

WORK – LIFE BALANCE: FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHER - PARENTS

Raquel M. Manuel¹, Dr. Romulo G. Doronio²

¹ Student, Educational Administration, Assumption College of Nabunturan, Philippines

² Professor, Graduate School, Assumption College of Nabunturan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Work-life balance is a challenge for teacher-parents since both roles are confronted with demanding time and energy. This study explored the experiences of teacher-parents work-life balance. Data and information were gathered using in-depth interviews. This study employed qualitative phenomenological research design where eight teacher-parents were selected purposively as participants. Specifically, the study investigated the circumstances surrounding teacher-parent maintaining work-life balance; their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights. The findings showed that the experiences encountered by teacher-parent include setting boundaries, prioritizing task, multi-tasking, task was easier with supportive husband and when child is getting sick. The study revealed that challenges were managing time effectively, extend school duties during weekends, going home late, workload outside of regular school hours and lack of personal time. The mechanisms employed by teacher-parent to overcome these challenges include time management, make a to do list, prioritizing, establish clear boundaries, sought support from others, and no workload to bring at our house. This paper concluded with the recommendation that the findings from the teacher-parent experiences will assist school administrators to review and adjust workloads and provide resources to streamline work process and teacher-parent will adjust and adapt school policies to maintain work-life balance. Further, it was suggested to create school environment that values and recognizes teacher-parent efforts and to allow them to leave specially when family members are in emergencies.

Keyword: *educational administration, teacher-parents, work-life balance, challenges, coping mechanisms, phenomenological research*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and demanding world, work-life balance has become more imperative. A well-balanced life supports the well-being and success in all aspects of life and leads to improve productivity and efficiency in carrying out duties and responsibilities.

In educational context, work-life balance is more closely related to the life of teachers whose profession requires a substantial amount of time and energy both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers served as vanguard, committed themselves to share knowledge, developed critical thinking skills and helped students reach their full potential which resulted to offer their personal lives fulfilling that commitment. However, in the educational setting, teachers faced challenges in balancing work and personal life.

In India, even with its progressive approach on balancing work and personal life, teachers faced difficulties in attaining perfect work-life balance. Shantana et.al (2013) study identified four factors that contributes to the

imbalance between work and personal life. These factors are marital status, working hours, requirement for mobility and longer working hours. These increases the experiences of teachers in achieving work-life balance.

In a lone Agricultural College of Bulacan, Philippines, a study conducted by Esguerra (2020) in which one of the challenges is work-life balance, teachers' responsibility did not end in the school premises but requires extra time at home to finish lesson preparation, checking of assessments, exams, etc. There are also times that teachers have failed to attend important familial events and dropped their connections to their friends just to fulfill the call of duty. Thus, the total work-life balance of teachers in Bulacan Agricultural College cause concern since most of them have ignored the importance of work-life balance. In Department of Education Division of Davao de Oro teachers are more focused on how to meet the rising demands of education and yet even with various programs and initiatives aimed at promoting work-life balance, achieving it has remained challenging.

In Maragusan East District, despite numerous endeavors designed to promote work-life balance, teachers found out that it is challenging to establish a balance between professional and personal obligations. For instance, the researcher where she was employed as a teacher needed to perform administrative functions such as planning, managing the student registration and maintaining accurate and up-to-date student records, engaging any curricular activities, modifying teaching strategies and resources to fit into the local context and national policies. Similarly, some works were brought homes because of the lack of time to finish all the duties and paperworks at school setting aside the responsibilities at home. This motivated the researcher to embark the study.

The researcher was motivated to explore the work life-balance experiences, challenges, difficulties, coping mechanisms and insights of teachers. The need to investigate the perceptions of teachers understood and addressed the implications of teacher-parents work-life balance. The outcome of this research enlightened not only to the respondents but to all teachers and management as they were given the chance to evaluate their personal balance between work and life and be aware of its significance in life. The researcher believed that it is indispensable to the current situation in which high demands and expectations of performances are needed to quality education while balancing the work and life of teachers. Therefore, this research has been assumed.

1.1 Research Questions

This study explored the experiences of teachers employed in Maragusan East District about work-life balance. To come up with relevant data, this study specifically sought to investigate the following questions.

1. What are the experiences of the participants in balancing their work and personal life?
2. What are the challenges of the participants in balancing their work and personal life?
3. How do the participants cope with the challenges they experience in balancing their work and personal life?
4. What are the insights gained by the participants from their experiences in balancing their work and personal life?

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized qualitative research design employing phenomenological approach. Phenomenology involved a desire to recognize contextual significance through examining the actual events experienced by the participants of this research. Essentially, it facilitates a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon being lived through as described by the participants (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2012).

The phenomenology claimed that in understanding human experiences, it required immersive saturation of individual's thoughts and insights through employing interviews. Since these were the actual lives of the participants who have all experienced the phenomenon of handling multigrade classes, it facilitates a culmination of interpretation of their experiences (Creswell, 2009). Phenomenological approach was the most appropriate method for exploring the teacher's experiences concerning work-life balance due to the fact that it gives a thorough understanding of how teachers perceive, experience, and handle the equilibrium of their personal and professional lives.

Typically, the life events of every individual or a group of people were examined using phenomenological approach. For this research, the qualitative method and phenomenological approach were considered appropriate.

2.2 Role of the Researcher

Since the study was a phenomenological and qualitative in nature, the researcher was responsible for creating the research design, interviewing and communicating with teacher-parents, collecting, verifying, transcribing, analyzing and reporting (Fink, 2000) the information gathered and interpreting the findings in connection to teacher-parents' work-life balance.

In the thematizing phase, the researcher focused on the experiences of teachers in work life balance. Designing during this stage, the researcher shaped the methodology and adopted phenomenology to understand the teachers' lived experiences. The researcher used an in-depth interview to gather information and formulated an interview guide in interviewing phase, exploring the lived experiences of the teachers in terms of their work life

balance. The interview guide was validated and approved before the in-depth interview, and then the researcher recorded every data given.

After the interview, the researcher transcribed the responses of the participants. Then, the next step of the research process was the transcription of recordings. The researcher encoded the responses and arranged them according to the questions. This enabled the data analysis efficient and quick.

Next step was analyzing in which coding was the first part of the analysis, which means that the research was concerned with naming and categorizing phenomena. Transcribed and arranged data was labeled, colored and correctly categorized. After the verification of the data, the researcher validated the data analysis, which concerned the findings' generalizability, reliability, and validity. Generalizability means that findings can be generalized; reliability refers to the consistency of findings/results, whereas validity questions of the study investigates what is intended. The number of participants that answered the exact answers would be considered and the number of instances it would be repeated; thus, data saturation was assured. The last phase was reporting; that goes without saying that reporting covers the part of the research process where the researcher wrote a report to present the findings. In this stage, the researcher followed the pattern for the presentation of the findings and their discussions, highlighting the emerging themes of the study.

2.3 Research Participants

The research participants in this study comprised of eight teachers employed with parental responsibilities in Maragusan, Davao de Oro, particularly in Maragusan National High School, Mapawa National High School, New Albay National High School, Paloc National High School and Tupaz National High School.

Using purposive sampling, the research eight participants were chosen based on the criteria that the participants should be a teacher for at least 2 years; married; reachable and interested to participate in the conduct of the study irrespective of their age, gender and length of service. The approval from the Department of Education officials was obtained before these participants are interviewed.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

First, the researcher secured an endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate School, who will approve to conduct this study. A letter was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent and the School Principals of the selected schools asking permission for the conduct of the study. Another letter was sent to the identified participants asking permission to conduct the study and let them sign a consent which signifies willingness to participate with no harm. In fact, they were free to withdraw their participation in the study anytime should they change their mind to participate. Also, they were informed about the core purpose of the study.

Second, the researcher accomplished and submitted ethics application form from Research Development and Publication Center of Assumption College of Nabunturan together with the revised Chapter 1 and 2, interview guide and curriculum vitae.

Third, on the agreed date, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview and utilized an audio recorder to record the conversation. In the interview, the researcher used the interview guide questions which was validated by five experts.

Furthermore, the researcher gathered data through audio recording and transcribed the result of the interview. It is a process of scrutinizing data through listening, watching, and converting audio materials into a manuscript (Lampert, 2014).

In addition, transcribing is a laborious process which needs ample patience, perseverance in order to collect data. In fact, it is vital in the analysis of data which served as a basis for the major themes in the study. Also, the gathered data from the transcription was checked, analyzed and scrutinized by the research adviser and the analyst.

The semi-structured interview was conducted where the participants shared their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights on work-life balance as teacher- parents. The researcher prepared an open-ended interview questions to encourage a thorough knowledge regarding the study.

In phenomenological study, comprehensive interview was the main approach of collecting data, so the participants were given a set of structured questions. To effectively collect the potentially relevant data concerning to the gaps of the study, participants were provided with questions that are carefully constructed.

2.5 Data Analysis

In conformity with the phenomenological nature of the study, a method of interpretation was adopted for analyzing the data collected. The researcher categorized the recorded responses based on themes to come-up with a well-structured summary of the research questions.

Data coding is the process of data organization that derives comes from the raw data collected. It organizes data by reducing the amount of raw data to the most relevant in the research questions and breaks it down into manageable sections, allowing for the themes to emerge (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

In the context of this study, the researcher determined the codes by highlighting the relevant and reoccurring themes with the used of colored pens, using the same color for similar ideas. Next, each theme together was clustered together based on their colors and labeled them using words and short phrases. Also, the researcher identified the colors that frequently occur or repeatedly emerge, as it was considered a theme.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participants' responses. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing and reporting patterns or themes with data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The participant's responses were transcribed and categorized into themes, which was used to serve as a basis for the discussions and recommendations.

In the context of this study, the thematic analysis was done after the initial codes were identified then, categorizing and analyzing all the responses of the participants from general to specific followed. Responses with similar core ideas were extracted and grouped to formulate comprehensive themes. For a theme to be valid, it was consisting of at least five core ideas. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher assigned code names for each of the participants to ensure anonymity.

3. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings to the research questions that explored the experiences of teacher-parents work-life balance. This study also seeks coping mechanisms and insights in maintaining work-life balance.

The responses were subjected to content review, which resulted in identifying common patterns among all responses. Codes are used to mask the identity of the study subjects following the research ethics for qualitative research. The results were presented in the order of the main research questions used in this analysis.

3.1 What significant experiences have you encountered in balancing work and personal life?

Significant Experiences Encountered in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated five themes: setting boundaries, prioritizing task, multi-tasking, task easier with supportive spouse, weighing on what to prioritize, and child getting sick

Setting Boundaries. Informant 1 shared that one of her significant experiences is setting boundaries in balancing work and personal life.

Prioritizing Task. Informant 2 shared that teacher-parents experience how to prioritize task between work and personal life.

Multitasking. Informant 3 indicated that balancing work and personal life involves multitasking.

Tasks Easier with Supportive Spouse. Informant 5 asserted that with supportive husband task is easier.

Weighing on What to Prioritize. Informant 6 indicated that she encountered weighing which one to prioritize. Is it family and job?

Child Getting Sick. Informant 8 shared that she experienced that one of her children is getting sick.

Effect as Teacher-Parent in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated eight themes: helping one find creative solutions to the problem, challenging, giving new perspectives, working through the night, adjusting and adapting to this situation need to choose what to prioritize, setting priorities and boundaries, and feeling burnout.

Helping One Find Creative Solutions to Problems. Informant 1 shared that the effect in balancing work and personal life requires creative solution to manage both role with the help of her family and school.

Challenging. Informant 2 admitted that balancing work and personal life is very challenging. She noted:

Balancing work and personal being a teacher-parent is very challenging.

Giving New Perspectives. Informant 3 stated that balancing work and personal life gives new perspectives.

Working Through the Night. Informant 4 shared that she needs to work through the night to compete obligations on personal and professional fronts.

Adjusting and Adapting to this Situation. Informant 5 revealed that it was very difficult to balance work and personal life when he had their first-born child but as time goes by, he adjusted and adapted the situation.

Need to Choose What to Prioritize. Informant 6 shared that she needs to choose which one should she prioritize.

Setting Priorities and Boundaries. Informant 7 informed that it is hard to manage time because sometimes school task may bring at home and it affected her role as a mother and a wife.

Feeling Burnout. Informant 8 conversed that there is always emotional and physical exhaustion in which energy and time drained due to challenges such as lesson and family planning.

Advantages Observed in Balancing Work and Personal Life as a Teacher-Parent

The responses generated six themes: able to understand child development, enhances time management, boosting one's creativity, able to be flexible and adaptable, spending time with family, easily teach kids.

Able to Understand Child Development. Informant 1 observed that she understood her child development and increase her patience and empathy as a parent as she aligned schedules between school and family activities.

Enhances Time Management. Informant 2 and 7 informed that balancing work and personal life enhances their time management skills.

Boosting One's Creativity. Informant 3 shared that she is able to control many things and allow her to think of systems to be employed to get the task done and then boosted her creativity to be productive and satisfied.

Able to Be Flexible and Adaptable. Informant 4 shared that in managing unexpected circumstances she knows how to be flexible and adaptable and willing to adjust work hours and personal plans.

Spending Time with Family. Informant 5 and 8 observed that balancing work and personal life allow them to spend time with family during weekend, holidays and breaks.

Easily Teach Kids. Informant 6 informed that she can easily teach her kids through strategies applied in work.

Disadvantages Observed in Balancing Work and Personal Life as a Teacher-Parent

The responses generated seven themes: feeling guilt for not spending time with family, exhaustion, no disadvantages, compromising quality of work, cannot do everything at once, choosing work over family, financial aspect.

Feeling of Guilt for not Spending Time with Family. Informant 1 confirmed that the disadvantage she observed is the feeling of being guilt for not spending enough quality time with her children.

Exhaustion. Informant 2 & 8 observed that exhaustion greatly affect individual if not properly managed.

No Disadvantages. Informant 3 asserted that as per experience, she has not seen any disadvantages.

Compromising Quality of Work. Informant 4 indicated that when balancing work and personal life leads to compromising quality of work and personal relationships.

Cannot Do Everything at Once. Informant 5 pointed out that one of the disadvantages is that he cannot always do everything at once.

Choosing Work Over Family. Informant 6 reinforced that she needs to choose over her kids to earn for a living.

Financial Aspect. Informant 7 asserted that when financial is draining she do not know what to do first especially when it is urgent between work and family.

3.2 What are the challenges of the participants in balancing their work and personal life?

Challenges Experienced in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated five themes: managing time effectively, extend school duties during weekends, going home late, workload outside of regular school hours, lack of personal time.

Managing Time Effectively. Informant 1 asserted that she sometimes has poor management skills.

Extend School Duties During Weekends. Informant 4 shared that in order for her to finish her job, she need to extend her school duties on weekends.

Going Home Late. Informant 6 added that to finish her work before the deadline, she went home late.

Workload Outside of Regular School Hours. Informant 7 indicated that workloads consumes time outside of regular school hours.

Lack of Personal Time. Informant 8 asserted that lack of personal time is one of the various challenges of balancing work and personal life.

Most Difficult Challenge in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated six themes: work time demand, managing demands of personal and professional life, choosing between personal and work life, family member getting sick, setting priorities between work and family matter and managing time effectively.

Work Time Demand. Informant 1 asserted that the most difficult challenge in balancing work and personal life is when time demands at work.

Managing Demands of Personal and Professional Life. Informant 3 added that managing demand of her personal and professional life is the most difficult challenge.

Choosing Between Personal and Work Life. Informant 4 shared that the most difficult challenge she experienced was deciding which is more important between work and personal life.

Family Member Getting Sick. Informant 5 added that the most difficult challenge is when a family member gets sick or ill.

Setting Priorities Between Work and Family Matter. Informant 7 asserted that setting priorities between work and family matter is the most difficult challenge she experienced.

Managing Time Effectively. Informant 8 added that time management is her most difficult challenge due to competing demands of professional and personal life.

Ways These Challenges Affect Work and Personal Life as a Teacher-Parent

The responses generated seven themes: stress and burnout, lack of attention towards my children, able to adjust the demands of both professional and personal life, set aside personal activities, quite difficult, affecting personal time, affecting one's health.

Stress and Burnout. Informant 1 informed that challenges made her stress and burnout. \

Lack of Attention Towards My Children. Informant 2 stressed out that she got disconnected with her children.

Able to Adjust the Demands of Both Professional and Personal Life. Informant 3 pointed out that she learned how to adjust the demands her personal and professional life.

Set Aside Personal Activities. Informant 4 informed that when she struggles work task, she had to put off personal activities or family time.

Quite Difficult. Informant 6 indicated that it is quite difficult for teacher-parent balance work and personal life.

Affecting Personal Time. Informant 7 affirmed that behavior of students made her drained and she has less energy and affected her personal time.

Affecting One's Health. Informant 8 added that balancing work and personal life affects her personal life.

3.3 How do the participants cope with the challenges they experience in balancing their work and personal life?

Mechanism Used to Cope with the Challenges and Difficulties Experienced in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated four themes: setting boundaries, setting priorities, time management, hire a house helper.

Setting Boundaries. Informant 1 asserted that setting boundaries is her mechanism on how to cope with the challenges and difficulties in balancing work and personal life.

Setting Priorities. Informant 2 indicated that setting priorities is essential.

Time Management. Informant 5 informed that time management is one coping mechanism on how to balance work and personal life.

Hire a House Helper. Another mechanism towards the challenges of balancing work and personal life, Informant 8 indicated that they hire house helper.

Effective Strategies Used in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated six themes: time management, make a to do list, prioritizing, establish clear boundaries, sought support from others, no workload to bring at our house.

Time Management. This theme serves as the major responses of the informants. It is indicated that time management is effective strategy to balance work and personal life.

Make a 'To Do List'. Informant 2 asserted that making list of what are going to do is essential guide.

Prioritizing. Informant 3 indicated that prioritizing is being employed in achieving balance between work and personal in order to accomplish many things.

Establish Clear Boundaries. Informant 4 indicated that establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life is crucial.

Sought Support from Others. Another effective strategy is seeking support when needed adjustment.

No Workload to Bring at Our House. Informant 8 added that no workload to be brought up and done at home.

Ways in Dealing with the Most Difficult Challenge in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated seven themes: setting clear goals, develop resiliency every time, keeping always positive, establish clear boundaries, prioritize urgent task, work smart, and make a to do list.

Setting Clear Goals. Informant 1 indicated that there should be a set clear goals in order to balance work and personal life.

Develop Resiliency Every time. Informant 2 asserted to develop resiliency every time in balancing work and personal life.

Keeping Always Positive. Informant 3 indicated that teacher-parent must always be positive of things despite too many negativities.

Establish Clear Boundaries. Informant 4 indicated that teacher-parent establishing clear boundaries is essential.

Prioritize Urgent Task. Informant 5 indicated that teacher-parent should prioritize most urgent task.

Work Smart. Informant 6 asserted that teacher-parent should work smart.

Make a 'To Do List'. Informant 8 indicated that teacher-parent shout list all what are needed to do.

Person That Helped in Coping with the Challenges in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated two themes: family and spouse.

Family. Informant 1 indicated that her family helped her in coping the challenges of balancing work and personal life.

Spouse. Most of the responses on of the informants indicated that their wife and husband helped them in maintaining work-life balance.

3.4 What are the insights gained by the participants from their experiences in balancing their work and personal life?

Insights Gained from Experiences Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated eight themes: need to improve time management, no need to rush, became more resilient, learn to say no, deal with the problems, choose family first, need for support system, and importance of detailed planning.

Need to Improve Time Management Skills. Informant 1 suggested that teacher-parent should improve time management skills

No Need to Rush. Informant 2 pointed out that to balance work and personal life there is no need to rush things.

Became More Resilient. Informant 3 also shared that balancing work and personal life taught her to become more resilient.

Learn to Say No. Informant 4 suggested to say no to the task that does not aligned with her priorities.

Deal with the Problems. Informant 5 asserted that personal problems would be easy when he and his wife are working together and problems at work would be easier with the help of his co-worker.

Choose Family First. Informant 6 indicated that teacher-parent must always choose family first.

Need for Support System. Informant 7 asserted that teacher-parent needs support system to balance work and personal life.

Importance of Detailed Planning. Informant 8 stressed the importance of detailed planning to balance multiple responsibilities at work and at home.

Lessons Gained in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated five themes: value of clear boundaries, prioritize self-care, choose family first, always work smart, necessary to balance and personal life.

Value of Clear Boundaries. This theme serves as the leading responses of informants in balancing work and personal life. Informants asserted that they gained lesson that teacher-parents should value clear boundaries.

Prioritize Self-Care. Informant 2 also shared to prioritize self-care.

Choose Family First. Informant 5 indicated that choosing family first is important lessons he gained.

Always Work Smart. Informant 6 also shared to always work smart.

Necessary to Balance Work and Personal Life. Informant 8 indicated that teacher-parent should significantly balance work and personal life.

Ways to Inspire Other Teachers with Experience in Balancing Work and Personal Life

The responses generated eight themes: make time for activities for recharging, things turning out fine, share real life experiences, make meaningful choices, balancing work and personal life not an easy task, not to entertain any work-related task after work, learn to adjust, and share different strategies.

Make Time for Activities for Recharging. Informant 1 emphasized that teacher-parents should make time for activities for recharging.

Things Turning out Fine. Informant 2 encouraged that everything is going to be fine.

Share Real-Life Experiences. Informant 3 indicated that teacher-parent should share real life experiences and challenges with other teachers in order to provide them useful tips and ideas in balancing work and personal life.

Make Meaningful Choices. Informant 4 encouraged to make meaningful choices to live a fulfilling life with family and without regret.

Balancing Work and Personal Life not an Easy Task. However, Informant 5 shared that balancing personal life and work is not an easy task.

Not to Entertain Any Work-related Task after Work. Informant 6 indicated that teacher-parent should not entertain any work-related task after work.

Learn to Adjust. Informant 7 also encouraged teacher-parents to learn to adjust in order to enjoy teaching profession and at the same time as a parent.

Share Different Strategies. Informant 8 inspired teacher-parents to share different strategies in balancing work and personal life.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights important practical implications for schools to implement interventions to assist teacher-parents in navigating effective mentorship, time management, and healthier dual responsibilities. The primary focus of the investigation was the investigation of the unique experiences and challenges of the teacher-parents' work-life balance. In addition, as educational institutions, schools ought to concentrate on cultivating a supportive environment that encourages students to be resilient, adaptable, and adaptable to any challenges that may arise.

Results of the study substantiates time management, setting priorities, setting boundaries and coping mechanism like support system are badly emphasized. Moreover, trainings and programs should also be a prioritized to equip the teacher-parents to manage their tasks effectively, their classroom responsibilities and allocate quality time for the family at home. By implementing these interventions and creating a supportive environment, the school could ultimately assist teacher-parents in better managing their dual responsibilities while also contributing to their overall well-being and job satisfaction. As a result, they were able to effectively carry out their duties and perform their dual roles.

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