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Is work-family balance a possibility? The case of Kenyan female teachers in urban public schools

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Young mothers in Kenyan public schools experience a high level of work-family conflict. Currently, there are no formal family-friendly policies, despite declining levels of extended family support and rising cost of hiring domestic workers. A total of 375 female teachers from three towns and Nairobi city filled open-ended surveys to examine the informal work-family balance support offered by the supervisors and colleagues, and suggestions to improve it. Open coding and content analysis were used to analyze the data. Key findings indicate teachers asked for permission/assistance from supervisor/colleagues to attend to family emergencies, and they excessively relied on the supervisor for emotional support (empathy) and counseling from co-workers. Some women did not know whether the school could provide work- family balance support and failed to ask for any support, while others did not receive any support. The school culture determined whether schools had family-friendly culture or not. Schools should increase flexibility, devise ways to reduce workloads and build daycare centers, school houses and offer breastfeeding breaks. These strategies will significantly reduce emotional support reliance on supervisors and use of ad hoc measures. There is a need to sensitize supervisors/teachers on work-family balance needs, and foster a family-friendly environment.

Key words: Work-family conflict, teachers, family-friendly policies, gender.

INTRODUCTION

The demands of work and family have intensified in the recent years all over the world. This is due to: Large numbers of women in dual-career families (Anderson et al., 2002; Behson, 2005; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007); organization culture that demands visible presence coupled with long working hours (Kirby and Krone 2002; Lewis, 1997); communication technology that demands constant virtual presence (Richardson and Thompson, 2012); and young parents, millennials, old workers who desire more flexibility between work and non-work activities (Kossek and Distelberg, 2009). In response to these demands, some countries in the West have devised programs, and family-friendly policies (Lewis, 1997; Kossek and Lobel, 1996; Simkin and Hillage, 1992). Family-friendly policies are "a formal or informal set of terms and conditions which are designed to enable an employee to combine family responsibilities with employment" (Simkin and Hillage 1992:13). However, in

Sub- Saharan Africa the need for family- friendly policies have lagged behind (Aryee, 2005; Mokomane, 2014). Recently, efforts have been made to sensitize organizations on the need for recognizing the need for work-family balance in Sub- Saharan Africa (International Labour Organisation, 2004; Mokomane, 2014). In Kenya, some studies on work-family balance have been conducted. Also, a few organizations, for instance, several banks have implemented family-friendly policies (Wang and Walumbwa, 2007). However, many sectors, for instance, public schools have yet to implement family-friendly work policies.

Generally, the subject of work-family balance and its accompanying family-friendly policies are still at the nascent stage in Kenya (Strathmore University, 2011). Work-family balance is defined as, "the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in and equally satisfied with work and family roles" (Clark, 2000: 513). Some scholars have explained that many organizations still assume families have sufficient resources in the form of extended family, and /or have access to cheap domestic workers, hence the reluctance in implementing family-friendly policies (Tsikata, 2009, Muasya 2014; Noyoo, 2014; Mokomane, 2014).

However, research continues to reveal trends that extended family support is declining especially in towns and cities. As families move from rural areas, they leave behind this support, as well as the increase in the cost of living in towns makes families adopt the nuclear form of family (Mokomane, 2014; Aryee, 2005). To compensate for this loss of extended family support, working women tend to substitute it with domestic workers (Tsikata, 2009, Muasya, 2014). Unfortunately, the cost of hiring domestic workers has continued to rise phenomenally as new labor laws demand better remuneration for house helps (Juma, 2011).

A domestic worker is, "any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship" and domestic work refers to, "work performed in a household or households" (International Labour Organization, 2011). Unlike in the West, employment of domestic workers in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa has always been regarded as means to enable women to work outside the home. This was made possible due to cheap labor and high levels of unemployment (Tsikata, 2009), but not anymore.

In 2012, the case of Robai Musinzi v. Safdar Mohamed in 2012 (KLR, 2012) recognized oral work contracts made between the domestic worker and their employer as binding in Kenya. Also, these contracts are enforceable under the Kenya Government Employment Act, 2007. Before the year 2012, it was still hard for the Kenyan government to enforce these contracts due to their informality. The same domestic workers' provisions in the Employment Act 2007 are in line with provisions of ILO Convention 189, which defines the terms of employment between an employer and a domestic worker (International Labour Organization, 2011). Currently, the minimum wage of domestic workers and payment of social security dues is enforced by the law with hefty penalties (Employment Act, 2007, Kenya subsidiary Law, 2012), pushing the cost of domestic workers in towns beyond the reach of many Kenyan families.

Thus the majority of Kenya's teachers are faced with limited sources of child care support. Research has shown that the majority of Kenya's female teachers in towns and cities with young children face high levels of work-family conflict (Combat, 2014). In this study, work-family conflict is defined as, "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985:77).

Purpose of the study

Despite the lack of formal family-friendly policies, some scholars have argued that the presence of informal family-friendly policies and /or culture in the workplace can alleviate work-family conflict. Examples of such informal family-friendly arrangements within an institution include supportive supervisors and peers (Kirby and Krone, 2002; Lewis, 1997; Thompson et al., 1999). However, there are no studies that have been carried out to determine whether informal arrangements among teachers exist in Kenya's schools; and what role (if any) those non-formal arrangements play in mitigating work-family conflicts among female teachers, especially those with young children. The purpose of this study was to fill the research gap by exploring the nature and adequacy of informal social support for work -family balance that teachers receive today in public Kenyan urban schools; and what the school administration could do to teachers to reduce the work-family conflict experienced.

Teaching in Kenya and work-family conflict

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology with Teachers Service Commission as its human resource arm employ public teachers in Kenya. In 2003, there was a sudden phenomenal increase in school enrolment due to the introduction of free primary education. Lack of corresponding increase in hiring of teachers and expansion of school facilities have led to increased teaching loads, and the student-teacher ratio (Sifuna, 2007; Wosyanju, n.d). Moreover, schools lack basic resources. Student indiscipline is rampant, and teachers face increased pressure from parents demanding high grades for their children, all these factors act as stressors to teachers (Sichambo et al., 2012).

Since then, Kenya's teachers have resulted to frequent strikes demanding for better remuneration citing unbearable large workloads, low pay in comparison to the cost of living (Oduori, 2015; Wosyanju, n.d.). Poor salaries are a huge constraint to hiring house helps, especially for female teachers who have young children. Furthermore, the majority of men are unwilling to help in child care and household work because of cultural norms. Thus, Kenya's women have continued to bear a disproportionate share of housework and child care, and have to juggle the demands of work and family (Coltrane, 2000); which contribute work-family conflict among teachers with young children (Cinamon and Rich, 2005). Work-family conflict is cited as one of the reasons women do not aspire to leadership positions (Combat, 2014).

This study focuses on young mothers in urban schools. In Kenya over 60% of primary school teachers in urban areas are female (Combat, 2014). As of 2015, there were 242,071 teachers in public schools, 118,608 teaching secondary schools, with an enrollment of 9.95 Million students (Wanzala, 2015). These young mothers are typically novice teachers, with little or no social networks at school, hence they usually become vulnerable to work-family conflict (Cinamon and Rich, 2005). Moreover, the life cycle stage studies suggest that women with young children have high child care needs, and experience high work-family conflict, unlike mother with older children (Rothausen, 1999).

In Kenyan towns and cities, there is less kinship support compared to the villages. Since the majority of teachers in urban areas are a part of dual-career families, and the job reporting hours in schools is fairly fixed, usually between 8am and 5 pm; thus, teachers have to outsource alternative child care arrangements. Alternative child care arrangements are often unreliable (Muasya, 2016; Tsikata, 2009), exacerbating the stress related to work-family conflicts among female teachers. The next section presents the conservation of resources theory, which forms the theoretical framework of this study.

Conservation of resources theory

Conservation of resources theory (COR), is an integral stress theory that weaves together resources (social support), stress, and cultural context. It assumes individuals seek to acquire and preserve resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). As a stress model, the theory identifies causes of stress, effects of stress and how individuals' and organizations cope with a lack of sufficient resources (Westman et al., 2004). Stress is defined as "a reaction to the environment when there is a threat of loss of resource, the net loss of resource or lack of resources gain following investment of resources" (Hobfoll, 1989: 516). Examples of resources are objects e.g., a car; personal characteristics e.g., self-esteem;

energies e.g., monies, time, and knowledge; and conditions e.g., tenure, which an individual uses to acquire other resources.

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a stress that arises from competing demands of time and strain between family and work domains (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The COR theory focuses on the stress effects caused by loss or lack of resources within an organizational or situational context (Hobfoll, 2001). Thus, a teacher seeks resources to enable her to meet the demands of work and family. It follows from Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) findings' that if a teacher has enough resources she/he will not experience work-family conflict.

Conservation of resources theory and sources of support

The teacher can receive resources in the form of social support to balance the demands of work and family. Social support is the "assistance that people provide to others when helping them cope with life challenges and situational demands" (Xu and Burleson, 2001: 535). To cope with demands of work and family, many organizations in U.S. and Europe have developed and implemented formal family-friendly policies to help their workers balance work and family (Anderson et al., 2002; Behson, 2005).

According to House and Cottington (1986), social support can be grouped into three categories, namely: Instrumental, emotional support and informational support. Instrumental support is practical assistance to alleviate the challenge facing an individual. Instrumental resources include: "Ability to organize tasks, support from colleagues, help with tasks at home, and help with child care, necessary tools for work, time for work, etc." (Hobfoll, 2001:342). The supervisor can enable young mothers to organize their tasks so that they do not interfere with the family, as well as developing day care centers. Employees can receive emotional support from the supervisor or colleagues. Emotional support involves behaviors that convey empathy, trust, love and care. These include, "understanding from an employer /boss", and "loyalty from friends" (Hobfoll, 2001: 342).

Anderson et al., (2002), have further pointed that a supervisor can be more understanding in times of family crisis, and this can consequently reduce family-family conflict. Workmates can also act as friends, and help each by encouraging each other. Informational support takes the form of general workplace information, and skills such as communication and problem-solving skills (House and Cottington, 1986). Informational support can come from "people you can learn from" (Hobfoll, 2001: 342), which in an organization involves the supervisor and colleagues. As Hobfoll (2001) has described, these people can offer to teach the teacher the necessary skills

to cope with competing demands of work and family.

Organization discourses and organization's family-friendly culture

This section illustrates how family-friendly culture is communicated in an organization and can be a resource or a stressor for reducing work- family conflict. Positive communication of family-friendly policies is a resource while negative communication is a stressor. The main tenet of COR theory is that lack of resources results in stress. This stress emanates from a "culturally construed nature of the environment" (Hobfoll, 2001: 338), Therefore, one way to alleviate work-family conflict' stress would be to change the way the issues of work-family conflict/family-friendly policies are communicated within the organization (Lewis, 1997). A family-friendly culture is, "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of work and family lives" (Thompson et al., 1999: 394).

Culture is a two- edged sword it can enable or hinder. It hinders employees in need of work-family balance support from receiving it; or those in a position to provide work-family balance support/ resources from providing it. If immediate supervisors and coworkers communicate negatively the usage of family-friendly policies, it can hinder their effectiveness (Kirby and Krone, 2012; Thompson et al., 1999). The immediate supervisor can communicate mixed messages where they claim to support employees to use family-friendly policies, but on the other hand demand employees to meet certain targets. This can also happen when immediate supervisors reward 'face time' as a measure of productivity and promotion which disadvantages someone working remotely. Thus, one who works hard but from home is viewed as less dedicated (Lewis, 1997), making career focused workers who need child care to shun them (Kossek and Lobel, 1996). This highlights how family-friendly policies and culture are important. Though one wonders how organizations without formal family-friendly policies, enable their employees to meet the demands of work and family.

Even without formal family-friendly policies, supervisors usually have resources at their disposal, and can facilitate some degree of informal practices that can alleviate work-family conflict (Behson, 2005). For instance, the Kenya's Teachers Service Commission besides providing teachers with statutory leaves, does not have any other formal family-friendly policies (Teachers Service Commission, 2014). Nevertheless, school principals can still enable teachers with child care needs to reduce their work-family conflict. This is because as supervisors at schools, the head teachers have some resources. For instance, they have control over time allocation and

schedules at their disposal.

Besides supervisors, co-workers communication of family-friendly policies indeed influences the family-friendly culture of the organization too. For instance, married men have been found to shy away from taking parental leave even if such leaves are provided for by the organization (Haas et al., 2002). Researchers have attributed these behaviors to social norms and peer pressure from other men who are afraid to be ostracized by society because they openly support their spouses (Haas et al., 2002; Kirby and Krone, 2002). Co-workers may resent their peers who take leaves, as more work will be assigned to them (Kirby and Krone, 2002). Due to the paucity of work-family balance research in Kenya, a lack of legislation on family- friendly policies has persisted in the country (Strathmore University, 2011). Based on the literature review and COR theory, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What were the nature of informal work-family resources available to the female teachers from supervisors and colleagues?
RQ2: What types of informal work-family friendly policies could schools implement to support the female teachers with young children?

METHODOLOGY

To answer the above research questions, a study was carried out in the public primary and secondary schools in two urban locations, namely: city (Nairobi and its metropolitan area, and towns (Eldoret, Machakos, and Wote). According to the country's 2009 census report, Nairobi has approximately 3 million people, while, Eldoret, Machakos, and Wote, have, 280,000, 150,000 and 50,000 people, respectively (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

The target population of this study was female teachers with at least one child in primary school or below. The study used self-completed questionnaires to collect data. The survey questions included both open and closed-ended questions requesting respondents for information related to : Work-family conflict, challenges female teachers with young children encountered combining work, child care and housework, the type of social support (if any), they received from supervisors and colleagues, and suggestions for improving work- family conflict faced by these teachers. This paper was extracted from part of the author's dissertation. It presents results from participants' responses to the open-ended questions analyzed, summarized and presented using qualitative data processing procedures.

Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and Kenya's National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) approved the study. The school administration gave consent for surveys to be distributed to the female teachers. Additionally, the consent of the individual teachers was sought. In each school, the researcher identified a contact person who distributed the surveys to the female teachers and collected them within an agreed period of time. Reminders were sent and a token of appreciation was given to the participants' through the contact person. A total of 472 surveys were distributed to 70 schools 35 from the city and 35 from towns from June to August 2014. A total of 375 questionnaires were collected, fully

Table 1. Informal sources of support from school.

Categories	Sub-categories	Dimensions	Supervisor % of N = 375	Colleagues % N = 375
Support	Instrumental support	Permission to attend to emergencies	164(43%)	170(45%)
		Schedule flexibility	89(24%)	0
		Material/financial support	30 (8%)	15(4%)
		Search domestic workers	0	46 (12%)
		Reduce workload	40(11%)	86(243)
	Emotional support	Listening, understanding and encouragement (empathy)	118 (31%)	28 (7%)
	Informational support	Advice /guidance/counselling	68(18%)	150(40%)
Culture	Good relations and team spirit	-	34(9%)	11(3%)
	Lack of support	-	45 (12%)	14(4%)

filled. Out of 375 teachers, 84.3% (316) were married and 15.7% (59) were single, divorced or widowed. They aged between 30 and 39 years, with an average of 3 children and 12 years of teaching experience. A total of 183 (48.8%) of the women were from towns and 192 women (51.2%) from Nairobi and its suburbs. Primary school teachers were 54.9% (206), and secondary 45.1% (169). From the participants' responses, the reported class sizes had an average of 46 students, and each teacher taught approximately 25 lessons a week.

Data analysis

To analyze the data generated by the open-ended questions, the researcher used open coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and content analysis (Saldana, 2013). The researcher chose randomly 50 respondents to developing the initial categories and a codebook. In the first cycle analysis, a line-by-line coding was carried out followed by constant comparison to develop the initial categories and dimensions. The researcher presented the initial codes to a colleague familiar with the work-family balance literature and Kenya's work family-balance context to code 31 respondents. The researcher compared the coding for the 50 respondents with that of the colleague; and out of 162 items, there was an agreement with 147 items (91%). The researcher modified the categories that were not in agreement and merged similar ones in the codebook. In the second level, the researcher saturated the categories and refined emerging categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The researcher sought disconfirming evidence from the data to avoid forcing categories. For each research questions the analysis was carried out separately (Table 1 and 2). Later on, the researcher sought to find the core category and relationships between all the categories through a conceptual mapping (Figure 1).

RESULTS

RQ1: What was the nature of informal work-family resources available to the female teachers from supervisors and colleagues?

To answer this research question, women teachers were asked two questions: first, "In what ways did your supervisor at school assist you in combining school work,

childcare, and housework responsibilities?" Second, in what ways did your colleagues at school assist you in combining school work, childcare, and housework responsibilities?" The response to these two questions produced two main categories: "Support" and, "culture". The integration of support and culture provided the "family-friendly environment" for young mothers to thrive. The support category had three sub- categories: Instrumental, emotional support, and informational support (Table 1). Under emotional support category, there was one dimension-empathy; this involved being listened to, encouraged and being understood in times of work- family balance crises. In instrumental sub-category, there were five dimensions: To be enabled to attend to emergencies; enjoy some schedule flexibility; being offered teaching materials and financial support; assistance in searching for domestic workers; and reduced workload.

Finally, in the informational support sub-category, there was one dimension-advice. This was advice for work-family balance received from supervisors and co-workers. The second major category-culture category-had two sub-categories: Good working relations and teamwork, amongst teachers and with the supervisor; and lack of support, no form of work- family balance assistance was offered. The extent of these supports varied between the supervisor and colleagues (Table 1) for percentages. These categories are discussed and illustrated in the following.

Support

The first subcategory was instrumental support.

Instrumental support

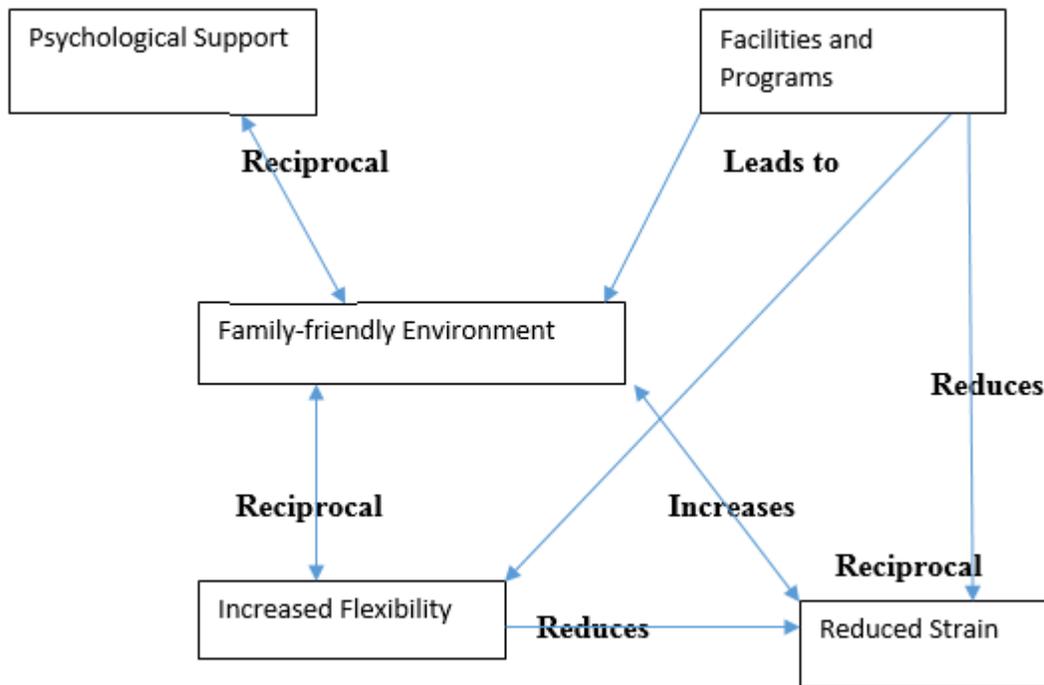Supervisors and colleagues offered practical assistance

Figure 1. Envisioned family- friendly environment.

to the teacher. For instance, permission to attend to emergencies was the greatest form of instrumental support received from the supervisors (43%) and colleagues (45%). Supervisors were supportive when teachers faced various work-family balance related emergencies, such as a child falling ill, and unavailability of a domestic worker for child care. The supervisor could grant permission for the teachers to be absent. One teacher, Chelagat, had this to say, "My supervisor gives me permission to take my children to hospital when they are sick". Colleagues would assist the teacher to attend to emergencies by substituting for each other. As Munyiva said, "Colleagues can stand in for me during my lessons or invigilation (supervision of exams) in a case of emergency. Not all of them can do that, though". Other forms of instrumental support were low for instance, schedule flexibility (24%) this was in the form of allowing some flexibility in the timetable, reporting and leaving time, and extended deadlines; reduced workload (supervisor support:24%; colleagues support: 23%).

 Emotional support

This was the second greatest form of support received by teachers from supervisors (31%) but not from peers (7%). Supervisors and colleagues empathized with the teacher when she met family crises such as lack of domestic workers or challenges of child care. This was through

listening to the teacher's circumstances and offering encouragement as reported by teacher Muthoni about her supervisor, "Understanding my situation especially when I am required to be out of school to attend to my children issues, and allowing me sometimes not to attend to all school responsibilities such as early morning (school) assemblies". Similarly, emotional support came from colleagues, Mwende happily confessed, "They are kind to me when I am unable to meet deadlines" and for Chebet, "Sharing experiences helps me to know I am not alone, other teachers go through the same difficulties. It encourages me to balance my duties as a teacher and a mother."

Informational support

Apart from instrumental and emotional support, teachers also reported receiving informational support. However, informational support in the form of advice was infrequent from supervisors (18%) but more frequent from colleagues (40%). Advice on topics such as how to manage time, reduce conflict between childcare and schoolwork, make- up for missed lessons, and relieve stress. Nagira had this to say about her supervisor, "She advises me, if possible, to do school work at school and not change my home to an office. But sometimes it forces as you are running to beat deadlines in school e.g. marking exams". Teachers looked upon experienced

colleagues for work-family balance counseling too.

Organizational culture

This section discusses how both the presence of work-family culture or lack of it influenced the work-family conflict the teacher experienced. This source of support was also low. Good relations with supervisors (9%), and colleagues (3%) promoted an environment to balance work and family needs.

Some teachers reported that their supervisors cultivated a family-friendly culture for teachers with young children. They used words such as stress-free, not demanding, conducive environment, ensuring teamwork, peaceful, ample time to describe this. As Nekesa puts it, "free friendly relationship with him makes one relieved and work at ease," Colleagues also contributed to this culture. Teachers expressed words such "stress-free", "peaceful", "where teamwork thrives" to describe their working relationships with their colleagues; as Bhoke puts it, "Offering a warm and cooperative environment for working. On the other hand, some teachers did not receive work-family balance support from their supervisors (12%) and colleagues (4%). Some supervisors were unaware of the challenges the teachers faced at home with housework and child care or cared little about it. Moreover, for some supervisors, this apparent lack of work- family support was due to the pressure of high-performance expectations at the expense of the family. These teachers reported that they could be assigned classes or remedial teaching at odd times such as early morning, e.g. 6:30 am, or very late in the day, or the supervisor held the belief that child care and house work concerns were private affairs. As Mutheu commented, "There is no cooperation, because the supervisor wants perfection in regards to the time of arrival, and the mean [students] score to be the best. Always you should time yourself or plan yourself".

On the other hand, some teachers thought that juggling work and family was their personal business, and they did not need to involve their supervisor or such assistance for them simply did not exist. This is the view of Naliaka, "I think there is no help especially when it comes to child care and housework responsibilities". The teachers' perception of the lack of social support seems to indicate a lack of awareness of work-family balance issues among supervisors and staff, lack of relevant policy, and the need of sensitivity training to ameliorate this situation and create an enabling family-friendly culture (Table 1).

Likewise, not all teachers had supportive colleagues around them. Especially male colleagues who failed to understand the pressures that young mothers go through did not view some absenteeism as genuine. As Chepchirchir commented, "My colleagues do not help

at all. They tend to view it as none of their business and in most cases they are the ones working for my downfall. There is this problem of being envious when they notice even a small favor from my supervisor."

RQ2: What types of informal work-family friendly arrangements could schools implement to support female teachers with young children?

In order to answer this question, the following open-ended question was asked: "What type of support would you like to see your school implement to help teachers with young children cope with the demands of school work, child care, and housework responsibilities?"

This question generated five categories namely: Increased flexibility, reduced strain, facilities and programs, psychological support, and an exception category. The increased flexibility had three sub-categories flexible schedules, time off to attend emergencies and working part-time. The reduced strain had two sub-categories; manageable workloads and, finances and other forms of material support (Table 2). These four categories interact to provide a family- friendly environment for the teachers with young children to combine work and family (Figure 1).

Facilities and programs had two sub-categories: Housing, day care and other programs and parental leaves. Psychological support had two categories: Empathy and work-related counseling. Finally, the miscellaneous category had two sub-categories: Good working relations and an exception category (Table 2) for percentages. These categories and sub-categories are discussed and illustrated following.

Increased flexibility

This had three subcategories.

Flexible schedules (26%): This sub-category emphasized the need for a teaching program that was cognizant of the family time needs of the teacher. Despite teachers requesting flexible time schedules, what was an appropriate schedule varied from teacher to teacher. For instance, some teachers preferred having lessons in the morning hours, or in the afternoons. Or to have classes in midmornings or just short breaks during the day to check on their young children. Teacher Neema commented, "To allocate lessons to the convenience of the teacher with young children e.g. not so early and not so late". Other teachers requested no evening classes or no classes in one day in the week.

However, teachers were cognizant of the limitations schools faced. Aoko remarked, "Having a day off. This will only work if enough teachers are deployed in

Table 2. Suggestions to schools to reduce work-family conflict for teachers.

Category	Sub-categories	% of N (345)
Increased flexibility	Flexible schedules,	91(26%)
	Time off to attend emergencies	15(4%)
	Working part- time (new concept in Kenya)	14(4%)
	Total	120(35%)
Reduced strain	Manageable workloads	99(29%)
	Finances and other forms of material support	19 (6%)
	Total	118(34%)
Facilities and programs	Housing, day care center other programs (transport, breastfeeding breaks etc.)	71(21%)
	Parental leaves (new concept in Kenya)	6(2%)
	Total	77(22%)
Psychological support	Empathy	46(13%)
	Work-family related counselling	30(9%)
	Good working relations	7 (2%)
	Total	83(24%)
Exceptions	Exceptions	4(1%)

schools". Interestingly, other teachers requested rescheduling of classes in the timetable in a case of family emergencies; as well as not being scheduled in school activities after working hours. It is apparent that teachers knew there could be some subtle ways the timetable could accommodate their work-family balance needs. Surprisingly, two teachers objected to having a special arrangement in the timetable. One of them, Achieng, suggested, "the timetable should be adhered to by all teachers, Ensuring that timetable is followed so that every teacher should plan how she should do her work/plan her work".

Time off to attend to family emergencies (10%): Teachers expressed the need to be allowed time to attend to family emergencies such as children falling sick. Among some, the stressors that teachers faced had to do with the unreliability of the domestic workers whom teachers in town tend to depend on, and children issues such as sickness. This was the concern for a number of young mothers. Nduta opined that, "The school should allow time to attend to child care and housework where need arises; so those teachers are motivated to work even harder when they get back to work" This opinion was also echoed by Talu," Support us when we do not have house helps like a day off to take care of our babies".

Working part-time (4%): This involved teachers working on part- time basis. This would allow teachers more time to be with their young children and breastfeed them as teacher Cherotich recommends, "Have them work half day during the first three months after leave to enable

them breastfeed their babies and be there emotionally".

Reduced strain

It had two sub-categories.

Manageable /reduced working loads (29%): This theme emphasized ways in which the workload can be reduced for teachers. These ways include: Reducing the number of lessons per week, not given demanding duties such as the class teacher, smaller class sizes, and employing more teachers to reduce the workload.

Finances/materials/other forms of support (6%): These are materials and other forms of support, which would make teaching more effective. Apart from teaching resources, there is the need for adequate pay to enable teachers to afford caretakers for their children and other things such as transport.

Facilities and programs

This category had two sub-categories.

Housing, daycare center and other programs (21%): Teachers suggested facilities such as day care center/ nursing room where teachers would nurse their children while at work, or a place for the child to stay when the teacher lacked other forms of support such as domestic worker as suggested by Kawera, "Creating a baby care and good ECDE (Early Childhood Learning Center) so as

to help in caring for children". Additionally, teachers should be given breastfeeding breaks.

A second suggestion was to house teachers with young children in school. In my sample, less than 10% of the teachers had school housing. Being housed or given priority to be housed within the school compound meant that the teacher would not spend many hours commuting. Additionally, the teacher can easily go back to the house during break /lunch hour to monitor the young children.

Parental leaves (2%): Teachers suggested the Ministry of Education should introduce new leaves such as parental leaves to the existing leaves. However, teachers had no consensus on the duration of this leave. Some teachers suggested three months, six months, one year, and two years.

Psychological support

It had two three sub-categories.

Empathy (13%): This was by making supervisors aware of the challenges that young mothers go through, that is, supervisors should listen and empathize when they face a family crisis and embrace dialogue as well as being granted permission. As Akiru puts it, "understand the teacher, inquire what might have caused the teacher to be late or absent, but not just judging the teacher as being undisciplined". Instances, where teachers felt they needed to be understood more were when they had no domestic workers, in the case of tardiness, with school deadlines, and in being assigned school responsibilities. Sometimes, these issues would be regarded as 'the lack of seriousness of purpose'. Thus as Ndanu posits, "Listen to them and give permission to attend to the children when a genuine need arises".

Empathetic listening had its own reward as Njeri remarks, "The school should allow time to attend to child care and housework when a need arises so that teachers are motivated to work even harder when they get back to work". However, two teachers were of the opinion that the teachers should employ domestic workers (and get more organized). Though, employing domestic worker was a partial solution, as my previous study showed that domestic workers could leave without notice or turn out to be unreliable; another teacher was of the opinion that teachers should be more organized.

Work-family related counseling (9%): The supervisor should offer guidance and counseling on how to balance the two roles of being a mother and a worker as Fatuma summarized, "Give psychological and moral support, guide and assist where necessary."

Good relations (2%): This category was more of the outcome of what could happen when measures were taken to reduce work-family conflict the teacher experienced as she combined the demands work and family (child care and house chores). There is a need to create a family- friendly environment/culture at the workplace. Chausiku noted that, "The school should create a friendly environment for teachers with young children by understanding and listening to them when they are late for work or did not turn up to work". A family-friendly environment would, "Provide a stress-free working condition," as suggested by Mwongeli.

Exception category (1%): The onus of balancing work and family demands was placed on the teacher. For instance comments such as, "the teacher should be organized" "timetable is followed". This suggests the idea of perceived self- efficacy.

Interrelationships among suggested work- family balance strategies

These five suggested categories (Figure 1) on their own are insufficient to reduce the WFC that these teachers experience; but their combination /interactions lead to the desired 'family- friendly environment' for teachers--the core category. For example, housing at school would reduce commuting time, and allow the mother to easily check on her young children.

A day care center would reduce the hassle of searching for domestic workers who often are unavailable. Teachers with reliable child care have peace of mind, which is a resource too. This will also reduce tardiness and poor job evaluations leading to more job satisfaction. Psychological support (advice and empathy) boosts the teacher's resources as well. A problem shared is a problem solved.

A closer look at Table 1 shows that the provision of variety of family-friendly related measures reduced the reliance on the supervisor to: (1) To provide permission to attend to emergencies from 43 to 4% (which were as a result of child sicknesses and lack of reliable child care); (2) To be more empathetic from 31 to 13%; (3) To offer counselling needs from 18 to 9%; and (4) Reduce the need to create good working relations from 34 to 2%. Thus by relying less on informal support measures and incorporating formal family-friendly policies, it reduced reliance on ad hoc measures provided by the supervisor to more reliable sources of support. Despite schools facing shortages of teachers, there is a lot that can be done with the existing resources.

DISCUSSION

A recap of the key findings of this research is that first, some teachers did receive some level of social support

from supervisors and their colleagues The most common form of instrumental support from supervisors was, permission to attend to work family related crises such as lack of house help. The way different supervisors provided this type of support was rather haphazard and ad-hoc in approach. The support to increase schedule flexibility and reduce workloads, were considerably low. Secondly, teachers received more informational support in the form of work- family balance advice from their colleagues, compared to that received from their supervisors. There were few mentions of words that communicatively describe a positive work-family friendly culture. It is probable that a majority of schools lacked a work- family friendly culture.

Moreover, some supervisors and teachers were not aware of the need of work- family friendly support and /or how they could provide it or get it. Some teachers hindered their colleagues'-teachers- from receiving support from the supervisor. Finally, indeed teachers expressed the need of cultivating a family-friendly culture, and provision of facilities, programs, and leaves in addition to what was currently available in schools.

From the findings of this study, it's evident that schools had provided some level of informal work-family friendly social support but the issue was that of adequacy. This study differs from that of Benson (2005) who saw informal work- family friendly practices as sufficient as a stand-alone measure. Thompson et al. (1999) posited that formal work-family policies were inadequate and required a supporting work-family friendly culture. Thus, from these two types of research, it is evident that there is a need for both the formal work -family practices and the enabling work-family friendly culture in the public schools. As results have shown in Table 2, the provision of formal work- family policies such as child care would increase the work-family balance resources for the teacher and considerably reduce the need for asking for permission to cater for emergencies from the supervisors. These emergencies nage their non-work commitments.

This study focused on one group-young mothers and some voices such as male teachers are lacking. There is a need to conduct other studies that bring up the perspectives of male teachers on this issues. This call for more varied studies that include both qualitative and quantitative approaches to work-family conflict. There is also the need for studies that seek to understand supervisors' perspectives on employees' work-family conflict. Moreover, comprehensive studies are required to examine the nature of support teachers receive, and whether this varies according to organizational culture prevailing at different schools.

This study used self-reported responses, which suffer from bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), limiting generalization. Future studies should include longitudinal measures, observations, and focus groups to augment self- reported responses. However, the study sheds light on some of the work-family balance issues that may not be obvious in a more general sample.

Conflict of interest

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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