UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

INVESTIGATING THE COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LACTATING MOTHERS IN GRADUATE SCHOOL, THEIR COHORTS AND THEIR LECTURERS: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

KHADIJATU IDDRISU

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(COMMUNICATION SKILLS) DEGREE.

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Khadijatu Iddrisu, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

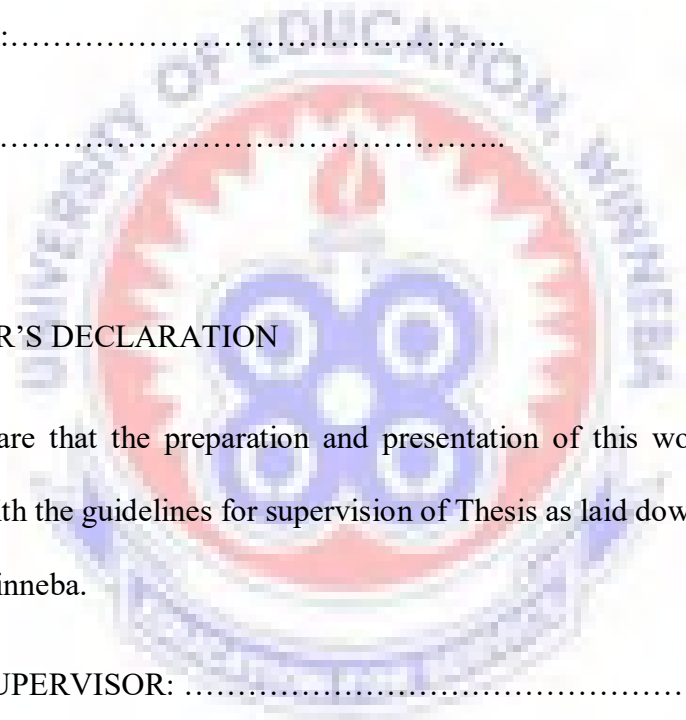SIGNATURE:………………………………………..

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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SIGNATURE:…………………………………………………………….

DATE:…………………………………………………………………….

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Finally, to all my lecturers, I appreciate your advice, support and cordial relationship. You made the department a family! Thanks to my cohorts for their affectionate relationship and support during our programme of study.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my precious children- Tung-teiya, Junaid and Suabir, and to my husband, Mutiemu.
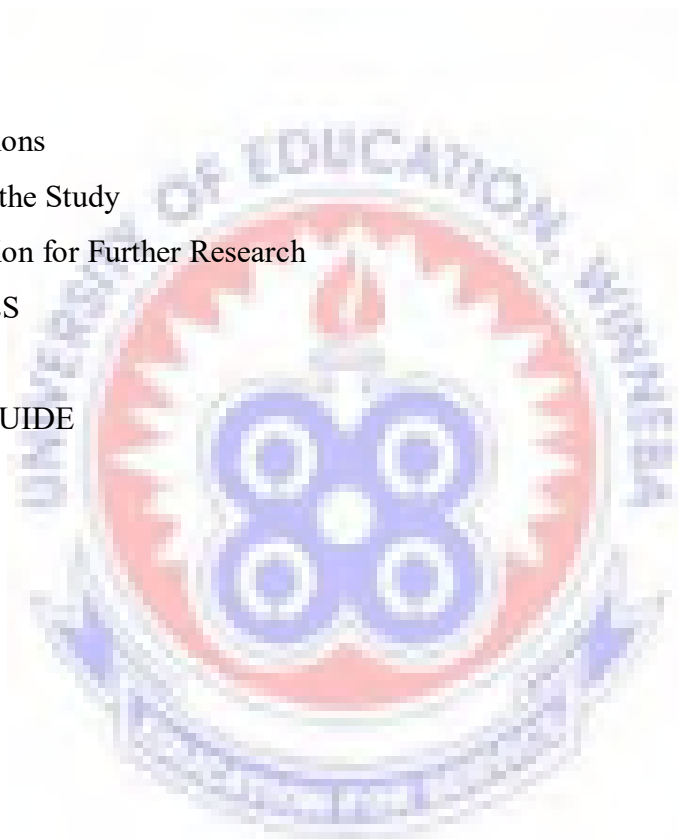
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ABBREVIATIONS

AAUW   Association of American University Women

CoE   Colleges of Education

GER   Gross Enrolment Ratio

GES   Ghana Education Service

MEd   Master of Education

MPhil   Master of Philosophy

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PCE   Presbyterian College of Education

PhD   Doctor of Philosophy

TA   Thematic Analysis

TESL   Teaching English as a Second Language

UEW   University of Education, Winneba

UNESCO   United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the communication relationships that existed between lactating student-mothers pursuing graduate programmes and their cohorts, and lecturers and the influence such relationships had on their academic development and success. It focused on the sandwich session of students, lactating sandwich mothers on Graduate programmes. It delved deep into their experiences of combining childcare and studies by using the phenomenological approach. In-depth interviews were conducted on four student-mothers. The interviews were transcribed and colour-coded into themes and descriptively analysed. The findings were that, graduate lactating student-mothers found it taxing combining these two roles which led to conflict. However, positive communication relationships between these mothers and their cohorts, as well as their lecturers including other support services from significant others, motivates them to learn leading to academic development and success. The study also revealed that, negative comments and awkward relationships demoralizes such students putting more stress on them which results in incongruence in their lives, thereby resulting in poor performance. The study recommended cordial relationships and positive interactions between lactating student-mothers and their associates and lecturers, university orientation, accommodating them at one hall of residence and providing support from other significant others, to promote every lactating student-mother's welfare and academic success. It is also recommended that evening lectures could be shifted to the weekends. Such arrangement would afford these mothers the opportunity to be with their babies during the night thereby relieving their nannies of the childcare duties in the night as well.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Education has long been key to the feminist goal of equal citizenship in terms of economic, legal, political and cultural participation in society (Findlow, 2012). For this reason, more women are striving to pursue higher education in the universities the world over.

It has been revealed that, over the past four decades, the number of higher education students has increased globally, and universities have moved from elite to mass, and then, to global higher education in developed countries (Taylor, 2003). The increasing rate of women's participation in higher education has been a feature of this development. Consequently, women now comprise the majority of tertiary students in majority of developed countries as well as those in transition (Leathwood & Read, 2009). For example, based on data derived from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO (2016), over the last 40 years, the proportion of women in higher education has increased from 39% to 56.4% in North America and Western Europe, 34% to 51.3% in East Asia and Pacific, 35% to 56.3% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 21% to 32.8% and South and West Asia, and 22% to 45.6% in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, men still remain in the majority in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, though there are some notable differences between countries and within regions. In furtherance, it states that, the proportion of women's participation in higher education has risen from 33% in 1970 to 54% in 2012 in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (UNESCO, 2016) (as cited in Parvazian, Gill, & Chiera, 2017).

Coffield (2011) and Findlow (2012) attribute women's access to education as a long-standing cog in the wheel in the feminist quest for equal citizenship. As early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, feminist scholars such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Cady Stanton grounded their broader arguments for democratic equality in the principle of women's access to education (as cited in Zaugg, 2014).

According to Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah (2013), "higher education in Ghana has seen outstanding development relating to the accessibility and participation. Within a period of 15 years, tertiary education enrolment increased from below 9,997 in 1992 to more than 132,000 in 2010, representing an increase of 1,300% (13-fold). Female enrolment has seen considerable degree of improvement with Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 1.52% in 1999 to 9.24% in 2011, although male enrolment increased from 4.28% to 14.92% respectively" (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013. p. 13).

Traditionally, women are however noted to be meant for the kitchen and nurturing of children while men are to work and provide for the family economically. This is confirmed by Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) that, marriage and housekeeping, limited the role of women. The place of the African woman he said, was the home, hers was to cook, and bring up children. Women were not as free as men. He also said women tended to be economically limited because men provided money for the running the home; hers was to cook and bring up children. Women were not as free as men. He also tended to be econmically limited because men provided money for the running of the home. Clark (1996) also asserts that the domestic and childcare responsibilities are solely assigned to women in Ghana. Goodman, (1993) affirms that life's work is assigned according to gender, and women's work is

caring, nurturing, making things right and worrying about relationships (as cited in Adofo, 2013).

Paulo Freire clarifies that, to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world by experiencing the world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known. He adds that man's separateness from an openness to the world distinguishes him as a being of *relationships* (Freire, 2005). In this case the graduate lactating student-mothers' constant engagements and interactions with their colleagues and lectures validates them as beings of relationships.

Again, communicative interactions between family members, friends and others, interpersonal relationships play an essential role in our personal and social lives (Sparks & Hill, 2005). Pederson (1991) concurs this by stating that, a person's sense of self-concept and self-esteem is validated by the communication of social support from significant others. Also, social support is crucial for positive well-being and provides powerful coping resource for persons experiencing stressful coping life changes (as cited in Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

Contrary to the assertions of Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) and Clark (1996) that women are meant to be housekeepers, Dolphyne (1991) explains that the recent trend in the world economy has made it necessary for women to act as co-breadwinners of the family and therefore must be educated to gain employment in order to earn a living. This means that women are now shifting from the traditional role of housekeepers to being career women though they are still responsible for housekeeping issues in the homes.

Again, the recent developments in university education has brought about flexibility making it accessible to all. The expansion of programmes like distance education and sandwich education has given a lot of women the opportunity to further their education especially married women with family. Women with babies who hitherto could not enrol on the regular programmes at the universities because of its long period and their inability to get babysitters to support them, now can enrol on the sandwich or distance programmes with minimal difficulties.

To buttress this, Faith and Coulter (1988) explain that distance education is often seen as being especially, appropriate for women who are homebound with children because it enables these women to further their education without compromising their family responsibilities (as cited in Plummer, 2005). Moody (2004) concurs that distance learning is particularly well suited to the needs of working women and mothers thus, allowing them to attend classes and still take care of their families and jobs.

In a similar way, the sandwich programmes in Ghana afford lactating working mothers the chance to pursue higher education without compromising their breastfeeding and child care duties. They stay on university campuses and study during the holidays of regular students. This is very suitable for women since the timeframe for sandwich programme in Ghana is five to eight weeks, depending on the university. Hence, these mothers can use their annual leave for this programme in order to acquire higher education. These programmes are usually very demanding since an entire 3 – 4 months programme is reduced to 5 or 8 weeks. Nursing a baby is equally very stressful, and nursing mothers on such programmes, suffer double agony.

Little information, however, exists on the experiences nursing mothers go through when enroled on the various programmes of the sandwich session, with regards to the communication relationships which exist between them and their associates and lecturers; and their impact on the academic development, hence the focus of the study.

According to Adofo (2013), "it is worth noting that despite the numerous policies and programmes and the expansion of access to tertiary education, no specific efforts are being made by way of policy or programme to make the tertiary institutions accommodating for female students who give birth in the course of their studies. This is quite worrisome. Due to their reproductive responsibilities women have to combine the quest for higher education to childbirth" (p. 4).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Education is the key to the socio-economic and socio-political empowerment as well as environmental and health consciousness of every individual who is privileged to have it. The pursuit of higher education elevates one's financial status and social status in society.

Jekayinfa, (2009) recommends that the educational system of any society is an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in persons certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in society. As a result of the necessity for education, there has been the view that, one who ceases to learn, ceases to exist although one may be living.

Paulo Freire in his book *Education for Critical Consciousness* further explains the meaning of existence as, "to exist is more than to live, because it's more than being in the world; it is to be with the world as well. And this capacity for communication between the being

which exists and the objective world gives to "existing" a quality of critical capacity not present in mere "living". Transcending, discerning, entering into dialogue (communicating and participating) are exclusively attributes of existence. One can only exist in relation to others who also exist, and in communication with them" (Freire, 2005. p. 16). This clearly indicates that education is indispensable for everybody, women and men alike, since it equips people with these critical attributes of existing, thus constant interaction and participation with others.

According to the Association of American University Women (AAUW, 1992), women return to college for a variety of reasons, including career advancement, higher wages and personal fulfilment. However, many women face significant barriers that make attaining a degree in a traditional college setting challenging or impossible. Balancing a job, a family, a career, and college is difficult for women who even enrol in online classes.

The timing of childbirth for example, is an important factor in a woman's career. Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and woman's biological clock coincides. He added that the average age for receiving a PhD is 33 and many professors do not secure tenure under the age of 40 (cited in Williams, 2007).

The above assertion of Caplan (1993) is what compels some women to be in school and have children at the same time, because they cannot sacrifice their education or career for a family and vice versa. This assertion perhaps is a motivation for Hensel (1990) who argues that, the verdict is clear, as having children is detrimental to a woman's career success. Hensel points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and

family life. Academic life assumes that people have "uninterrupted" time (cited in Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

The discrepancy between how women without children and women with children are viewed in academia is noted by Williams (2002), who says that female professors and staff members report that they felt treated like valued colleagues until they had children, and then felt their colleagues' assessment of their competence started to Plummer (cited in Williams, 2007).

Pursuing a second degree is very demanding and difficult and it is even more stressful when one is enroled on the sandwich session whereby one year's programme is reduced to five or eight weeks; which is done when the regular students are on their long vacation. Because of its short nature, most workers normally prefer to enrol into this using their annual leave. Breastfeeding and childcare are demanding and can be more distressing when enroled on the sandwich session of the graduate programme in Ghana.

There is however, minimal research on the experiences of nursing mothers pursuing sandwich programmes in Graduate school in the public universities, though student mothers are a unique student population who defy all odds to achieving educational success. Using qualitative research methods, this study therefore seeks to uncover the experiences of lactating mothers who combine child care and studies as sandwich graduate students.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- reveal the experiences of nursing mothers combining childcare and studying as sandwich graduate students

- examine the communication relationships which exist between lactating student-mothers, their cohorts and their lecturers.

- ascertain the influence of these relationships on the academic development and success of lactating student-mothers.

1.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to find answers to the following questions.

- What are the lived experiences of nursing mothers combining childcare and study as sandwich graduate students?

- What communication relationships and interactions exist between lactating mothers, their cohorts and their lecturers?

- What is the influence of these relationships and interactions on the academic development and success of lactating mothers?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study will add to existing literature in this area and give lactating mothers the information needed to prepare adequately to enable them to surmount the challenges in their quest to pursue higher education.

The results of the study will also help tertiary institutions to make their learning environment conducive for all manner of persons including lactating mothers. Finally, the findings will equip policy makers with the necessary information to formulate gender friendly policies to enable a lot more lactating mothers to pursue further education through the sandwich mode.

1.5 Delimitation

The study focused on nursing mothers pursuing sandwich programme at UEW, that is the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 academic years. It focused on students on the south campus as the researcher had access to some lactating mothers and made the necessary contacts.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by giving the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and the general layout of the thesis.

Chapter two talks of the theoretical frameworks and the review of relevant literature in the research area. Chapter three is on the research methodology and approach used.

The outcome or results of the research is presented in chapter four. There is a detailed discussion of the findings of the research and the inferences made from them in view of the findings from the literature reviewed. Chapter five focuses on the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations from the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature regarding the topic. It also deals with the theoretical framework guiding this study.

The theoretical frameworks to guide the study are phenomenology and role conflict theories. Other literature to be reviewed are motivating factors, impact of communication relationships between graduate student-mothers and their cohorts and lecturers and the challenges of nursing student-mothers in graduate schools.

2.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the way in which human beings come to understand the world through direct experience- the perception of a phenomenon, whether an object, event, or condition. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a theorist in phenomenology, wrote that, "all my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world." Phenomenology, then, makes actual lived experience the basic data of reality (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). They added that phenomenology as a tradition, focuses on the internal, conscious experience of the person. It looks at the ways in which a person understands and gives meaning to the events of her life as well as to her own sense of self. Additionally, cited in Kreisher (2017), it is stated that phenomenology includes qualitative studies that examine a specific type of experience shared by a group of individual and studies that seek to understand lived experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2013).

The phenomenology theory helps the researcher to get the experiences of lactating student-mothers combining studies and child care and the communication relationship which exists between these mothers and their cohorts and lecturers.

It is further stated in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) that Carl Rogers was a giant of the twentieth century regarding human relationships. His approach to phenomenology says as much about relationships as it does about the self because according to Rogers, the self cannot be separated from relationships. Rogers' approach to relationships begins with the phenomenal field. Your overall experience as a person constitutes your phenomenal field; it is all that you know and feel. It is the totality of your experience (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Relating this to the graduate student who is a lactating mother, her phenomenal field becomes her relationship with her baby, her babysitter, her cohorts both in class and at her hall of residence, and her lecturers. Her totality of experience with each of these people constitute the lactating mother's phenomenal field.

It is again noted in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) that, when a person feels strong and clear, then, the individual experiences *congruence*, or a consistency between who he or she is, what he or she does, and how he or she fits into the world. During times when one feels confused, the experience is *incongruence*, or loss of consistency in life. For Rogers, congruence leads to growth, while incongruence leads to frustration.

The degree to which you experience congruence is very much affected by your relationship with others. Relationships characterised by negative, critical communication tend to breed incongruence, precisely because they create inconsistency between your sense of self and other aspects of your experience. In contrast, congruence is a product of affirming,

supportive relationships. In other words, a supportive relationship is characterised by *unconditional positive regard,* which creates a threat-free environment in which we can be self-actualizing. (Littlejohn & Foss 2011). For instance, in 2002, my mate in the University for Development Studies, Navrongo campus, gave birth during her undergraduate course of study and brought the baby to school. Lecturers and some students critiqued her for bringing the baby to school saying it would be very stressful for her and advised her to defer the programme for one year to enable her take good care of the baby, which she did, and returned a year later to continue the programme. This critical communication from her relationship with others, brought about incongruence and she had to defer the programme. However, if she had a supportive relationship such as positive comments like *'You can do it. Others have done it before by combining lactating duties and studies',* from her colleagues and lecturers, it would have spurred her on to stay with her baby and study.

2.2 Role Theory

Biddle and Thomas (1966) noted that according to most role analysts, a comprehensive "role theory" has not been developed. However, varoius authors have given some definitions or explanations of the term role. For instance, Parsons and Shils (1951) define role as "the role is that organised sector of an actor's orientation which constitutes and defines his participation in the interactive process. It involves *a set of complementary expectations* concerning his own actions and those of others with whom he interacts" (cited in Mackey, 1977).

Similarly, Biddle (1986) stated that, role theory concerns one of the most important feature of social life, characteristic behaviour patterns or roles. It explains roles by presuming that

persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviours and those of other persons.

Another concept of role suggested by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) was that associated with every work is a set of activities, which are defined as potential behaviours. These activities constitute the role to be performed, at least approximately by any person who occupies that office (cited in Mackey, 1977). Mackey (1977) noted that in spite of the confusion surrounding the concept of role, the most common definition of role was cited by Hare is "a set of expectations" which means that what others expect from persons who have roles to perform.

Goffman (1963) described how all social performances aspire to ideals. Accordingly, our performances of social roles are socialised, moulded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of a society in which it is presented. Thus, when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society than does his behaviour as a whole (as cited in Williams, 2007).

Beena (1999) states that, the term role denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status within a group or social situation. One common thing runs through the definitions stated above, thus, the *expectations* of society from one's *performance* of her/his *duties*. This study therefore finds out from lactating student-mothers about the perceptions of their cohorts, lecturers and other significant others regarding the performance of their dual roles- to fulfil her duty as a mother and as a student.

The academic demands expected of them by their lecturers and associates and the expectations of society regarding their child care duties are looked at.

2.3 Role Conflict Theory

Kahn et al (1964) have defined role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures, such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. Beena (1999) also noted that, role conflict may exist by the perceived and experienced incongruity of the expectations associated with the ascribed or assigned role in an institution. Relating this to the study, lactating student-mothers perform dual roles of childcare and studies simultaneously. In line with objective one of the study, the researcher explores how student-mothers juggle between these roles and what conflicts they experience in the execution of these roles.

Parsons (1951) cited in Mackey (1977), defined role conflict as the exposure of an actor to conflicting sets of role expectations such that complete fulfilment of both is realistically impossible. He further noted that, it is necessary to compromise, that is, to sacrifice some at least of both sets of expectations, or to choose one alternative and sacrifice the other. In any case, the actor is exposed to negative sanctions and, as far as both sets of values are internalised, to internal conflict. On the definition above, the study gathers from the participants which of the two roles is mostly compromised for the other when they encounter role conflict.

Siegall and Cummings (1995) stated that there are four types of role conflict in Katz and Khan, (1966) framework. Intrasender conflict occurs when incompatible expectations are received from a single role sender. Intersender consists of incompatible expectations from

two or more role senders. The third form of role conflict occurs when focal's own role expectations are in disagreement with those of one or more role senders. This form is called person-role conflict. Finally, inter-role conflict exists when pressures from one role conflict with those from another role. The common element in all four forms of role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other. For instance, a woman may enthusiastically embrace the simultaneous role of mother and student, however, undertaking these two roles, even in the ideal condition, can pull one person in different directions (as cited in Springer, Parker, & Levinten-Reid, 2009). In this study, lactating student-mothers experience the inter-role conflict since their childcare role always conflict with their academic role.

Combining motherhood and studying without compromising the activities of either one is a great dilemma for student mothers. When a mother must focus all her attention on her studies, her behaviour may contrast with her traditional motherhood roles (Visick, 2009 cited in Moghadam, Khiaban, Esmaeili, & Salsali, 2017).

At any point in time one of these roles will have to be compromised to fulfil the other. For instance, when the baby is sick, the mother will have to forgo lectures and take the child to the hospital to seek medical attention. This is explained further by Hammer & Thompson (2001) that, there are situations where the proscribed set of behaviour that characterize roles may lead to cognitive dissonance in individuals. Role conflict is a special form of social conflict that takes place when one is forced to take on two different incompatible roles at the same time.

According to Wolf (1968), cited in The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, the term role conflict refers to a clash between two or more of a person's roles or incompatible features within the same role. These incompatibilities can consist of differing expectations, requirements, beliefs and/or attitudes. He notes that people in everyday life enact multiple roles simultaneously. For example, a character called Jane might be a boss, an employee, a daughter, a mother, and so on. These roles are often activated concurrently and harmoniously. Jane's role as a primary wage earner for her family is not likely to be in conflict with her role as a supervisor at work. However, different roles are sometimes incompatible and the requirements of one role can clash with those of another. In addition, contradictory requirements within the same role can produce role conflict. Wolf on his part, identified two types of role conflict: *intra-role* conflict, referring to incompatible requirements within the same role and *inter-role* conflict, referring to clashing expectations from separate roles within the same person. This simplifies Katz and Kahn's role conflict framework.

Intra-role conflict arises in two ways. First, different people sometimes have inconsistent conceptions concerning the requirements and expectations that constitute a particular role. Jane's conception of being a good mother might consist of having a job outside of the home. She might also believe that providing socio-emotional support to her family is a necessary ingredient in her role as a mother. However, Jane's mother-in-law might think that to be a good mother, Jane would need to relinquish her job to provide around-the-clock care for her children. Because of these differing conceptions concerning the role of a mother, Jane is likely to experience intra-role conflict.

Inter-role conflict arises when the requirements and expectations of one role interfere or conflict with those of another role. Jane's role as a mother is likely to conflict with her role as a student and worker. When one of her children becomes ill, Jane may find that the demands of her job (e.g. staying at work) are in conflict with the demands of motherhood (e.g. taking her child to the doctor) (William, n. d). The focus of this study is on the second type because it best describes the situation of the lactating student-mother. Thus, the requirements and expectations of her role as a mother constantly interferes with her role as a student.

2.3.1 Impact of Role Conflict

A research conducted in America highlighted the fact that the symbolic nature of both roles- mother and student- is often in conflict with the structural elements around which each role is performed. Student-mothers confront this dilemma through a number of strategic practices including 'maternal invisibility'; 'academic invisibility'; luck, and reliance on the more traditional means of economic and emotional support that come from spouses and parents (Lynch, 2008). Lactating student-mothers are bound to face role conflicts. At any point in time one of her expected roles is compromised. For instance, when she goes for lectures, her baby misses her and when she is with the baby studies cannot go on. This study inquires what effect the dilemma of childcare and studies have on student-mothers.

Parenting and academia are both described as "greedy institutions" Coser (1974), meaning they demand essentially endless time and energy from those who partake in them. (as cited in Kreischer, 2017). Similarly, the sandwich session of the graduate school is very

demanding because of its relatively short duration. Some lectures begin as early as 7:30am and end at 5:30pm, and others even have evening lectures. Nursing a baby equally require the full attention of their mothers. Therefore, mothers who enrol in graduate school on the sandwich session, are completely robbed-off their time since both tasks demand their endless time and energy.

Graduate student-parents experience multiple marginalised roles as those of the graduate student (Grady, La Touche, Oslawski-Lopez, Powers, & Simacek, 2014) and the working parents. Parents, particularly mothers, are also marginalised at work as they have historically received less pay and have been rated as less competent than their childless counterparts solely because of their parenthood status (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007).

Situated within two marginalised roles, graduate student parents may be at increased risk for negative personal and academic outcomes (Kreischer, 2017). This implies that the overly demands of one of these roles to the neglect of the other would certainly result in poor outcomes of the compromised role.

Another consequence posited by Hammer and Thompson (2001), was that there are situations where the proscribed sets of behaviour that characterise roles may lead to cognitive dissonance in individuals. Role overload and conflict often lead to difficulties with meeting role expectations, known as role strain (Goode, 1960). Various negative psychological and physical problems can follow from role strain, in many cultures, women experience stress, as a result of combining work and family roles (Ponzentti, 2003).

Kreischer, 2017 concurs this citing other authors who wrote that students who are parents need to attend not only to endless graduate programme requirements but also to the daily

needs of their children. I posit that because they assume multiple demanding roles, graduate students with children may experience more intensified difficulty with stress, finances, and struggles unique to their intersecting identities, as compared to graduate students who are not parents (Grady et al, 2014).

Research has also shown that role conflicts benefit role actors. Wolf-Wendel and Ward, (2006) stated that, "parenthood and graduate school may also provide benefits to graduate students parents in that these roles may buffer the stress of one another" and allow students to gain new insights into parenting, research, teaching, and service. Such instances of ways in which roles positively affect one another are referred to as role enhancement. The fundamental thesis of role enhancement perspective is the participation in multiple roles, role accumulation, provides access to various resources that can be utilized by the individual across various role responsibilities. The resources gained through role accumulation and the individual skills developed by taking on additional roles are posited to encourage positive outcomes at the individual level regarding well-being, and they are presumed to promote group processes such as work-group performance and family functioning (as cited in Sieber, 1974).

Contrary to Goode's (1964) assertion of multiple roles leading to role strain, Marks & MacDermid (1996), in their theory of role balance, also found people who are able to fully participate in and perform a number of different roles experience not only less role strain but also lower rates of depression and higher self-esteem and innovation (cited in International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family, 2003). Coser (1975), argues that it is among multiple roles that individuals are able to express individuality and act autonomously in accordance with or in apposition to normative expectations. This study

therefore explores the impact of role conflict on lactating student-mothers' academic development.

2.4 Factors that Inspire Women for Higher Education

Zaugg (2014), in her dissertation, identified two factors that contribute to a mothers' pursuit of higher or further education. These are economics and personal fulfilment.

2.4.1 Economics

A significant factor influencing women's decision whether or not to return to school is the prevailing economic climate. Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced, statistics indicate that post-secondary education plays a key role in improving women's earning potential and contributing to an improved quality of life (Zaugg, 2014).

Working Mother columnist (Bacher, n. d.) wrote that in today's economy and job market, many working moms see going back to school as a necessary step to greater pay and career advancement (cited in Zaugg, 2014).

According to Adofo (2013), the immediate concern of women is their ability to earn enough money so that they could feed, clothe, and generally take better care of their children. Education of women increases their chances of getting paid job to supplement the man's income and meet the high standard of living.

Dolphyne (1991) is also of the conviction that higher education gives a woman economic security and so makes her economically independent. This shows that higher education or acquiring more knowledge through further education elevates one's salary level and promotions at work.

Again, Parvazian, et al (2017) notes that empirical research tends to proceed from an idea of higher education as benefiting the individual woman through the potential earning power and greater labour force participation of women.

They mention that two global approaches are identified for the basis of woman's greater employability due to higher education attainment. The first counts women's greater employability as a function of the knowledge and skills transmitted by higher education and its contribution to workforce development. The second approach investigates the use of higher education credentials by employers to identify the potential social and cultural capital of the individuals (Brennan, 2008; Brown, 2016). Whichever approach is used, higher education is seen globally to affect women's willingness and ability to enter the labour market as it raises their potential earning power, provides them with necessary credentials for employment, and changes their attitudes towards women's traditional roles in the household and in the workplace. Taking into consideration the above notions, this study would seek the opinions of the participants of their pursuance of higher education.

2.4.2 Personal Fulfilment

As cited in Coffield's (2011) study on educational aspirations and expectations of women who are educationally disadvantaged, "a woman's decision to enrol in an adult education and literacy programme is often intimately linked to her sense of self and to the formation of her identity".

Ghanaian scholar Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey stated that, "if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a nation." This means that when a woman pursues higher education, she gets personal fulfilment in the sense that her children

and the nation at large would benefit. It is therefore not surprising that for many women, another aspect of personal fulfilment was found in the belief that, their own educational experiences provided "improvement models of educations success for their children… [and] that the value they placed on post-secondary education modelled positive educational expectations for their children that might offset other risk factors" (Haleman, 2004 cited in Zaugg, 2014).

Haleman (2004) again asserts that education was also frequently viewed by study participants as an avenue for personal growth that transcended economic benefit. Zaugg (2014) agrees by stating that for many women, both then and now, the desire for personal growth and to be more than they currently are is a motivation enough to obtain further education.

In addition to some of the benefits of women's education, Caldwell (1981) cited in Wadatul (2001) explained that, the educated mother was more likely to hear and adopt new ideas about childcare nutrition and also take advantage of modern healthcare practices such as immunisation among others. This means that education of females will go a long way to even improve the healthcare of the family. He refers to the results of two surveys that were carried out to arrive at the conclusion that maternal education is the single most significant determinant of child mortality. Janowitz (1976) concurs that formal education of females widens their horizon, make them susceptible to new ideas and perception and liberate them from ignorance and traditions that are not helpful (as cited in Adofo, 2013).

Cited in Parvazian et al. (2017), it is noted that changes in women's rights along with educational achievements have increased gender equality and society, including in family

life. These changes have been heralded as transforming women's opportunities to control and shape their personal lives (Goldin & Katz, 2008). In family relations based on a social partnership of interdependence and mutual adjustment, couples can decide how to divide their labour most effectively to satisfy personal needs and family responsibilities, which does not require that all duties be split evenly in the middle. Today, women have more control over the course and rhythm of their lives than ever before. They also struggle with more choices about how to achieve self-fulfilment (Gilbert, 2014).

2.5 Relationships and Graduate Student-Mothers

Kreisher (2017) notes that graduate students with children, like those without children, felt guilty because they continuously strove to meet high expectations that were seemingly never met due to their ambiguous and open-ended nature. However, for graduate students who were parents, guilt also resulted as a function of spending less time with one's children than was desired or expected.

In addition to the idea that students with children encountered more intense feelings of guilt than did childless students, researchers suggested these groups experienced different forms of isolation, as well. In a qualitative study of 17 participants enroled in master's, professional, and doctoral programmes, graduate students without families reported feeling isolated because they did not have enough time to develop or maintain committed relationships with spouses and romantic partners (Grady et al., 2014). Graduate student parents, on the other hand, may be at risk for isolation because they maintain fewer friendships in attempt to eliminate roles and therefore ease strain (Sallee, 2015).

Again, regarding social support, for graduate students in general, higher levels of social support from their programmes and families correlated with lower levels of stress

symptoms (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Graduate students typically cited student peers and faculty members as vital to their social support systems though very limited time may restrict graduate student parents from socializing with members of these support systems (Offstein et al., 2004). Students with children and significant others may have received social support from their family members, but research by Tompkins and colleagues (2016) suggested that among student peers, faculty mentors, and friends/family outside of their programme, support from faculty mentors held the most power in predicting students' overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with the programme (Tompkins, Brecht, Tucker, Neander, & Swift, 2016).

Worth mentioning, female students reported less support from their graduate programmes and more feelings of isolation than males (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). This may be related to the "motherhood penalty" described by Correll and colleagues (2007) as the negative consequences women face when they enter the workforce despite cultural expectations to engage in motherhood at the expense of all other roles. Regardless, research about mothers and fathers in graduate school highlighted that time spent in student and parent roles consumed any time that may have been spent within a social setting (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011). Therefore, the literature suggests that social support significantly affected the lives of all graduate students but students with and without children may have received support from different sources. Those who were parents may have lacked the time to build important social networks with faculty and peers in their programmes, but family relationships provided a built-in social support network away from the programme (Grady et al., 2014).

To add to the above, Adofo (2013) stated in her findings that nursing mothers had emotional and physical support from their husbands and peers. Therefore, the indispensable position of the husbands of student nursing mothers makes them succeed in their academic pursuit.

Finally, Müller (2008) posits that educational institutions that recognizes women's professional, social, and academic needs are better prepared to create policies and services to address those needs. In furtherance, Muller observes that educators who understand the complexity of women's balancing of diverse roles can more effectively advise and prepare women to be successful in online courses. From the foregone discussions it is evident that building relationships is helpful for student-mothers. At the family level, social support in the form of motivation, finance, psychological, physical and moral from husband and other family members is so valuable to these mothers. Likewise, in the academic realm support from faculty members especially lecturers and associates in the form of motivation, study materials and guidance impact positively on the academic wellbeing of these student mothers.

2.6 Difficulties Student-Mothers Encounter

The combination of two full time work –motherhood and studies- comes with numerous difficulties, since to yield optimum benefits and satisfaction, both should be done one at a time and not simultaneously. Below are some of challenges student mothers face in the course of their studies.

Jarvis (1995) found out that adults who are over-stimulated or anxious do not learn as well as those who are stimulated to respond to their learning situation in a normal way.

According to him, anxiety could impede new or even the mastery of new motor skills, it tended to interfere or inhibit original thought.

Also, Banda (2000) stated that teacher-learners with babies bring babysitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. As a result, some of these teacher-learners sometimes miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area.

According to Hordzi (2008), for distance education programme, the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This means that there could be interruptions from the baby while the mother is studying for the exams and this could make her lose concentration.

Adofo (2013) concurs this when she found in her study that it was difficult combining childcare and studies. She stated, "it is clear that the drudgeries of childcare make it difficult for student nursing mothers to combine it with learning. Baby's cry for attention takes off their minds from the books thus making it difficult to concentrate" (p. 83).

Adofo (2013) also noted that, furthering education by women could also have profound effect on their relationships and marriage. She cited Suiter (1987) as stating that, the decline in marital happiness among full-time students and their husbands appear to have been related to changes in the women's performance of family roles over the years, and to husbands' responses to those changes.

As Hensel (1990) is of the view that, being a mother means being constantly interruptible and continually responsive to needs of someone else, which makes it difficult to develop the concentration necessary to write and study (as cited in Dallan, 1998).

More so, Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) state that the stress or trauma which student-mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their new born babies alongside their studies. Some have had to birth in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or because they even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and level of achievement (Egenti & Omoruyi, 2011).

Finally, Banda (2000) conducted a research on female teacher-learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi which revealed that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher-learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the programme as the cause of the child's death.

Deducing from above discussions, it is evident that combining two unrelated roles comes with countless challenges. The expectations of nursing a baby is completely different from the expectations of studies in graduate school. Both need undivided attention from the role actor (student-mothers). On the contrary, student-mothers combine these roles and consequently face difficulties such as stress, missing classes and group studies, leaving babies in the care of nannies and sometimes death of some of their babies.

2.7 Summary

To sum up from the literature reviewed, women are expected to perform their traditional roles of childcare and managing the home. However, the need for the woman to support in the family upkeep necessitates her to go for further studies to enhance her economic power and personal fulfilment. It is evident from the literature that studying and childcare both demand uninterrupted time from student-mothers, therefore the combination of both brings about conflict when executing them simultaneously. This makes them face myriad of challenges: stress, missing lectures, no peace of mind to study among others. These eventually lead some of them to fail their exams and others even dropout of school.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter expounds the methodology used to gather and analyse the data. The aim of the research is to investigate the communication relationships between lactating student mothers in graduate school and their cohorts and lecturers. The following are discussed herein; the research approach, research design, sample procedure/technique, sampling, data collection instrument used, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach adopted was the qualitative research method of data collection. This was because the research sought to investigate the experiences lactating student-mothers in graduate school have, regarding their communication relationship between them, their cohorts and their lecturers. Here, the research participants told their stories about the phenomenon, which enabled the researcher to have a deeper understanding of their experiences and present the results as narrated without manipulating their stories.

Qualitative inquiry aims to explore the meaning individuals attach to objects and experiences (Creswell, 2013). Braun & Clarke (2013) also note that qualitative research uses words as data, collected and analysed in all sorts of ways. They add that, it's rich, exciting, and challenging in lots of ways and it captures the complexity, mess and contradiction that characterises the real world, yet allows us to make sense of patterns of meaning. Therefore, in this study the stories told by participants were used as data which was then analysed or interpreted thematically.

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seek to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real-world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Additionally, Patton and Cochran (2007) declare that qualitative researchers aim at analysing the situate form, content and experience of social actors in words rather than in number. Similarly, because qualitative research aims at getting in-depth knowledge rather than statistics, no statistical interpretations were done in this study. (Patton & Cochran, 2007)

Again, in qualitative research, stories are increasingly recognised as a powerful research tool (Cohen & Mallon, 2001). According to Gjedde (2005) narrative is fundamental for the construction of meaning on a personal as well as on a community level. The narratives offer immersive experiences, which allow the user to engage at an emotional level and involve the user with different emotional states. In the same way, participants of this study narrated their experiences of combining childcare and studies which served as data for analysis.

Phenomenology includes qualitative studies that examine a specific type experience shared by a group of individuals and studies that seek to understand lived experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Because the research is to uncover the lived experiences of lactating student-mothers in graduate school, a phenomenological approach was used.

Using a phenomenological approach requires the researcher to "bracket" their own history of the phenomenon under investigation, separating their experiences from those of the participants as a means of viewing the data with a new lens (Creswell, 2013). Finlay (2008) explains that "the bracketing process is often misunderstood and misrepresented as being

an effort to be objective and unbiased. Braun and Clarke (2013) posits that subjectivity is positively valued in qualitative paradigm. According to them, research is understood as a subjective process; we, as researchers bring our own histories, values, assumptions, perspectives, politics and mannerisms into the research, and we cannot leave those at the door. They further state that, the topics we find interesting to research, and ways we ask questions about them, the aspects of our data that excite us, these (and many other factors) reflect who we are; our subjectivity. Therefore, any knowledge produced is going to reflect that, even if only in some very minor way. In qualitative research, our humanness, our subjectivity in this way it needs to be thought about and considered. But to do qualitative research well, and to use subjectivity is by being reflexive. Reflexivity is an essential requirement for good qualitative research as it refers to the process of critically reflecting on the knowledge we produce and our role in producing that knowledge.

3.2 Research Design

Creswell (2014) describes a research design as a strategy, plan, and a structure of conducting research work. The selection of a research design is also depended on the nature of the research problem, the researcher's personal experiences and the audience for the study.

Yin (2014) states that the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions. He adds that research design is also thought of as a blueprint of research, dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect and how to analyse results (Yin, 2014).

The action plan for this research included, sampling, design of the interview guide, data collection and data analysis which are discussed in detail below.

Again, the research used case study as its research strategy. Case study was used because it gave me the chance to investigate and to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of the phenomenon of lactating student mothers in graduate school. As buttressed by Yin (2014) that a case study is an in-depth empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-world context.

3.2.1 Sampling Procedure/Technique

According to Patton (2002) cited in Braun and Clarke (2013), in qualitative research, the typical approach to sampling is purposive, with the aim of generating insight and in-depth understanding of the communication relationship that exist between lactating student mothers and their cohorts and lecturers. Purposive sampling involves selecting data cases (participants, texts) on the basis that will be able to provide 'information-rich' (Patton, 2002) data to analyze. Creswell (2014) also defines purposive sampling as the selection of sites or participants that will aid the researcher in understanding the problem and the research question. He adds that when using the purposive sampling, decisions need to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take and how many people or sites need to be sampled. The participants of this research or study were selected purposively since the focus is on lactating student-mothers pursuing various graduate programmes on the sandwich sessions, telling their in-depth experiences of combining childcare and studies. This concurs Patton's (2015) position that purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. Therefore, only

lactating mothers of the South Campus were considered since they were easily accessible to the researcher; therefore, the convenience sampling technique was also employed.

In this regard, Patton (2002) stated that convenience sampling is a very common approach in participant-based research. Convenience has been identified as the least rigorous and justifiable sample method (Brink, 1993). The intensive nature of the graduate sandwich programme, kept the mothers busy with their lectures and other academic demands. The babies were always seen with their babysitters hence it was through them the researcher got the lactating mothers. The babysitters told me their Halls or places of residence and the researcher followed up to meet the student-mothers and told them of the focus of the research and they all gladly agreed to participate.

Participants were selected from two sandwich sessions 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 academic years. The researcher had two participants in the 2016/2017 year and three from the 2017/2018 who agreed to grant me the interview.

3.2.2 Sampling

Braun and Clarke (2013) noted that like any research, qualitative research involves the selection of a data sample we then analyse. In total, we need a sample that is *appropriate* to our research question and the theoretical aims of the study and provides *an adequate* amount of data to fully analyse the topic and answer our questions (Morse & Field, 2002). The appropriate sample for this research is the graduate lactating student-mothers on the Sandwich programme. They are embedded in the phenomenon of childcare and studies, hence, have the requisite knowledge to share (right amount of data) and that would adequately answer the research questions and analyse the research topic well.

3.2.2.1 Size

Sample size is the number of people or objects in the selected sample (Manheim & Rich, 1999). According to Patton, 2002, qualitative research tends to use smaller samples than quantitative research, but there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. In connection with this, the selected sample for this study was initially five (5) sandwich graduate lactating student-mothers from the South Campus of University of Education Winneba (UEW). One of them however declined to participate in the course of the study as she was also busy with writing her thesis. This clearly agrees with the assertion of Lindlof and Taylor (2002) that the sample size is usually considered to be a factor that cannot be decided until much later in the course of the study. Therefore, the final sample for the study was four (4).

3.2.3 Data Collection Instrument

Braun and Clarke (2013), define interviewing as a professional conversation (Kvale, 2007), with the goal of getting a participant to talk about their experiences and prospectives, and to capture their language and concepts in relation to a topic that you have determined.

They further noted that, interviews are ideally suited to experience-type research questions and since the lactating student mothers have this experience using interviews will help explore their understanding, perception and the construction of things that they have some kind of stake in, so, will give out the rich and detailed responses needed from the interviews.

The semi-structured interview (sometimes called the interview guide) approach (Patton, 2002) was used, and was developed based on the research questions, objectives and review of other related works, but was not rigidly followed during the interview process. This

enabled participants to discuss issues that were important to them which had not been anticipated. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) put it aptly and succinctly, cited in Braun and Clarke (2013), the ideal qualitative interview is 'on target while hanging loose'. Therefore, the researcher was flexible with the questions in the interview process and this enabled participants to tell freely their experiences.

3.2.4 Data Collection

According to Snape and Spencer (2003), certain data collection methods have also been identified with qualitative research such as observation, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives and the analysis of documentary evidence. Relative to the above, in-depth interviewing was employed in this study.

Telephone interviews were conducted. The reason for this choice was that some of the participants (2016/2017 Batch) had completed the programme and the others (2017/2018) had gone home and to return during the long vacation of the regular students. Therefore, all my participants were dispersed in different locations hence my choice of data collection method.

Before the inception of the interview, the researcher sought the consent of participants to record the conversation in order not to violate ethical issues. The researcher also took notes so that in the event the recording failed she would rely on it. Recording the interviews helped the researcher not to lose the actual words of the participants as Patton (2002) states, "no matter what style of interviewing you use and no matter how carefully you word questions, it all come to naught if you fail to capture actual words of the person being interviewed". Participants were assured of confidentiality since this work is solely for

academic purposes hence all information gotten was used to develop the thesis. Additionally, actual names were replaced with pseudonyms in order to conceal their identity and the names of people who were mentioned during the interview were also concealed.

3.2.5 Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) indicates that in analysing data, the researcher needs to 'winnow' the information gathered, and the impact of this process is to aggregate the date into smaller number of themes. This number of themes can be five to seven.

In this study, the audio interviews were transcribed by the researcher since she is experienced in transcription as she worked as a researcher with a research firm (Associates for Change). The data were then coded and clustered into themes. The analysis of the data was done based on these themes. Braun and Clarke (2013), stated that Thematic Analysis (TA) is relatively unique among qualitative analytic methods in that it only provides a method for data analysis and can be used to answer almost any type of research question (with the exception of questions of language practice) and used to analyse almost any kind of data. In furtherance, TA can be applied to data in different ways, from experiential to critical and can be used to develop and detailed descriptive account of a phenomenon. Since the research work aims to get lactating student mothers experiences, analysing the data thematically brought out vividly a detailed descriptive account of their experiences. These were supported with quotes from my participants to enable readers also get into the world of these mothers. The themes which emerged from the research were: motivation for enroling in graduate school, sandwich as an option, experiences combining childcare and

studies, clashing roles, balancing the roles, communication relationships and their impact, support, challenges and suggestions

3.3 Summary

The methods used to gather and analyse the data are discussed. The research approach used was the qualitative research method. This was done in order to get an in-depth information of the experiences of the lactating student-mothers combining childcare and studies. The research design used was a case study and the sampling technique was purposive. The chapter also dealt with data collection and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcome or results of the research. There is detailed discussion of the findings regarding the investigation of lactating mothers' communications relationship between them, their cohorts and their lecturers. It concerns telling the stories of their experiences combining childcare and studies on the graduate sandwich programme.

To ascertain and analyse these stories, one-on-one interviews were conducted via telephone which were recorded and transcribed. In all, four (4) participants were interviewed. Of the four participants, two studied MEd Science Education- one majored in Chemistry and the other in Biology; the other two participants both studied MEd Teaching English as a Second Language (MEd TESL). Three of my participants were teachers in the second cycle schools and one teaches in a College of Education. All my participants were within the age range of 33 and 38. Two of them had three children each and the other two had two children each. The ages of their children also ranged from 6 months to 13 years old.

The telephone interviews were the only convenient way to collect the data as all my participants were dispersed in different locations across the country. Traveling to them to conduct a face-to-face interview with each of them required money and time and could not have been the best choice. These were very limited almost not available at the time and the deadline for the submission of the theses was approaching. At the beginning of all the interviews, telephone etiquettes were observed, and I also requested to record the conversation which they all accepted. Even though the interviews were successful, there

were however a few challenges encountered. For instance, one of the interviews was conducted at a very noisy background where my interviewee was on a field, they were holding sporting activities amidst loud music and noise. In addition, during the interview process with one of them, the communication network was terrible, the call dropped about thrice and the call quality was bad. Also, a two-year old of one of the participants was crying at the background disrupting her mum from speaking and she told me she had to carry her on her back while we continued with the interview. With all these challenges, they still were eager to tell their stories which successfully happened eventually.

The data were then transcribed by the researcher and coded using colours in word document. Different colours were used to highlight different themes and similar information regarding particular themes were highlighted with the same colour and printed out. For confidentiality, all the names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms, therefore all the names which appear in this analysis are not the true names of the research participants. The analysis and interpretations are done in-depth with several participants' voices as quotes to tell their stories.

The themes that emerged from the interviews included, motivation for enroling in graduate school, sandwich as an option, experiences combining childcare and studies, clashing roles, balancing the roles, communication relationships and their impact, support, challenges and suggestions. Before a detailed analysis is done on these themes, a brief profile of each of the research participants is given below:

4.1 Brief Profiles of Participants

Hannah is a 35-year-old mother of two girls. She said she was highly pregnant when she came for the first session of the sandwich programme and she delivered and came together with the baby for the second session when she was 9 months old. She hinted that, this was her second time of going for a sandwich programme with a baby. The first time she took a child to school was when she was pursuing a Post Graduate Diploma programme. She graduated last year with MEd Science Education, Biology option.

Mildred is a mother of 3 and she is 33 years of old. She went to the second session of the graduate sandwich school with her two-month-old baby. She studied MEd TESL.

Wun-nam, a 38-year-old teacher is married with 3 children. She noted that during her first degree, she was pregnant, and she gave birth along the line and took the baby to school. She added that when she got the admission for the graduate programme, she again was pregnant and almost due so, she had to defer it to the following year when she came with her baby who was 1 year. She studied MEd Science Education, Chemistry option.

Tina is a mother of two boys and is 36 years old. She came to the second session of the graduate school when her baby was 6 months old. She studied MEd TESL.

4.2 Motivation for Enroling in Graduate School

Haleman (2004) asserted that when a woman pursues higher education, she gets personal fulfilment in the sense that her children and the nation at large would benefit, When the question of why they enroled in graduate school was asked, all four participants stated personal fulfilment as their reason. Tina had this to say, "you know as humans, we need to

add value to ourselves", Mildred also stated that, "for higher academic achievement" and Hibba mentioned, "I wanted to upgrade myself in my study area".

The words "add value", "higher academic achievement" and "upgrade myself," revealed from the participants all describe uplifting the self-worth of a person. This confirms Coffield's (2011) statement that a woman's decision to enrol in an adult education and literacy programme is often intimately linked to her sense of self and to the formation of her identity. Again, as a result of the need for education, there has been the view by Paulo Friere that one who ceases to learn, ceases to exist although the person may be living. By inference, for instance, if a teacher ceases to learn she/he will continue to teach old things with old methods to students which will not be helping the students. Therefore, these women went for higher education to upgrade themselves in their respective study areas which would help them acquire new knowledge and skills to enable them to change their old ways of also imparting knowledge to their students and this endorses Paulo's assertion. This is also in consonance with Zaugg's (2014) claim that women aspire to pursue higher education for their personal fulfilment. This however is in contrast with Adofo's (2013) findings that the immediate concern of women was their ability to earn enough money so that they could feed, clothe, and generally take better care of their children and that education of women increased their chances of getting paid job to supplement the man's income and meet the high standard of living. All the student-mothers did not mention higher pay as their reason for pursuing higher education, rather, it was to upgrade their knowledge and status. This confirms the explanation of Haleman (2004) that education was also frequently viewed by his study participants as an avenue for personal growth that transcended economic benefit.

In this study, another reason emerged, which is, an obligation to be fulfilled by workers in order to qualify them to be at their workplace. This was stated by Wun-nam;

> Because I happen to be at the training college where there is that pressing need for us, one of the requirements is that you must have it, be a second-degree holder before you can lecture there. So that is the basic motivation.

The statement of having a Masters being a pressing need is confirmed by a publication on Graphic online where Emmanuel Ebo Hawkson reported, "According to the President of the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Reverend Professor J. O. Y. Mante, Colleges of Education had now acquired tertiary status as a result of the CoE Law (2012), hence there was the need for lecturers in such institutions to have a minimum of at least a Master's degree in a relevant field. He said this at the 9th congregation of the Presbyterian College of Education (PCE) at Akropong-Akuapem in the Eastern Region on 21st May, 2016 (Hawkson, 2016).

This implies that the upgrading of the Colleges of Education to tertiary status would necessarily change their curriculum so that students who complete these institutions would be awarded first-degree. This has made it incumbent on all tutors there with first-degree to upgrade themselves. Therefore, the inspiration to pursue higher education for Wun-nam was to meet this requirement necessary for lecturing at the College of Education.

4.3 Sandwich as an Option

Moody (2004) asserts that distance learning is particularly well suited to the needs of working women and mothers thus, allowing them to attend classes while not taking time away from their families and jobs.

Similarly, my participants noted that the sandwich graduate programme was the best option for them as it is an ideal time or period for a worker because it takes a shorter duration- about 6 weeks for UEW- to complete a session. It is made up of two sessions, one-year interval for the Master's programme at UEW. To support their claim, Wun-nam stated her reason for going for sandwich as follows,

It is the nature of my job. I just got the opportunity to join the college right after when I finished my first degree and because I haven't taught there for long, I couldn't have left the classroom like that to continue the Masters. I needed to go with the sandwich since that one is better than the regular one.

Hibba also noted,

Because I heard I might not have study leave for that programme and will have to go for leave without pay. So, doing it sandwich during holidays was convenient for me only that I'll have other challenges.

Some workers always request for the annual leave to pursue this programme in order not to go contrary to the expectations of their employers in performing their roles. As noted by Kahn et al in connection with the concept of role that, associated with each office is a set of activities, which are defined as potential set of behaviours. These activities constitute the role to be performed at least approximately by any person who occupies that office. Being a teacher myself, we are always told that getting study leave with pay for the Masters' programme is almost not available. Ghana Education Service (GES) to be specific, have very limited quota for the Master's programme so, teachers prefer to use

their long holidays which coincides with when universities run the sandwich programme to pursue it.

4.4 Experiences in Combining Childcare and Studies

Telling their experiences regarding the phenomenon of combining childcare and studies, all the nursing student-mothers in this study were heard speaking one voice repeatedly, thus, **"it was not easy, "it was challenging", "it was hectic".** This shows how difficult, stressful and exhaustive both tasks- childcare and studies impacted on lives of these lactating student-mothers.

Tina recounts sadly,

> It was challenging. Sometimes you'll be in class or lectures and when lecturers are getting to the peak of what you've learnt, all of a sudden you need to go out and feed your baby. Your baby needs you. So even when you're in class you are always thinking about what is going on. Is the child going to cry? You'll be in class and your phone will be blinking and you have to leave the class. Sometimes you come back, and you miss certain… you see, it is not everything you are able to write. Even when you take notes from your colleagues there is no way you're going to get those points. So, you feel very exhausted, the baby will cry in the morning you'll be confused. You see and this project work too is worrying.

Hibba also describes her ordeal,

> In fact, it was a challenge. Because, I had to get somebody to take care of my baby, and then when I was at lecture the inconveniences to go and breastfeed my child. It wasn't easy. In fact, it was also hard erm there was a little headache along academic

work having a nursing child. In all it was very challenging because the time you wanted to study that is the time the child needs you and you have to share. It wasn't easy but we managed through.

Wun-nam's situation was no different as she narrates,

It hasn't been easy because there is some time you need to devote your time to studying but the child also needs your time and care, so the child will be disturbing and finally you can't study because of the child's disturbance. Because you can't divide your attention for the child and the studies at the same time. So, it's necessary you have to attend to one and it's definitely the child you have to attend to because while she is disturbing you can't even concentrate. So, the studies will have to wait. You'll just have to abandon it. So, it not very easy, I must say.

These narrations go to concur Coser's saying that, parenting and academia are both described as "greedy institutions" because they demand essentially endless time and energy from those who partake in them. (Cited in Kreischer, 2017). It is clear from these narrations that, graduate student-mothers even with the support of babysitters, still have unstable minds during lectures. The cry of their babies and their disturbance when they are with them, make it impossible for them to do any other thing but to concentrate on the child and this results in stress for these mothers. These also support Parsons's (1951) allusion that it is necessary to compromise, that is to sacrifice some at least of both sets of expectations, or to choose one alternative and sacrifice the other. Adofo (2013) concurs this when she found in her study that, it was difficult combining childcare and studies. She stated that, the drudgeries of childcare make it difficult for student nursing mothers to combine it with

learning. Baby's cry for attention takes off their minds from the books thus making it difficult to concentrate.

Sharing how a typical day was like for them during weekdays, all the lactating student-mothers stated that they woke up as early as 4am and 4:55am to start the day's work and sometimes retire to bed after 10:30pm. Mildred said that even though she wakes up at 4 am, she leaves her baby with the babysitter who was not matured enough to take care of her baby well. For this reason, she had to make sure that the baby slept before she went for lectures and this made her late for lectures most of the time. This is in line with Banda's (2000) findings that teacher-learners with babies bring babysitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. As a result, some of these teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Wun-nam and Hibba's stories were no different and to compound their issues, they added they had a science practical lecture which extended up to 9:30pm and sometimes 10pm. They lamented that this was worrying because they still had to leave their babies with the babysitters that late instead of taking over. Hibba said she sometimes used to go with the baby and the babysitter and when the baby is about to sleep, the babysitter takes her back. Tina recounts her daily routine,

> 4:50, 4:55am I'll wake up pray, after prayers, I'll heat water, bath, bath the baby. You wash clothes of the baby. By 6:40, 6:45, I'm already leaving the hostel because classes start at 7. (interrupts) (KD: ok, classes start at 7am?) yes at 7am. 7 to 10, thus three hours continuous till we break, and we come back at 12, hmm no, we come back at 11 and continue till 1, then from 1 to 5 no, 1 to 4 rather. Within all these periods I'll be moving in and out because my baby is the type who cries a lot.

So basically, an hour I'll go. And may be within 30minutes I'm out again because he'll be crying on top of his voice. So, even the lecturer will even say that "oh for you my dear your mobile phone is calling you", so I just have to leave class to go. Sometimes is not necessarily breastfeeding I just go to be with him to play with him, a whole lot before you come back to class. So that was a normal day, a normal thing. Sometimes you miss class just to cuddle him. Even during the day time group discussions and all that. It was hectic.

These stories as told by the participants concurs (Grady et al, 2014) when they wrote that students who are parents need to attend not only to the endless graduate programme requirements but also to the daily needs of their children. They add that because they assume multiple demanding roles graduate student with children may experience more intensified difficulty with stress, finances and struggles unique to their intersecting identities, as compared to graduate students without parents.

4.5 Clashing Roles/Role Conflict

Kahn et al (1964) defined role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures, such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. It is worth noting that all participants of the study always experienced role conflicts. They bemoaned that there is always the need to attend a lecture and your baby too might need you at that moment. This made some of them report late to lectures during the day. Some stated that sometimes they carry their babies close to them during night lectures or even miss out completely, all because of the double roles they performed. These night lectures Wun-nam stated, were not convenient or even were incompatible with her childcare role, since sometimes she leaves her child the whole day unattended to waiting

to be with the child at night, only to leave for lectures again sometimes. Wun-nam had a guilt feeling which concurs Kreischer's (2017) assertion that for graduate students who are parents, guilt also resulted as a function of spending less time with one's children than was desired or expected. When this happens, one of these roles is compromised either partially or completely- and this is mostly the academic work. Again, these experiences coincide with Kreischer (2017) who notes that students who are parents need to attend not only to the endless graduate programme requirements but also to the daily needs of their children, Mildred stated as follows;

> Early in the morning I have to attend lectures, but my baby will not be asleep, so I have to stay to make sure that she sleeps, then I put her to bed before I go for lectures. So, most of the times I'm always 30minutes to 1hour late.

Hibba another participant shared her experience of clashing roles,

> There was a particular lecture I had from 8:30 to 10:30 there about and I had to breastfeed my child for her to sleep. Now, I have to have to move to the lecture to have my course, and that course when you miss once, trouble. So sometimes I had to move the baby closer, when she's about to sleep then the caretaker takes her away. And sometimes too I have to withdraw. I might not attend that, I have to talk to the lecturer involved, I cannot make it because my daughter is crying, I have to take care of my daughter. (interrupts) (KD: and that was in the night or?) That was in the night. We had some ICT and some Statistics course in the evenings.

These narrations agree with Welch (1990) that, being a mother means beings constantly uninterruptible and continually responsive to needs of someone else which makes it difficult to develop the concentration necessary to write and study.

4.6 Coping Strategies/Balancing Roles

Role balancing was the only way these mothers could use to cope with these role conflicts stated above. They noted that some of the strategies they employed to balance the double-role of being a mother and a student included preparing adequately for the needs of the baby before leaving her with the nanny. For instance, Tina had to express her breast milk down for the babysitter to feed the baby when necessary and Mildred had to also feed the child very well and putting her to bed so she could sleep for hours. This made them to participate fully at lectures without thinking about how the child was doing. They added that mostly their individual assignments were done in the night or at dawn when their babies were asleep. Tina narrates how she does her personal assignment;

> With individual assignments, I was doing them at night, like when my baby is asleep, I will give him to the one caring for him but if he refuse, I'll have to back him to the reading room, hold him, breastfeed. Sometimes you'll go there, and he'll be distracting, making noise. I'll have to come out. Mostly the convenient time was at night.

Hibba also expressed that sometimes the children are disappointed as we have to sneak out just to make sure we achieve our academic work, and this makes them cry a lot. She added guiltily that these are not easy times for the children and there is nothing the moms can do at that point but to allow them cry. This concurs Lynch (2008) when he mentions that

student-mothers confront the dilemma of role conflict through a number of strategies including maternal invisibility and academic invisibility.

Similarly, Tina had this to say,

> Initially, sometimes when I am going to class, I'll just express some of the breast milk, so, I'll express some of the breast milk in the feeding bottle, then make sure I put it in a container to make it warm. Then I leave so that any time he wants to take it, it will still be at the normal temperature for him. So, when I go to class I don't come back.

In executing group tasks, all my participants mentioned that their group members were very understanding, and they always allowed the moms to choose convenient time for the group to meet. They added that sometimes in the cause of the work when the babies are crying and their mums are called by their care takers, group members gave them the chance to go and attend to the children while they continued with the work.

Hibba stated, "the group one we scheduled, they asked we the breastfeeding mothers to pick the time we feel that will be very convenient for us".

In relation to the above experiences as told by participants, it came out clearly in (Adofo, 2013) study where she stated that, the drudgeries of childcare make it difficult for student nursing mothers to combine it with learning. Baby's cry for attention takes off their minds from the books thus making it difficult to concentrate.

4.7 Communication Relationships and its Impact

4.7.1 Relationship with Colleagues

Responding to the question of what my participants' communication relationship was with their cohorts, they all said that it was cordial. They added that they were sympathetic, considerate and always willing to assist them. Interestingly, Hibba revealed that some of her colleagues were astonished at the good academic performance of some of them, even though they had babies with them. She said,

> They were somehow amazed you know since we the lactating mothers did better than them because we diligently take it so serious. Because we know we have two tasks ahead of us. So, that is how our mates perceive us. Sometimes some of them say "eii I'm not in your condition but you're able to do better than I do.

Marks and MacDermid (1996) in their theory of role balance, found that people who are able to fully participate in and perform a number of different roles experience not only less role strain but also lower rates of depression and higher self-esteem and innovation. Hibba's statement above conforms with this since they diligently take whatever they teach the seriously and she has higher self-esteem because her colleagues are praising her performance in the face of her difficulties.

Talking about the impact of these relationships, my participants specified sharing of information, motivating one another and class reps consulting lactating mothers on their views to get suitable timetable for the class. For instance, Hibba said this to me about how their relationship with their classmates impacted positively on them.

In fact, especially because they know some are breastfeeding mothers, when we our timetable drawn, especially the class reps they come to consider us and hear our views, in fact, to let the timetable be a little bit suitable to us if the lecturer is ready for change. And there are some of them if they give us group work, they are ready to help us with the work, and then later give us copies for us to go through it and we'll also have an idea to help us do our best during the presentation.

In the same way, Wun-nam concurred saying,

Because they used to… information like this, we used to share information. Sometimes I could go online without getting some information then when I consult them, they will give me those kinds of information. Then we used to motivate one another through inspiration and all those kinds of things.

From the above stories it is clearly seen that because the student-mothers' predicament of child care and studies, they sometimes attend group work partially or miss out completely but the support from their cohorts, they are able to cope with academic demands. This support Pederson's (1991) allusion that, a person's sense of self-concept and self-esteem is validated by the communication of social support from significant others. Not only is social support crucial in itself for positive well-being, but social support also provides powerful coping resource for persons experiencing stressful coping life changes.

Contrary to these positive impacts, one of my participants mentioned sadly that some of her hall mates made unpleasant comments which demoralised her. She recounts,

Hmm in fact, as for friends because most of the time we don't send our children to the lecture halls to cause inconvenience you know, but sometimes at the hall it's

not easy. You get a child disturbing the people and you know you have to try to control the child and the child is not controllable, then people start becoming angry that "why? Don't you know we're here to sleep and study and your child is worrying, and you couldn't do anything about it?" so those are the negative comments from them.

Such negative comments eat up these mothers to their bone marrow as even they, need that peace and quiet to sleep and get up to study. The disturbance of these babies is so stressful on mothers and sometimes they just become confused and cannot do anything else. The addition of these negative comments weighs these mothers down more. This supports Carl Roger's notion that relationships characterised by negative critical communication tend to breed incongruences because they create inconsistency between your sense of self and other aspects of your experience.

4.7.2 Relationship with Lecturers

According to my participants, some lecturers were also friendly, considerate, advisors, and permitted lactating mothers to attend to their children during lectures. They however mentioned that lecturers did not countenance any laziness and you needed to work hard to achieve success. One of the participants who was pregnant during the first session of her programme added that lecturers also encouraged women to get pregnant and go to school because this has a positive impact on the foetus, but they again cautioned that it is a tough thing to do. Illustrating the comments lecturers made that spurred them on, Hibba stated,

> In fact, most of them, especially if you're pregnant and you're in the class, they're going to say the child will be genius because you're in the lecture, and your child

is also there attending the lectures. So, they believe during the development of the child, the child will also take something out of it. (interrupts) (KD: I see, so, they used to tell you that) Oh yes, they did, especially the tutors. So, sometimes they do encourage us that it's very good but it's very tough and some of them also teases us, 'so you know you're this and you're here, you shouldn't have come'. But on the whole, they sympathise with us and they encourage us because there is gender issue when it comes to this and they don't want to be so biased. But sometimes they don't want you to feel relaxed and then you'll just be following them you want favours, as for that they wouldn't compromise with you.

Tina had this to say regarding the interaction they had with one of the lecturers which motivated her;

There was one lecturer, one of the lecturers, there was one time he came to class and he was like, sometimes when we go back to our schools as teachers we go to class, and we treat the children as the same forgetting that they all have their individual problems. Sometimes even there are days the kids will come to school very moody, very sad so it is the responsibility of you the teacher to ensure that your kids ae happy. They are ok. They feel free when they are with you. So similarly, when they also come to lecture halls, it is their responsibility to laugh not to make us feel bad but rather feel better. Because sometimes irrespective that we are all smiling we equally have our own problems in our blankets. He also told us that life is not easy, life is war. You need to struggle. You need to fight challenges, so if you are not ready to fight you are not ready to become what you want to. You need to forge ahead.

For Wun-nam, their lecturers used to advise them a lot. She recollected on particular lecturer who was so inspirational and encouraged them to come back and pursue their MPhil and PhD especially those lecturing at the COEs. He even assured then that he would opt to supervise their theses or dissertations if they returned. She added that he further whets their appetite regarding how economically beneficial it is to be in academia and for this alone she was planning to return for her MPhil.

Tina again had this to say to demonstrate how considerate and accommodating their lecturers were;

> Oh, they were nice. They were accommodating. In fact, they were even considerate. I remember a time we were given a term paper. We were supposed to do was it four questions to a lecturer and it was Math. So, but the very day the lecturer gave the work I wasn't in class. I wasn't around. I was attending to my son. So, I learnt they complained to him and said no, that was his final decision. They are supposed to do all the four. But the following week when he came to class after closing, he gave the deadline for submission so I raised my hand and I was like "oh please can't you reduce it is not easy". And it was like a magic. As soon as I said that then he said ok then we should do three. So, the man was so considerate. And people were like oh in fact, you have saved us. But in my absence, they pleaded, and he refused. But while I came in, I was like it is not easy and he said ok you guys should do three. They were considerate, very, very, considerate.

All these confirm the assertion by (Offstein et al, 2004) that graduate students typically cited student peers and faculty members as vital to their social support systems, though

very limited time may restrict graduate student parents from socializing with members of these support systems

In contrast to the above, one of my participants recounted painfully that sometimes some lecturers set certain rules in class though to promote uninterrupted learning period, but it can be detrimental to the students. She narrated that one of their lecturers set a rule that during his lectures all phones must be off. So, during one of their sessions, they ended the first part of the lecture at 6pm and they were told to come back at 8pm to continue and a venue was agreed upon before they left. She quickly rushed to attend to her baby at her hostel which was outside campus and the baby delayed her. When she returned, unfortunately for her they had changed venue and all attempts to reach them failed because everybody's phone was off. She lamented that they could not be located so she left and that was the beginning of that course, so it affected her performance since she was unable to catch up.

Inferring from all the above narrations of the lactating student-mothers' experiences in these communication relationships, it is seen that positive interactions led to positive outcomes and the negative interactions or comment led to negative outcomes for these mothers. This is what Carl Roger described as being congruent when positive and incongruent when negative. These, he explained in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) as relationships characterised by negative, critical communication tend to breed incongruence, precisely because they create inconsistency between your sense of self and other aspects of your experience. In contrast, congruence is a product of affirming, supportive relationships.

4.8 Support

These mothers received various forms of support from different categories of people, namely, husband, family and friends, nanny and academic support. All these forms of support contributed to reducing their stress level giving them the sound mind to study. As stated by Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992 regarding social support that, for graduate students in general, higher levels of social support from their programmes and families correlated with lower levels of stress symptoms.

4.8.1 Support from Husband

In all the interviews, three of my participants revealed that there was a clear, unflinching support from their husbands on their decision to pursue the graduate sandwich programme with their babies. The fourth one indicated that her husband initially did not agree but upon clearing certain doubts about how she would be able to combine her studies and still take good care of the child, he was of immense help. They all mentioned that they received moral, psychological and financial support from their husbands. This support gave the mothers the motivation and courage to pursue their programmes. Below are some of my participants' voices;

Mildred stated, "he was supportive. Very, very supportive. He even encouraged me at the time I wanted to defer the course."

This was what Tina said regarding support from husband.

> Sometimes when you are fortunate to have positive minded people around (pause) beginning I felt like, no, I could not do it so after staying around may be two years after giving birth I then go back to school. But my husband insisted that I must go.

Words of encouragement from husband, family members, I was able to… at least and by by help of and mercy of Allah I was able to…. Because initially I planned deferring, is all my husband and my mother-in-law who were like, 'Oh you go. The school fruit is coming, if don't go you'll regret it ooo. You'll be like 'if I had gone, I would have finished by now' so you try and go'.

Wun-nam also had this to say,

As for that he encouraged me to enrol in the first degree and even the second. Even the second one I was not willing to go but he was on my neck till I did it. At a point in time, I had to even quarrel with him because he was just rushing and then erm giving me pressure to go and do it. For that one he supported me throughout physically and then financially and all those stuffs.

These quotes demonstrate clearly that some men are now interested in women's higher education, probably because of the role these women play in their families- maybe acting as co-breadwinners. This is in line with Adofo's (2013) finding that the indispensable position of the husbands of student nursing mothers makes them succeed in their academic pursuit.

4.8.2 Support from Family and Friends

All my participants stated confidently and happily that their family members gave them their full support. While these mothers were away in school, family members took care of the children they left behind and managed the home as well. Wun-nam and Tina told me that it was their mothers-in-law who took care of their children back at home while they were away. This gave these mothers the peace of mind to go and study since they were sure

of safety for their children at home. This was what Mildred said when asked about support from family, "Also supportive. They took care of the other two while I was away".

Even though Wun-nam acknowledged her mother-in-law's support, she contrarily mentioned that other members of her matrimonial family were unsupportive, and they made negative comments such as, she had turned her marriage into schooling and not attending social gatherings such as weddings, funerals and naming ceremonies of the family. They even commented that she was always indoors and did not want to even take up her marital responsibilities such as cooking. She explained that her being indoors was to enable her work on her thesis devoid of noise or disturbance and this was a problem. Wun-nam attributed their negative comments to they not being educated hence they know not the value of schooling. This corresponds to what Sallee (2015) said, "Graduate student parents may be at risk for isolation because they maintain fewer friendships in attempt to eliminate roles and therefore ease strain."

Discussing support from friends in connection of them going to school with a baby, three of my participants said their friends were supportive of their going and they even encouraged them, and others were sympathetic as they knew it would not be easy for these student-mothers. Wun-nam added that she even received financial support from one of her friends.

> Oh, my friends most of them are also into academic field so they know and some of them even gave me encouragement. And some of them even financial support, they supported me financially.

Tina also had this to say about comments made by her friends;

Oh, they were just sympathizing with me. They were like 'eh it won't be easy'. I have a colleague madam, she also encouraged me. She was like 'you try you'll be able to do it. You don't worry, all will be well'.

These responses correspond with Adofo's (2013) findings that nursing mothers had emotional and physical support from their husbands and peers.

4.8.3 Support from Nanny

All my participants went to school with nannies to help take care of their babies while they attended lectures. They stated that trust was key to leaving your baby in the care of a stranger. Two of the lactating student mothers brought their past students to help take care of their babies. The other two brought their neighbours children. They all agreed that their babysitters were supportive and that helped in their studies. Mildred however, noted that her babysitter was not mature, and her baby was just two months old, so it was a big challenge managing the baby. Tina had this to say about how supportive her nanny was;

She was very, very, supportive. Very, very, supportive. Very good girl. Someone who understands, you know before you even leave your baby with someone it's not very easy. It is not an easy thing to do. I initially did not trust the person, but she was there like, a biological sibling who could do anything for you. So even there were times she will even tell me, 'oh madam why don't we do this for Nawaz?' Why don't we… like she was even questioning me like my nurse. 'Let's do it this way, let's do it this way' so she was very helpful.

Wun-nam added, "She was very compromising, and I was able to enjoy her services".

That is why Mallinckrodt and Leong 1992, emphasise that, not only is social support crucial for positive well-being but it also provides powerful coping resource for persons experiencing stressful coping life changes.

4.9 Challenges

Participants for this study outlined myriad of difficulties they faced when the question of what their biggest challenge was asked. One of them stated that the break period of an hour was not enough for mothers to go and breastfeed their babies and come back. Hibba noted,

> In fact, my challenge was sometimes how lectures were organised or the timetable for attending lectures were organised. Because I thought if you're a lactating mother there should be a little a break that can last for 2hr so that they can go and check on their children and come back. That was what I felt wasn't there. There should have been break, at least to enable you do one or two things.

Also, the issue always leaving her baby in the room without bonding with her was of great concern to a one of the mums. She came with a two-month old baby so the baby was always left indoors with the nanny, as at that tender age she could not have been exposed to the environment.

Again, a challenge noticed by all participants was lack of information on support services for lactating student-mothers on campus. Issues of lactating student-mothers are not discussed during the orientation for students. Muller (2008) however asserts that education institutions that recognise women's professional, social and academic needs are better prepared to create policies and services to address those needs. In this sense, there is

therefore the need for UEW to take pragmatic measures to put in place services and support systems to ease the plight of these mothers with babies on campus.

Additionally, working on their project work or thesis was a difficulty these student-mothers who had to combine childcare and supervisor stress faced. Tina recounts bitterly,

> My greatest challenge was my project work. In fact, it gave me hell. It wasn't easy with my project work. …and you see every supervisor and the way they want their work to be done. So sometimes when you do this and you send it and they use their red ink in it, master, you feel like crushing the earth against the wall. It wasn't easy. You go they send you back that you should do this, they say is like that, it wasn't easy. I was fed-up. It got to a point I was fed-up. I said aba! My project work, in fact, gave me hell.

These mothers were also faced with the challenge of how to manage their time, i.e. how to apportion the limited time for studies and the child. Wun-nam laments,

> Time management was my biggest challenge. How to make good use of time. Because when it happened that I had a child, studies, how to apportion the time for both was a big challenge for me. Because at a particular time I could have an assignment to do and this child too will be worrying me especially when my nurse was wounded; and especially night discussions and studies were my problems.

Wun-nam could no longer leave her child at night again with the babysitter because she was wounded and so her night studies were compromised and that affected her negatively. She added that she sometimes loads so much work which make her miss doing some of her assignments.

Another challenge worth mentioning was money. They stated that going to school with a baby and a nanny demanded more finances for feeding and to meet other needs.

Finally, the issue of accommodation was of great concern to the lactating student-mothers. They noted that accommodation on campus was very expensive. They stated that to be allocated a room as a nursing mother you needed to pay for two- you and your nanny. This was however not the case for the hostels outside as they were cheaper, and you only needed to pay for the room and not per person.

4.10 Suggestions

4.10.1 Suggestions for Colleagues

The student-mothers in the study reiterated that their associates should be accommodating and also assist lactating student-mothers to obtain information necessary to execute their academic work.

Tina proposes, "Colleagues too should be accommodating, they should be nice, they should help nursing mothers out because it is not an easy thing to do."

Wun-nam also states,

> I'll suggest that they should assist the nursing mothers in obtaining certain information. Because sometimes childcare is hectic, you cannot get time to do all what is required of you because of the time. And even the illustration I gave earlier, if one of them had called me when they were relocating it would have helped me. So at least they should be willing to they should assist the nursing mothers by giving out information necessary and then assistance.

This implies that support from their course mates is vital to their academic success. The share of information and study materials with student-nursing mothers by colleagues help to ease their burden.

4.10.2 Suggestions for Lecturers

One of the suggestions for lecturers is that they should not let students switch off their phones as this could be harmful to the students. They pleaded that such rules should be flexible to meet the needs of student-mothers.

Another recommendation made was that lecturers should share their experiences with students in order to motivate them. When students hear stories about how others especially their tutors have surmounted similar or tougher challenges to excel in life, it gives them hope to also succeed in life and not to give up when they are in difficulty.

4.10.3 Suggestions to the University

It is stated that educators who understand the complexity of women's balancing of diverse roles can more effectively advise and prepare women to be successful in online courses (Muller, 2008). Though this was targeting women pursuing online courses, it is equally necessary and applicable to all tertiary institutions to institute gender friendly policies and services to address the needs of lactating student-mothers who bring their babies to school. Proposals made by participants of this study for the university are: accommodation for nursing mothers, day-care schools should be established, the campus should be lactating student-mother friendly, orientation for them and these mothers should be given special attention like what is given to special needs students.

Wun-nam had this to say,

The university need to add lactating mothers to the special needs' category of students. So that from time to time when one needs any assistance, they should be able to give that assistance. It will also be good for them to get accommodation for nursing mothers. They should dedicate the down floor to nursing mothers and all those without children should go up.

Tina added,

The university should make the campus, they should make it nursing mother friendly so that it will be very easy for nursing mothers to come to school to pursue knowledge. As part of the school's orientation for fresh students, they should remember to talk about lactating student-mothers on campus and the support services they have for them.

Hibba also noted,

They should try their best at least every working or higher institution should have a day-care for breastfeeding mothers or nursing mothers so they can at least to, take care of their other responsibilities for them.

To these student-mothers, the onus is on the university to provide them with appropriate support services such as accommodation, orientation and day-care sin order to ease their stress and enhance their learning on the sandwich programmes.

4.11 Advice to Graduate Student-Mothers

Graduate lactating student-mothers in this study advised that women in similar situation who wish to pursue the graduate sandwich programme should be ready to sacrifice and

persevere as it is very tedious to do. They added that it is very expensive to do, so they should be financially sound since they would be taking care of two additional people. Finally, they should look for nannies or babysitters who are committed and hardworking to support you if not a lazy person would frustrate you. Wun-nam declared,

> One thing I know about it is you should be financially sound. That one is very expensive. You spend a lot. Going with a baby and a nanny requires money as compared to going alone. And on the part of the nanny, you should get somebody who is committed, and then hardworking, you shouldn't just go in for anybody at all, because if you don't get somebody who is committed and hardworking, you'll not find it easy. Yours should just be breastfeeding of the child and some other minor, minor, things so that the person would do the child care and the other things. But if that person is not hardworking and committed and you have to be doing some major things that the nanny is supposed to do, it takes a lot of time that you cannot even get time to study.

Therefore, student-mothers who wish to enrol on the sandwich graduate programme, should have enough money to meet their expenses. They should also look for nannies or babysitters who are committed and hardworking to support them else, bringing a lazy person would frustrate the student-mother. Lastly, they should be studious, hardworking and persevering as the combination of the sandwich programme and child care is difficult.

4.12 Summary

The chapter looked at the findings and discussions of the research questions which sought uncover the lived experiences of lactating student-mothers and to find out the

communication relationships which exist between these mothers, their cohorts and their lecturers. An in-depth analysis of the stories told was done thematically after these stories were transcribed and coded. The themes that emerged include motivation for enroling in graduate school, sandwich as an option, experiences combining child care and studies, clashing roles, balancing the roles, communication relationships and their impact, support, challenges and suggestions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the work, draws conclusion and makes pertinent recommendations based on the findings.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate the communication relationships between lactating mothers in graduate school pursuing the sandwich programme, their cohorts and their lecturers. It achieved three things;

- It revealed the experiences of nursing mothers combining childcare and studying as sandwich graduate students.

- Secondly, it found out the communication relationships which existed between these lactating mothers, their cohorts and their lecturers.

- The third, ascertained the influence of these relationships on their academic development and success.

A qualitative research approach was employed in order to explore the meanings these lactating student-mothers attached to the phenomenon of combining childcare and studies on the sandwich programme.

Telephone interviews were conducted on four participants on a one-on-one basis. This was done using an interview guide which directed the conversation though not rigidly followed.

The interviews were transcribed and coded into themes which were then thematically analysed. The analysis was done, and the results and interpretations discussed in connection with literature reviewed and supported with quotes from participants.

The themes that emerged were, motivation for enroling in graduate school, why sandwich as an option, experiences combining childcare and studies, clashing roles/role conflicts, balancing roles, communication relationships and its impact, support, challenges, suggestions and advice to sandwich graduate lactating student mothers.

Summary of the findings would be addressed based on the three research questions which were asked prior to this study.

What are the lived experiences of nursing mothers combining childcare and studies as sandwich graduate students?

The main findings that came up from this study of lactating student mothers combining childcare and studies were;

- The study showed that all mothers left their babies in the care of their nannies during the day and went for lecturers. Those who resided outside campus and were practicing exclusive breastfeeding brought them to campus to hang around so that as and when their babies needed to be fed, they went out to do it.

- Breastfeeding and studies were challenging tasks, i.e. they were very difficult, stressful and exhaustive to combine. Some of the student-mothers had to be leaving lectures in and out to breastfeed their babies.

- It was also found that night lectures were not convenient for lactating student-mothers as they were incompatible with their childcare role. This is because some of the children were left unattended to or had just minimal contacts with their mothers during the day and hoping to be with them at night which was sometimes again robbed partially from them. Some mothers sometimes missed these lectures because of guilt-feeling of not playing their role well as mothers and so would want to devote that time to the child.

- It was also revealed that some mothers could not practice exclusive breastfeeding and had to rely on baby food supplements so that their nannies could feed their babies when they went for lecturers.

- Lateness to lectures was another challenge since some mothers had to make sure their babies slept in the mornings before they went for lectures.

- Individual tasks or assignments given by lecturers were difficult to execute by some of these mothers and submitted on time whereas the group ones, group members could complete them in the absence of these mothers when their babies needed them.

What relationships and interactions exist between these lactating mothers, their cohorts and their lecturers?

- Participants of the study had cordial relationships with their cohort since among other things they always showed concern by asking of how their babies were doing daily.

- It was also revealed that classmates were considerate, sympathetic and understanding. They gave student-mothers the opportunity to schedule group meetings at their own convenient time and they always permitted them to attend to their children during group discussions when the need arose.

- Again, it was found that some class reps consulted the lactating student-mothers for their views to get a convenient timetable for the class.

- Participants also stated that encouragement from their colleagues served as a source of motivation to them and hope to move on despite the challenges they were facing.

- On the part of their relationship with their lecturers, it was found that they were also friendly and considerate as they permitted them to move in and out to attend to their babies.

- Participants also revealed that some lecturers elevated their spirit and confidence level by telling them to aim higher.

- However, it was revealed that some students at the halls of residence see these babies as nuisance especially when they cry uncontrollably thereby passing negative comments which hurts these already dejected mothers in such circumstance.

- It was again discovered that rules set by some lecturers such as putting all phones off are not convenient for lactating mothers since they leave their babies

in their halls of residence with nannies who could call them at any time in case of a problem.

What is the influence of these relationships and interactions on their academic development and success?

- The advice given by some lecturers encouraged these mothers not to give up despite the challenges they faced.

- It also gave them hope and one of my participants told me she was coming back to do her MPhil after graduation.

- Support from colleagues also reduced their burden and anxiety especially regarding group assignments and presentations.

- It was also found that colleagues supported them with study materials from the internet if they were finding it difficult to get materials to do their individual assignments which eased their tension and dissonance level.

5.2 Other Findings

- It was revealed that the university had no information on support services for lactating mothers either on their website or during orientation for fresh students.

- The constant support of husbands, family and friends encouraged these mothers to do their best on their various programme.

- With regard to accommodation, it was revealed that accommodation on campus was very expensive and these mothers needed to pay for two people before they could be given a place. All the beds in the rooms are meant for one so these mothers

struggle for space on these beds with their babies and they wake up feeling so worn-out.

- Another finding was that, some of these mothers found it very difficult to manage their time well so that they could have time for their personal studies. This is because the whole day is used for lectures and the night too, in an attempt to get these babies to sleep, these mothers end up sleeping too because of the tiredness.

5.3 Conclusion

Motherhood is taxing likewise studies in graduate school especially on the sandwich programme, hence the performance of the two roles results in conflict and making it stressful on these mothers.

However, support from both lecturers and cohorts in terms of good relationship and interaction, motivates or gears these mothers up to success and higher academic development. Again, support from significant others such as husband, family members, friends and nannies in the form of psychological, financial, motivational and caring for baby very well, all contributed or enhanced their learning leading success.

Awkward relationships and comments from lecturers, colleagues, family and friends depress and demotivate lactating student-mothers leading to poor performance.

The university, however, needs to do a lot – in terms of providing comfortable and affordable accommodation services, day care school, trained nannies and special orientation - to support these mothers achieve their academic dreams with minimal difficulty.

5.4 Recommendations

- It is recommended that all lactating student-mothers should be accommodated in one hall on the ground floor and those without children should not be mixed with them to avoid negative comments from their colleagues who have no children with them.

- The university as part of their orientation for students, should devote some time to talk about nursing mothers and the support services available to them since they are a unique category of student population who require support. They should also be educated on how to manage their time well in order to make judicious use of it.

- The university should make the campus baby/child friendly so that nannies can relax and entertain these babies to minimise their interruptions during lectures.

- Lecturers should not put or institute strict rules at lectures but make them flexible to make room for these student-mothers.

- The university should also provide lactation rooms close to lecture halls so that lactating student-mothers would not have to go far to breastfeed and come back thereby saving valuable contact hours during lectures.

- Evening lectures could be shifted to the weekends. This would afford these mothers the opportunity to be with their babies during the night thereby relieving their nannies of the childcare duties in the night as well.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The sample size of this study is small. Four (4) lactating student-mothers participated in the study. A fifth participant declined because she was busy with her thesis coupled with time constraint, therefore, valuable experience which she could have shared was missed.

5.6 Recommendation for Further Research

This research could be expanded by juxtaposing the views or perceptions of lecturers, cohorts and the university on their communication relationships with these student mothers and the views of the mothers themselves.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

a. Profile of Interviewee

1. Tell me about yourself.

Probes: Age; Number of children and their ages; Marital status; Employment status;

Level in graduate school; program of study;

Your motivation for enrolling in graduate school;

Why did you choose to study on the sandwich program?

What led you to pursue a graduate program while nursing a baby?

Is this your first time of going to school with a baby? If no, at what level of your education?

How different was the experience as compared to this?

b. Experiences of Graduate Student Mothers combining Childcare and Studies

2. Can you tell me your experiences combining childcare and studies?

3. Tell me how a typical day is like for you during weekdays. What about your weekends?

4. Can you share with me some examples of role conflict you experienced?

5. How do you balance your role as a mother and a student in terms of scheduling?

6. How do you get your individual or personal academic work or assignments done? What about the group assignments? **Probes:** How do you participate? How suitable are the group schedules to you?

c. **Communication Relationships between Lactating Mothers and their Cohorts and Lecturers**

7. Please describe to me the relationship that exist between you and your classmates? **Probes:** How do they view or perceive your status as a lactating mother and a student on the sandwich program? Why do you say that?

8. What about your lecturers? **Probes:** How do you feel you are treated in your program by your lecturers? How do they perceive your status as a mother and a student?

9. What about other students in your hall of residence? **Probes:** What is your relationship with them? How do they view you as a lactating mother and a student?

10. In what ways have your relationship with your cohorts supported you towards achieving your academic success?

11. How about your lecturers? In what ways have their comments spurred you on towards your academic development?

12. In what ways have these relationships impacted negatively on your academic development? What comments from both lecturers and your colleagues made you to feel unsupported?

d. Support Services

13. How supportive was your husband on decision to pursue a graduate program and carrying your baby or child along?

14. How about family and friends? What were their comments?

15. Can you share with me your experience of getting nanny to go with you to school to take care of your child?

16. How supportive was she during your course of study?

17. What was the information you had regarding lactating mothers in graduate school prior to your going?

18. What information did you receive during your orientation with regard to support services for lactating mothers?

19. What about at the department or faculty level?

20. What was your biggest challenge encountered when you were pursuing the graduate sandwich programme with a baby?

e. General Information

21. What other things do you have to share which we have not touched on?

22. What advice do you have for other women in similar situation who want to pursue the graduate sandwich program?

23. What suggestions do you have for lecturers, cohorts and the university?

Thank You for Your Time