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Multiskilled in many ways: Ghanaian Female Journalists Between Job and Home

Boateng, Kodwo Jonas Anson & Lauk, Epp

Abstract

In Ghana, feminisation of 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 worktime 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 worktime arrangements impedes many female journalists to achieve 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 causes emotional stress, guilt and self-condemnation and further revealed, female regional correspondents tend to have higher levels of work–life imbalance.

Keywords: gendered journalism, female journalists, Ghana, worktime 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 in journalism and in 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 wage-earning arena, nonetheless Ghanaian women like most African women are disadvantaged. African societies still see women as responsible for domestic care-giving and daily housekeeping. In all these socio-economic areas, Ghanaian women's efforts at achieving work–life

[1] Respondent 4.

[2] BADEN, S., GREEN, C., OTOO-OYORTEY, N., PEASGOOD, T.: 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, Institute of Development Studies, UK, Bridge Development-Gender. 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.

balance are impeded by specific socio-cultural norms[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 minimizing conflict between competing work and domestic and social obligations. Since work life tends to complement and regulate social and domestic life it is important to consider the tensions that emerge for workers, especially when they strive to allocate time to obligations for each set of competing activities [6].

Journalism's worktime is not considered family friendly. Journalists work arrangement entails longer work durations, working non-standard hours, including irregular and erratic work times[7]. As Chambers and Steiner stress journalism work time arrangements are mostly unsuitable to and often conflict with women's domestic and social life obligations[8]. Adasi and Frimpong also claim that most Ghanaian female journalists need to combine unfriendly work time schedules with religious ceremonies, family socialization, elderly and childcare. The combination of these unfriendly schedules with equally important family obligations tend to stress marriages of most Ghanaian female journalists[9]. 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, social patriarchy and social arrangements allow men to spend more time on work and other work-related activities than their female counterparts. Journalism worktime is therefore gendered and disadvantages female journalists.

Most related studies adopt gender neutral analytical viewpoints, disregarding the primacy of socially constructed gender roles and possible negative implications of work time arrangements on multiple roles women play while attempting to attain appreciable levels of work–life balance. By contrast, a gendered framework considers gendered constructs such as gendered social role

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[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. [online]. [2019-09-16]. Available at: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ljh/article/view/181049>

[5] DAVIS, R.: Work-life Balance: Measures to help reconcile work, private and family life. *Library Briefing- Library of the European Parliament*. Brussels, Belgium. 2013. [online]. [2019-09-23] Available at: <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 leader*. Released on 11th September 2014. [online]. [2019-09-07]. Available at:< https://niemanreports.org/articles/where-are-the-women/>

[8] CHAMBERS, D.; STEINER, L.: The Changing Status of Women Journalism. In S. Allan (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*: Abingdon, UK; NY, New York: Routledge, 2010.

[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 M. de Bruin., K. Ross (eds.): *Gender and Newsroom cultures: Identities at work*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc. 2004, p.105-117

relations as fundamental in shaping public–private spheres' segmentations[11]. The framework examines taken-for-granted discriminatory tendencies, mostly emanating from patriarchal attitudes, which generally prevail in journalistic work culture. The approach further pinpoints entrenched gender discriminatory practices and routines based on patriarchal attitudes, which impede effective integration of women into the profession[12]. Thus, a feminist approach brings to fore endemic issues such as "motherhood penalties" and "motherhood dilemma" as consequences of gendered workplace inequalities[13]. Ghana's Labour Act 651 Section 57[14] guarantees and protects rights of working and expectant mothers. Ghanaian female workers generally have three to six months paid maternity leave including shorter working days for nursing mothers. The Act also ensures gender equity in remuneration, but the reality is different, especially concerning smaller private media houses, which suffer scarcity of advertising revenues[15]. In addition, the Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) is not unionized 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 characterized 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 emphasize how issues such as "motherhood penalties" and "motherhood dilemma" contribute towards career stay or opt/out choices especially when choosing between family and childcare obligations, and journalism work[16]. Griffin (see footnote 7) further argues that such inflexible worktime arrangements and irregular/erratic schedules invariably impose challenges on women in relation to childcare. North reiterates other arguments emphasizing the extent to which mothers returning from maternity leave tend to lose out on career progression opportunities since they cannot commit sufficient time to work demands (see footnote 13). Consequently, most Ghanaian male editors may use motherhood as an excuse to 'penalize' and discriminate against female journalists returning from maternity leave, in news assignment allocations.

This qualitative study examines 23 Ghanaian female journalists' experiences with journalism worktime arrangements and their efforts at achieving an appreciable level of work–life balance. The paper suggests that journalism worktime arrangements consisting of work duration, non-standard work schedules, and high work volumes have become normalized, reflecting male

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[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. Working Paper MeCoDem (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 65: [online]. [2019-08-21]. Available at: <http://laws.ghanalegal.com/acts/id/162>

[15] 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] LOBO, P., SILVEIRINHA, M. J., DA SILVA, M. T., SUBTIL, F.: 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

dominance and entrenched patriarchal attitudes in the profession (see footnote 8), which are combined with deep-rooted perceptions of women obligations as housewives. Female journalists' ability to manage elderly and children care as well as the ability to sustain marital and social relationships are also deeply interwoven with their worktime arrangements[17]. Though Ghanaian female journalists have equally daunting domestic obligations, lack of institutionalized 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 worktime 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 worktime 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 journalist. Reich and Golder consider time as a critical element in news production and an indispensable factor in journalism's work culture[18].

In the African context, studies on the gendered nature of journalism worktime arrangements are limited. For instance, majority of Gadzekpo's gender in media studies focus on women's representations in the media[19]. Bosch confirms this trend in her extensive review of gender issues in African media, which indicates a shift from issues related to media portrayals to women in media management[20]. Some African media scholars like Zuiderveld[21]; Gadzekpo (see footnote 19)

; Opoku-Mensah (see footnote 10); Wijngard[22]; Irukwu[23], also acknowledge the critical nature of journalism work time schedules as incongruous to social and family lives of African female journalists. Irukwu, for instance, discusses the impact of journalism work and its related time arrangements on Nigerian female journalists' effective integration into the profession. Wijngard also identifies certain critical socio-cultural roles that impede Senegalese women's effective

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[17] CHEN, C., 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.

[18]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

[19] GADZEKPO, A.: Battling old Ghosts in gender and Africa media research. In *African Communication Research*, 2011*, Vol 4,* No.3, p.389-411

[20] BOSCH, T.: Gender in South Africa newsroom studies. In *Journal of African Media Studie*s. 2016. Vol. 8, No.3, p.295-304.

[21] 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

[22] WIJNGARD, VAN DEN R.: Women as Journalists: Incompatibility of Roles? In *African Media Review*, 1992 Vol.6, No. 2, p.46-56

[23] 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.

integration into a male dominated profession. In South Africa, Zuiderveld associates the erratic nature of journalism work times on South Africa's female journalists' inability to sustain work–family life balance.

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 worktime for female journalists. There are instances where female journalists report late for work because they had to send a sick child to hospital. This means they may not be available for early morning or evening news assignments, confirming North's "motherhood dilemma" hypothesis, which posits that female journalists who are nursing mothers tend to face balancing work and family life imbalance (see footnote 13).

In traditions' based societies like Ghana, most Ghanaian female journalists have additionally social obligations, which generally retard their ability to fully commit to journalism work. Newsroom culture tends to reflect deep rooted social patriarchal and widely accepted stereotypical attitudes. These deep-rooted mentalities conveniently disregard multiple and contrasting roles women play outside the work. Meanwhile, most male news editors in Ghana are influenced by these traditional notions about women, resulting in 'gendered' mentalities that eventually influence gender relationships in newsrooms[24]. For instance, in Nigeria, male news editors tend to view female journalists as "appendices" in the profession[25].

Other studies of journalism worktime arrangements outside the African context by Chambers and Steiner[8]; Reinardy[26] Creedon and Cramer[27]; and Robinson[28], generally support assertions that journalism work schedules are incongruous with personal social life rhythms for most journalists. Reinardy[29] concludes that failure to balance time between competing activities have health and well-being implications for journalists. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States ranks the journalism as the seventh most stressful profession. The picture looks gloomy especially considering the incompatible nature of journalism work time schedules with women's other social life activities.

> *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*

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[24] OPOKU-MENSAH, A.: Marching on: African Feminist Media studies. In *Feminist Media Studies*, 2001*, Vol. 1*, No.1, p. 25-34.

[25] 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,* 201, Vo. *2*, No. 12, p.93-107

[26] REINARDY, S.: Female Journalists more likely to leave newspapers. In *Newspaper Research Journal.* 2009. Vol. 30, No.3, p.42-57.

[27] CREEDON, P., CRAMER, J.: *Women in Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, London, New York: Sage Publications. 2007

[28] ROBINSON, G. J.: *Gender, journalism, and equity: Canadian, US, and European experiences*. New Jersey: Hampton Press. 2005

[29] REINARDY, S.: Newspaper journalism in crisis: Burnout on the rise, eroding journalists' career commitment. In *Journalism.* 2011*,* Vol. 12, No.1, p.33-50.

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.[30]

From a gender viewpoint, female journalists opt-out of journalism profession partly due to inconveniences associated with irregular working hours, long workdays and erratic worktime arrangements. Also critical to any analysis of gendered worktime arrangements is ability to identify factors that influence female journalists' capacity to maintain and sustain marital relationships (see footnote 27). The unfriendly nature of journalism worktime arrangements in addition to long workdays and irregularity of work schedules are significant factors impeding women's career progression in journalism. In some countries, they may contribute to persistence of the invisible glass ceiling phenomenon impeding women's career progression to managerial levels[31] Tsui and Lee[32] stress that social and domestic obligations deepen and impose extra burdens on women, forcing female journalists to either 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.

Gendered dimensions of worktime arrangements

Time-bind metaphor provides an analytical tool premised on a binding relationship between workers and their working time arrangements[33]. It provides a basis for critical examination of the extent to which worker-worktime binding affects achievements of work–life balance[34]. 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"[35]. It is also essential to consider the idea of work–life balance, described as ability of "… people [to] effectively manage multiple obligations at work, at home, and in their communities" [36]

The notion of time-bind aligns with Eurofound's three-dimension approach to analysis of worktime arrangements. The first dimension focuses on issues of worktime durations especially on the extent to which long working hours affect work–life balance. The second dimension discusses three key aspects of work time schedules – standard work schedules, non-standard irregular work schedules

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[30] SALTZMAN, J.: Sob sisters: The image of the female journalist in popular culture. California: University of Southern California. 2003.

[31] VAN ZOONEN, L.: *One of the girls? The changing gender of journalism*. In: S. Allan, G. Branston., C. Carter. (eds.), News, Gender and Power. New York, NY: Routledge, 1998. pp. 33-47.

[32] 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

[33] 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.

[34] EUROFOUND: *Working time and work–life balance in a life course perspective,* Dublin: Eurofound, 2012.

[35] 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

[36] *Workplace Wellness*:[online]. [20-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca/hr-resource-centre/hr-toolkit/workplaces-work/workplace-wellness>

and flexible work schedules – all of which explain the scope and effect of these schedules on work–life balance. The third dimension further examines the essence of workload volumes in relation to work–life balance achievements. To the International Labour Organization (ILO) worktime arrangements that fall outside standardized guidelines 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"[37]. Poulose and Sudarsan[35] 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[38]. Subsequently, a worker's ability to achieve a balance between work and life activities depends on his/her ability to apportion time and effort equitably between paid work activities and private family/social life activities. Balancing work and life activities requires conscious commitment of time and effort in attaining an appropriate "fit" between two or more competing obligations embodied in work and life activities[39].

Inserting a gendered social construct perspective into the discourse can help unravel obscured sexist tendencies that creates segmentations of roles within work and life (social-domestic) activities (see also: footnote 11). 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 also relevant to worktime arrangements and management of work–life balance discourses. Most societies still expect female workers to manage a balance between traditional social and family responsibilities and the demands of wage-earning work. Despite rapid socio-economic transformations in Africa, most societies still regard women's wages as complementary incomes necessary for regulating the inadequate income earned by men. However, although social expectations changed significantly to accommodate women's socio-economic role as wage earners, women are often expected to spend more time on unpaid household chores than their male counterparts.

Research Design

Twenty-three (n=23) in-depth unstructured interviews were carried out with female journalists from four regional capitals. This is about 10% of full-time female journalists in Ghana in 2016. According to Ghana News Agency (GNA), 257 female journalists worked full time in Ghanaian

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[37] INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION.: *Guide for Developing Balanced Work Time Arrangements.* Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization, 2019.

[38] 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.

[39] 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.

media in 2014[40]. In 2017, 215 women were registered as active members of the Ghana Journalists' Association[41]. It must be noted that not all journalists in Ghana are registered as members of the GJA. Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of twenty-three female respondents interviewed for the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Media Experiences 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)

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.

[40] GHANA NEWS AGENCY: Discrimination against women rife in broadcasting. 2014 [online]. [2019-09-08]. Available at: <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/discrimination-against-women-rife-in-broadcasting>

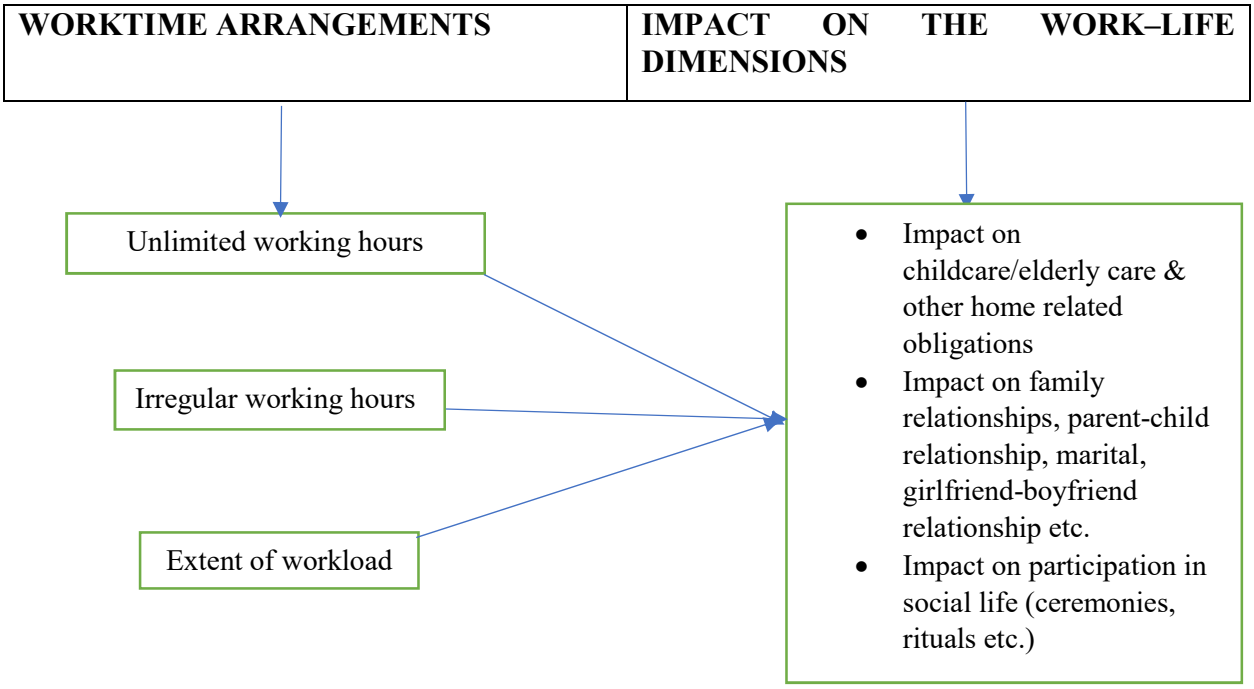
[41] GHANA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION: Ghana Journalists Association. List of eligible voters for the GJA. National Elections. 2017 [online]. [2019-09-07]. Available at: <http://www.gjaghana.org/images/gjalist2017a.pdf >

Interviewees had erratic work schedules that affected planned interview appointments. In two instances, I 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[42]. 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.

Figure 1: Themes of Analysis



[42] OLSEN, W.: *Data collection: Key debates and methods in social research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE. 2011.

Results

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

1. Unlimited duration of worktime

1.1. Impact on elderly care and child-care

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[43]. Though sections 33 to 39 of Ghana's Labour Act (651) stipulates 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 guarantees the protection of pregnant and working mothers. The Act guarantees pregnant women twelve weeks paid maternity leave including early time off to nursing mothers for breastfeeding, yet the general impression among respondents is that their daily work hours far exceed the legally stipulated eight hours. Such impressions re-emphasize Melki and Mallat's findings about the sentiments of Lebanese female journalists' worktime[44]. In countries like the US, where most newsrooms lack comprehensive family leave policies assuring pregnant and nursing mothers childcare leave,[45] female journalists tend to opt-out of journalism. Again, most respondents expressed guilt and frustration for their inability to devote sufficient time

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[43] CHAMBERS, D. et al.: *Women and Journalism.* Routledge, 2004

[44] 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

[45] GOLDSTEIN, K.: *The Case for Family Leave*. *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/>

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 passion like 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?"*

1.2. Impact on relationships

In an online article: '*Only unusual men marry female journalists'* the Nigerian blogger Funke Olande highlights challenges Nigerian female journalists face in dating and in sustaining marriage[46]. Most journalists, regardless of gender, attest to the high stress levels in their marriage, as a result of long and erratic working hours[47]. 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[48]. In Ghana, most regional correspondents report that they experience higher 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. Its 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.*

1.3 Impact on participation in social life

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[46] OLANDE, F.: *Nigeria: Only Unusual Man Can Marry Female Journalist*, All Africa. 2007. [online]. [2019-09-15]. Available at: <https://allafrica.com/stories/200703110239.html>

[47] WARD, B.: *I almost let my journalism job destroy my marriage. Don't make the same mistake*. [online]. [2019-08-2019]. Available at: <https://www.poynter.org/newsletters/2017/i-almost-let-my-journalism-job-destroy-my-marriage-dont-make-the-same-mistake-update/>

[48] VASARHELYI, M.: Journalism in Hungary. In D. H. Weaver., L. Willnat (eds.). In *Global Journalism in the 21st Century*. Routledge. 2012. p.234-242

To Shelley[49], nature of journalism work is incongruous with social lifestyles of female journalists. Here, journalism worktime schedules inhibit both male and female journalists to build viable social networks outside the workplace. In Ghana, tradition expects women to play active and significant role in traditional functions such as funerals, child naming, puberty rite ceremonies and other religious ceremonies[50], yet, as most respondents explain, long working hours restrict them from participating meaningfully in these ceremonies. Most respondents confirm Chen and Javid-Yadzi's assertion[17] 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) recognized the adverse effect of such long working hours on social lives of Nigerian journalists[51], 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.*

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[49] 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.

[50] 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. [online]. [2019-09-16]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3773817>

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

2. Irregular worktime

For most Ghanaian journalists, journalism work times are irregular, unpredictable and unsociable, which adversely affect 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 characterize journalists to be "tough as nails" and "macho" (see footnote 18) still persist in the profession despite the feminization of the profession. Secondly, the digitization and introduction of 24/7 TV news production creates added demands on already busy worktime of journalists[52]. For most respondents, irregular worktime which falls outside the standard working hours, constantly interferes with domestic duties.

To overcome these challenges most respondents rely on a network of family or/and paid house-help support system. 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"*.

2.1 Impact on elderly care and childcare

Variations in work schedules – night shifts and weekend shifts – impose time restraints, significantly affecting Ghanaian female journalists' ability to meet child and elderly care demands. As Ghana's population ages and increases, high rates of poverty and inadequate health facilities for aged care means that most female workers must perform these roles as caregivers. Respondents 9 and 10 describe how inconsistent work-start times, prolonged work durations and unpredictable closing hours impose additional burden, creating stress and conflict between work and elderly care.

> **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.*

[52] RUOHO, I., TORKKOLA, S.: Journalism and Gender: Toward a Multidimensional Approach. *Nordicom Review*, 2018. Vol. 39, No.1, p.67-79.

2.2. Impact on relationships

Chen and Javid-Yadzi (see footnote 17) find that the erratic and irregular time schedules of journalism work are significant casual 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 a constant anxiety.

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

2.3 Impact on participation in social life

Indeed, majority of respondents expressed concern about their inability to participate actively in important traditional, social and religious activities. A majority of older female journalists lamented their inability to take part in important funeral and child naming ceremonies. Again, it is important to note the regional – metropolitan differences in relation to this point. 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:

> **Respondent 20**: *We also have our religious lives as well. I want to go to church this evening, but the job doesn't 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 program.*

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 don't think anybody in my position will tell you that she's managing [her]social life and then…I think it is the men in the industry. Because I hear some of my male colleague in the room say: "Friday we are going to Tilapia Bay, we are going to a spot or a club around 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 don't 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 don't think the men really have a stressful routine like the women/---/

3. Excessive workload

Excessive workload in journalism, closely linked to long work duration and irregular working hours, combine to entrench the negative impact of work–life imbalance. Some media scholars hypothesize that female journalists suffer career disruptions due to the intrusion of excessive workload associated with news production processes into domestic and social spheres for women**Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**. For instance, a series of factors including long commuting times to and from news assignments, demands of new media technology, and the need for journalists to generate additionally multimedia content – all add up to increase the workload for Ghanaian female journalists. For regional correspondents, the size of geographical regions including reporting news across diverse rural communities additionally increase their workload. Respondent 7, the regional bureau chief and the only reporter from 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 significant number of respondents stress the extent to which the number of hours spent covering news assignments subtract substantial hours needed for work at home. Thus, most young and unmarried respondents were ambivalent about starting a family, revealing the so-called "motherhood dilemma"[53]

> **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, North quotes Ross[54] to emphasize 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" (see footnote 13). Female journalists in Ghana often bemoan the extent to which their workload intrude 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:

> **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 affect. 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 …*

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[53] NORTH, L.: *The Gendered Newsroom: How journalists experience the changing world of media*. New York, NY: Hampton Press Inc. 2009.

[54] ROSS, K.: Women at Work: Journalism as en-gendered practice. In *Journalism Studies*. 2001, Vol.2, No.4, p. 531-544. ISSN 461-670X

Notwithstanding the many disadvantages of working as a female journalist in Ghana, the respondents place high value on their work as journalists. They perceive dedication and passion as a meaningful sacrifice and 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 that I don't want to be in 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 in relation to the extent to which journalism worktime arrangements impact on their social and domestic lives. The study discusses important elements encapsulated within the broad idea of journalism worktime 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 important 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 (see footnote 9). Despite gender progressive labour policy reforms and legislations, Ghanaian female workers still face high levels of discrimination in gendered workplace due to subconscious adoption of entrenched traditional norms which in turn act as change barriers. Thus, according to a facilitator of Gender, Safety and Equity Campaign, Mrs. Alice Tettey, "there is discrimination against most female journalists with regard to remuneration, promotion and assignments, among others"[55]. Respondents further 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[56]. Respondent 5 clearly emphasizes this point:

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.

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[55] NYAVI, G. A.: Female Journalists trained in discrimination at work. 2017. [ONLINE]. [2019-09-15] Available at:<https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/female-journalists-trained-on-discrimination-at-work.html>

[56] STEINER, L.: Gender and Journalism. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. [online], [2019-08-015] Available at: <http://communication.oxfordre.com 2017>

Again, older Ghanaian female journalists acquiesce to these male-centric attitudes entrenched in the profession and accepted as given. This partly confirms arguments by scholars like Steiner (see footnote 56) that some female journalists tend to adopt male tendencies in order to fit in the profession. Older female journalists admonish younger female journalists to desist from using complications and difficulties associated with pregnancy, childcare and motherhood, as excuse to cover news assignments or take up demanding newsroom tasks. Some older interviewees feel proud to describe their capability and ability to cover demanding or late-night assignments despite being in the last trimester of their pregnancy.

Most female journalists also adopt coping strategies that enable them combining work demands and childcare (see footnote 17). For instance, it is common practice for some female journalists to take their young children to work during weekend day shifts. Weak enforcement of labour policies and regulations fail to tackle these endemic impediments of 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 are only pressure groups that lack legal legitimacy to fight for better conditions of service for female journalists. These Associations have however, been effective in providing awareness and advocacy training programs that increases female journalists' personal safety at the workplace.

Another significant (often overlooked) issue relates to differences in worktime arrangements and workloads between regional and metropolitan correspondents. This important finding offers a virgin area for further exploration by researchers of gender issues in the media in Africa.

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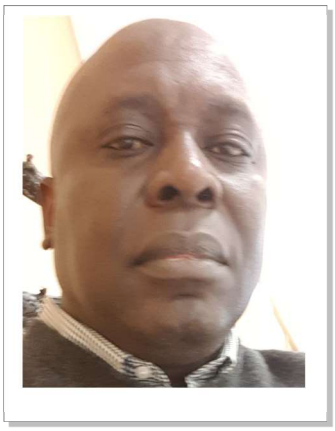

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