funerals and weddings, unless I'm off during that weekend but sometimes I'm too tired to go because that's the only time I have for rest. So, if it's a funeral that is going to take the whole day, I might not be able to go. If it's a wedding that's going to take a lot of my time, I might not be able to go because ... on Saturday and on Sunday I would want to go to church, I have laundry to do. If there is something, I need to do at home like maybe cleaning the bathroom or cleaning around the house I have to do it between Saturday and Sunday. So, you don't really get time to interact with family members unless it's the weekend and you're off duty."

Irregular Work-Time

For most Ghanaian journalists, journalism's work times are irregular, unpredictable and unsociable, which adversely affects their family and social lives. From a gender perspective, the 24-hour alert work culture in journalism required for covering breaking news assignments, and a particular 'unwritten trait' that characterizes journalists to be 'tough as nails' and 'macho'⁶⁸ persist in the profession despite the feminisation of the profession. Secondly, the digitalisation and introduction of 24/7 TV news production have created additional demands on the already busy work time of journalists.⁶⁹ Thus, for most respondents, irregular work-time which falls outside the standard working hours always interferes with domestic duties.

To overcome these challenges, most respondents rely on a network of family and/or paid house-help support systems. It is essential to point out that most of these support helps tend to be women. Added to this is the fact that most Ghanaian female regional correspondents work more irregular hours than their metropolitan counterparts. **Respondent 12** complains that: "Those of us in the regions are more stressed up because I think in Accra, they are assigned to a specific program, but in the region, you are supposed to look at the entire region."

65 ABROMAPAH, O. M.: Women's Roles in the Mourning Rituals of the Akan of Ghana. In *Ethnology*, 1999, Vol. 38, No. 3, p. 257-271.

66 CHEN, C. P., JAVID-YAZDI, M.: Career Strategies to Enhance the Vocational Wellness of Journalists. In *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 2019, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 31-38.

67 See: NIGERIA UNION OF JOURNALISTS: *Media Roundtable on "The Working and Welfare Situation of Journalists in Nigeria": A Report*. Lagos: The International Press (IPC), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), 2010.

68 See: REICH, Z., GODLER, Y.: A Time of Uncertainty: The Effects on Reporters' Time Schedule on Their Work. In *Journalism Studies*, 2014, Vol. 15, No. 5, p. 607-618.

69 RUOHO, I., TORRKOLA, S.: Journalism and Gender: Toward a Multidimensional Approach. In *Nordicom Review*, 2018, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 67-79.

Impact on Elderly and Childcare

Variations in work schedules – night shifts and weekend shifts – impose time restraints, significantly affecting Ghanaian female journalists' ability to meet the child and elderly care demands. As Ghana's population ages and increases, the lack of a sophisticated social welfare system for the aged coupled with inadequate health facilities for aged care means that most female workers must perform the roles as caregivers. In the meantime, women are saddled with childcare obligations that impede their ability to work effectively in the profession. For instance, **Respondents 9** and **10** describe how inconsistent work-start times, prolonged working hours and unpredictable closing hours impose an additional burden, which creates stress and conflict between work and elderly care and childcare obligations.

Respondent 9: "Work is demanding, every hour; our schedules are not consistent, [the work] fluctuates. Today you are working the whole week, tomorrow you work from Monday to Sunday and the time ranges. Sometimes you close at 10 p.m., so, you must get to work as early as 2 p.m., depending on the shift you are on. You are not able to go to pick the kids from school, you need a house-help."

Respondent 10: "... you have to take care of kids, even if there are no kids your husband is there, and you need to take care of him. So, it is very challenging. And even the emotional stress we go through. Sometimes you are on assignment and you'd be thinking 'It's time to pick up my children. [Or] my children are home, who is there?' The emotional stress that we go through is very huge."

Impact on Relationships

Chen and Javid-Yadzi⁷⁰ find that the erratic and irregular time schedules of journalism work are significant causal factors for marital breakdowns for most journalists around the world. For instance, most journalists are unable to develop emotional attachments to men outside the workplace due to such irregularities in work time schedules. For most Ghanaian married female journalists, the danger of marital breakdown is constant anxiety.

Respondent 9: "Frankly speaking, it is not easy. It is very stressful, demanding and frustrating, especially when you have a partner who does not buy into your dream, your aspiration and the profession that you are in. It has been one of the problems, I have had combining work with the children; the attention of being a wife, being a mother, being a worker."

Impact on Participation in Social Life

Indeed, the majority of respondents expressed concern about their inability to participate meaningfully in important traditional, social and religious activities. A majority of older female journalists lamented their inability to take part in social obligated funeral and child naming ceremonies. Again, it is essential to note the regional – metropolitan differences here. For example, some regional correspondents combine the role of managers of regional news bureaus with news reporting, covering assignments in an entire region.

Respondent 20, a regional correspondent of a leading media house in Ghana's second-largest city, describes her typical weekend, which tends to disrupt her church-going routines severely:

70 CHEN, C. P., JAVID-YAZDI, M.: Career Strategies to Enhance the Vocational Wellness of Journalists. In *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 2019, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 31-38.

Respondent 20: “We also have our religious lives as well. I want to go to church this evening, but the job does not allow me. Weekends, you are supposed to be free with your family; you have friends to visit, most importantly go to church because you have been to work the whole week but look at the situation now; you are in church, and you are being called to come and cover a programme.”

Other respondents point to the gender differences in time spent on social activities outside work. Most respondents observe that most male journalists are uninhibited by childcare and family obligations; male journalists can therefore afford to spend time in pubs after work.

Respondent 9: “I do not think anybody in my position will tell you that she is managing [her]social life and then... I think it is the men in the industry. Because I hear some of my male colleagues in the room say: ‘Friday we are going to Tilapia Bay, we are going to a spot or a club around the vicinity.’ Then they go like ‘OK. We are meeting’. Whether [or not] they close at 10 p.m. They will all go and meet.”

Respondent 2: “...you have other responsibilities that you have to do, but I do not think these are priorities for men in the media so... (...) After a stressful day they are supposed to go home and rest, they find time to go out and meet friends and chill. It only tells you that, I mean they have a lot of... They are not as stressed as we are. I do not think the men really have a stressful routine like the women.”

Excessive Workload

The volume of workload in journalism is closely linked to long work duration and irregular working hours and both combine to have negative impacts on the work-life balance in the profession. Some media scholars hypothesise that female journalists suffer career disruption due to the intrusion of excessive workload volumes associated with news production processes into domestic and social spheres for women. For instance, a series of factors including long commuting times to and from news assignments, demands of new media technology, especially the need for journalists to generate additional multimedia content – all add up to increases in workload volumes for Ghanaian female journalists. Then for regional correspondents, the scope of the geographical areas they cover for news assignments, including reporting news across diverse and remote rural communities increases their workloads. **Respondent 7**, the regional bureau chief and the only reporter for a region for her media house reports that: “The Eastern region has 26 districts and has a population over 2 million. There are several communities, and the condition is that you should be able to tell the stories of all of them.” A substantial number of respondents also stress the extent to which the hours spent covering news assignments subtract substantial hours needed for work at home. For most young and unmarried respondents, the volume of work was a significant contributory factor in their decision to delay starting a family, which also confirms the ‘motherhood dilemma’⁷¹ hypothesis.

Respondent 7: “Children! Truthfully, there is a bit of confusion because this [journalism] is a very busy work and so you are going to get pregnant.”

To buttress the point, Ross points to the extent and nature of the problem for younger female journalists: “For women considering having children in the future, the near impossibility of successfully combining family and career still seems an insurmountable problem.”⁷² Female journalists in Ghana often bemoan the extent to which their workload intrudes into their marriages and romantic relationships. Most respondents also report that they often write and file news stories at home after returning from late-night assignments. Respondents readily acknowledge the extent to which such practices adversely intrude into and disturb their marriages and relationships:

71 See: NORTH, L.: *The Gendered Newsroom: How Journalists Experience the Changing World of Media*. New York : Hampton Press, 2009.

72 ROSS, K.: Women at Work: Journalism as Engendered Practice. In *Journalism Studies*, 2001, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 531-544.

Respondent 2: “Honestly, I haven’t been in a relationship for a very long time but then I also think that if I were it would have a great effect. I return late at night which means that if I’m dating someone, then I’d have to meet the person only on weekends and I have a lot of things to do on weekends as well. I may probably not have so much time for my boyfriend and I am sure that it is going to create a lot of tension...”

Notwithstanding the disadvantages associated with working as a female journalist in Ghana, respondents place a high value on their work as journalists. Most respondents display high levels of passion and dedication to their work. They view their work as a contribution towards the democratic and social development of the Ghanaian society.

Respondent 9: “It has been frustrating and interesting; yeah, I won’t lie about that. It’s fun, frustrating and a mixed feeling and I console myself with the fact that every job is like that. Nowhere is perfect. So, you make where you work a comfortable zone, love what you do, and you feel less of the stress in it. So that is what motivates me and I’m looking forward and ahead of that I don’t want to be in a management position, yeah that’s for a fact.”

Respondent 11: “I had promised myself not to go back into journalism after I had left Angel FM but the offer from Scotland from ABCI Media was good. I had promised myself again that at 40 I will quit journalism and I was 40 a few weeks ago so I’m still considering that. I would hope to own my own media institution one day.”

Conclusions and Discussion

This qualitative study has probed the experiences of Ghanaian female journalists concerning the extent to which journalism work-time arrangements impact on their social and domestic lives. The study discusses essential elements encapsulated within the broad idea of journalism work-time arrangements. The findings support notions that the not-clearly-defined work duration, irregular schedules and excessive workload impact negatively on Ghanaian female journalists’ ability to balance multiple domestic and social obligations with equally essential demands of journalism work.

As the interview responses indicate, Ghanaian female journalists face a myriad of challenges stemming in part from patriarchal perceptions, historical and social conceptions of women as burden bearers and unequal partners in gender relations. Despite gender progressive labour policy reforms and legislations, Ghanaian female workers still face high levels of discrimination in the gendered workplace due to the subconscious adoption of entrenched traditional norms which in turn act as barriers to change. Thus, according to a facilitator of *Gender, Safety and Equity Campaign*, Alice Tettey, “there is discrimination against most female journalists concerning remuneration, promotion, and assignments, among others.”⁷³ Our interview respondents confirm the notion that female journalists’ career progression and effective integration in the profession are hindered by perceptions that the journalism practice is a men’s playground; therefore, female journalists require extra commitment, courage, and strength. This is clearly emphasised here by **Respondent 5**’s observations:

Respondent 5: “I have suffered in the newsroom and I remember these words: ‘This is a man’s world. If you cannot stand the heat get out of the kitchen.’ I mean, yes, I was threatened with those things so many times.”

Again, older Ghanaian female journalists acquiesced to these male-centric attitudes entrenched in the profession and accepted as given. This partly confirms arguments by scholars like Steiner⁷⁴ that some female journalists tend to adopt male tendencies to fit in the profession. For instance, in the interviews with older female journalists, they admonish younger female journalists to desist from using complications and

73 NYAVI, G. A.: *Female Journalists Trained in Discrimination at Work*. [online]. [2019-09-15]. Available at: <<https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/female-journalists-trained-on-discrimination-at-work.html>>.

74 STEINER, L.: *Gender and Journalism*. [online]. [2019-08-15]. Available at: <<https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-91>>.

difficulties associated with pregnancy, childcare and motherhood, as excuses to decline coverage of specific news assignments or take up demanding newsroom tasks. Some older interviewees feel proud to narrate their capabilities in cover demanding or late-night assignments despite being in the last trimester of pregnancy. Most female journalists also adopt coping strategies that enable them to combine work demands and childcare. For instance, it is common practice for some female journalists to take their young children to work during weekend day shifts.

The issue here is that weak enforcement of labour policies and regulations have failed to tackle these endemic impediments to women's effective integration into the journalism profession in Ghana. Additionally, the GJA and the women journalists' associations like the *Association of Women in Media* (ASWIM) are pressure groups that lack the needed legal legitimacy to fight for better conditions of service for female journalists. These associations have, however, been effective in providing awareness and advocacy training programmes that increase female journalists' safety at the workplace.

Finally, it is important to draw attention to a significant but overlooked issue in African journalism studies, that is differences in work-time arrangements, workloads and general working conditions between regional and metropolitan correspondents, especially the effect they have on the work-life balance of female regional correspondents. This critical issue offers a virgin area for further exploration by researchers of gender issues in the media in Africa.

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