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Coping strategies, work-life balance programs, and their impact on professional performance of female lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Enugu States

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Abstract: *The dual responsibilities of career and parenting place significant demands on female lecturers, particularly in tertiary institutions, where academic expectations often collide with family obligations. In Anambra and Enugu States, female lecturers face unique challenges in balancing these roles, with many experiencing stress, burnout, and anxiety due to time constraints and societal expectations. The study used a descriptive survey approach to examine the coping strategies of female lecturers managing career and parenting responsibilities in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Enugu States, southeastern Nigeria. A total of 2,297 respondents from colleges of education, universities, and polytechnics participated. Data were collected using a validated 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, the "Scale for Balancing Psychological Impacts of Career and Parenting" (SBPICP), with a reliability coefficient of 0.76. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and pressures faced by participants. Non-parametric tests, including the Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests, were used to examine differences in perceptions based on marital status and age. Decision trees were also considered to explore nonlinear relationships in the data. The findings reveal that female lecturers face significant challenges in balancing career and parenting, including anxiety, burnout, stress, and time constraints. These challenges are exacerbated by societal expectations and family responsibilities, which negatively affect their psychological well-being and professional performance. Although work-life balance programs exist, their effectiveness in addressing these stressors remains limited, particularly in terms of childcare options and institutional support. The study also identifies various coping strategies employed by female lecturers, including time management and social support, as crucial in mitigating the negative impacts. Based on these findings, the study recommends the implementation of more comprehensive and targeted work-life balance programs, such as flexible working hours and childcare facilities, to enhance the well-being and professional performance of female lecturers.*

Keywords: *professional performance; female lecturers; tertiary institutions; psychological well-being; stress management;*

Introduction

Coping strategies and work-life balance programs have gained significant attention in recent years due to their impact on professional performance, particularly for female lecturers in tertiary institutions. These factors are essential in managing the complexities of balancing personal and professional responsibilities, contributing to well-being and improved academic productivity (Aik, 2022). Coping strategies are essential for managing stress, a common challenge faced by female lecturers in higher education. Work demands, personal responsibilities, and societal expectations often create a stressful environment that can affect performance. Coping strategies help individuals manage these stressors and mitigate negative outcomes. The two main types of coping strategies identified in the literature are problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Trask, 2017). Problem-focused coping involves taking active steps to address the source of stress, such as organizing work tasks or seeking assistance. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, focuses on managing emotional responses to stressors, such as seeking social support or practicing relaxation techniques

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(Diego-Medrano & Salazar, 2021). Both strategies can improve resilience, which is crucial for female lecturers who juggle multiple roles within and outside the academic environment.

Work-life balance programs have been identified as significant tools in supporting female lecturers in managing work and personal life demands. These programs aim to reduce the conflict between professional and personal roles, enhancing overall well-being and job satisfaction. Common work-life balance programs include flexible work hours, remote work options, parental leave policies, and on-campus childcare facilities. Such programs enable female lecturers to effectively navigate their professional and personal obligations, resulting in higher productivity and better performance in their academic roles (Oderinde et al, 2024). Research suggests that when work-life balance programs are implemented effectively, female lecturers experience less burnout, better job satisfaction, and improved professional performance (Nwagbara, 2020). In contrast, a lack of adequate work-life balance initiatives can contribute to stress, decreased job satisfaction, and lower performance levels.

The relationship between coping strategies, work-life balance programs, and professional performance has been well-documented. Female lecturers who have access to flexible work schedules and childcare support, for instance, are better equipped to manage both their professional responsibilities and personal life demands (Nwagbara, 2021). These programs reduce the pressure on female lecturers, enabling them to focus on their academic work without feeling overwhelmed by the demands of their personal lives. Consequently, the implementation of work-life balance programs positively affects their ability to engage with students, conduct research, and contribute to academic administration.

Moreover, coping strategies and work-life balance programs have a synergistic effect on reducing stress and improving performance. Female lecturers who utilize effective coping strategies, such as time management or social support, and participate in work-life balance programs are better positioned to manage their professional and personal responsibilities. This combination results in greater job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions, ultimately leading to enhanced performance (Adisa et al, 2021). When female lecturers feel supported both personally and professionally, they are more likely to be engaged in their work, exhibit higher levels of creativity, and contribute meaningfully to the academic community (Debruijn, 2020).

Despite the positive outcomes associated with coping strategies and work-life balance programs, there are challenges in their implementation. Some tertiary institutions may have insufficient resources or policies that fail to meet the needs of female lecturers. For example, the lack of childcare facilities or inflexible work hours can hinder the effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives (Jamison-McClung, 2022). Additionally, societal expectations and gender norms can influence the extent to which female lecturers utilize these programs. In some contexts, female lecturers may feel guilty about taking advantage of work-life balance programs or may face stigma for seeking flexible work arrangements (Santos et al, 2021). Therefore, creating an institutional culture that supports gender equality and acknowledges the importance of work-life balance is crucial for maximizing the impact of these initiatives.

The motivation for this study stems from the growing recognition of the challenges female lecturers face in balancing career responsibilities with parenting. These dual demands often create stress and affect their overall well-being and professional performance (Rahimi et al, 2024). Understanding how female lecturers cope with these competing demands is essential for improving institutional support and fostering an environment where they can

thrive both professionally and personally. This study aims to explore coping strategies employed by female lecturers to manage the demands of their careers and parenting roles, shedding light on the methods that enable them to navigate their responsibilities effectively. Evaluating the effectiveness of work-life balance programs will show how institutional policies and support systems can alleviate stress and enhance job satisfaction. Additionally, examining the impact of balancing career and parenting on professional performance will provide understanding into how these factors influence productivity, engagement, and academic outcomes. This research is crucial for tertiary institutions aiming to create supportive environments that foster the growth and success of female lecturers, ensuring they are able to contribute meaningfully to their institutions while maintaining a healthy balance between work and family life. Ultimately, the findings will inform policies that enhance both institutional performance and the well-being of female academic staff.

Objectives

1. Explore coping strategies for managing dual demands of career and parenting.
2. Evaluate effectiveness of work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions.
3. Study impact of balancing career and parenting on professional performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions would guide the study:

1. What coping strategies do female lecturers employ to manage the dual demands of career and parenting?
2. How effective are work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions for female lecturers?
3. What is the impact of balancing career and parenting on the professional performance of female lecturers?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies for managing the dual demands of career and parenting based on marital status and age.
2. There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions based on marital status and age.
3. There is no significant impact of balancing career and parenting on professional performance based on marital status and age.

Literature reviews

Gender Role Theory

Gender Role Theory, proposed by Alice Eagly in 1987, explores how societal expectations and norms regarding gender influence behavior and role fulfillment. According to this theory, men and women are socialized into distinct roles that dictate appropriate behaviors and responsibilities for each gender. These roles are culturally constructed and perpetuated through socialization processes, leading to differential expectations for men and women.

Gender Role Theory emphasizes several key principles. Firstly, it highlights gender socialization, the process through which individuals are taught behaviors and attitudes that align with societal expectations of their gender, starting from a young age. Secondly, role congruity asserts that societal pressure compels individuals to conform to these prescribed gender roles, influencing their behavior, self-concept, and aspirations. The theory also addresses the impact on behavior and identity, noting that gender roles affect both professional and personal areas of life, shaping career choices, parenting responsibilities, and overall identity. Lastly, role conflict occurs when individuals try to engage in behaviors that contradict their assigned gender roles, potentially leading to stress and conflict.

In the context of female lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Enugu States, Gender Role Theory provides critical understanding into the psychological impacts of balancing career and parenting. Societal norms often dictate that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles, while professional achievements are secondary. This can lead to increased stress and role conflict for female lecturers who are striving to excel in both their careers and their parenting roles. Female lecturers may face societal pressure to fulfill traditional caregiving roles, leading to feelings of guilt or inadequacy if they perceive themselves as not meeting these expectations. This can result in significant psychological strain as they attempt to navigate the demands of their professional and personal lives. Additionally, institutional and societal support systems may be insufficient to accommodate the dual roles, exacerbating the stress and conflict experienced by these women.

Gender Dynamics in Academia

Gender biases and stereotypes persist in academia, shaping the experiences and opportunities of female lecturers. Research has shown that gender biases can manifest in various forms, including differential treatment, expectations, and evaluations of men and women (Debruijn, 2020). For instance, female academics are often subject to higher standards of competence and face skepticism regarding their professional abilities compared to their male counterparts (Cecchini et al, 2019). This bias can lead to fewer opportunities for women in terms of research funding, publications, and leadership positions.

Stereotypes about gender roles also influence perceptions of women in academia. Women are frequently seen as more nurturing and less assertive, which can undermine their authority and professional standing (Santos et al, 2021). These stereotypes can lead to biased student evaluations, where female lecturers are rated less favorably than males, particularly in fields traditionally dominated by men (Ro et al, 2023). This perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage, where women must continually prove their worth in an environment predisposed to doubt their capabilities.

Female lecturers encounter numerous obstacles in advancing their academic careers. One significant barrier is the "leaky pipeline," where women are disproportionately lost at each successive stage of their academic careers, from doctoral studies to tenured positions (Adejugbagbe et al, 2024). Factors contributing to this phenomenon include gender bias in hiring and promotion practices, lack of mentorship, and limited access to professional networks.

Additionally, the burden of balancing work and family responsibilities disproportionately falls on women, affecting their career progression. Female academics often experience career interruptions due to maternity leave and childcare responsibilities, which can delay their research and publication activities (Ileuma & Fakorede, 2023). These

interruptions can result in fewer publications and less research funding, hindering their chances of promotion and tenure.

Women in academia also face the challenge of navigating an environment that may not be supportive of their professional growth. Institutional policies and cultures that do not accommodate the needs of working mothers, such as inadequate maternity leave and lack of childcare facilities, further exacerbate the difficulties faced by female lecturers (Redondo-Flórez et al, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for systemic changes to create a more equitable academic environment.

Societal expectations and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping the work-life balance of female lecturers. In many cultures, women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over their careers, which can conflict with the demands of academic life (Pasamar et al, 2020). This expectation places additional pressure on female academics to excel in both their professional and personal roles, often leading to stress and burnout (Rahimi et al, 2024).

Societal norms that view women primarily as caregivers can create barriers to their professional advancement and exacerbate feelings of guilt and inadequacy when career demands interfere with family responsibilities (Mayya et al, 2021). These cultural factors can limit the time and energy female lecturers can devote to their careers, affecting their productivity and professional growth. Moreover, the lack of supportive policies and infrastructure, such as affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements, can make it difficult for women to balance their work and family lives effectively (Dominguez & Diez, 2022). Female lecturers may also face societal scrutiny and criticism for not conforming to traditional gender roles, which can further undermine their confidence and career aspirations.

Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms are essential strategies individuals employ to manage stress and achieve balance in their lives, particularly when balancing demanding roles such as career and parenting. Individual coping strategies encompass a range of approaches that individuals use to manage stress and maintain well-being. Time management is a fundamental strategy identified in the literature. Effective time management involves prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, and allocating time efficiently between work and personal responsibilities (Khamisa et al, 2015). This strategy helps individuals maintain a sense of control over their schedules, reducing stress associated with time pressures.

Self-care is another critical coping strategy that involves activities aimed at preserving and enhancing one's physical, mental, and emotional health. Self-care practices can include exercise, relaxation techniques, hobbies, and seeking social support (Chen et al, 2022). Engaging in self-care activities allows individuals to recharge, reduce stress levels, and improve overall well-being, essential for managing the demands of career and parenting.

Beyond individual coping strategies, broader strategies for managing stress and achieving balance integrate multiple approaches to support well-being. Flexible work arrangements are a significant organizational strategy that allows employees to adapt their work schedules to accommodate personal responsibilities, such as childcare (Ruppanner et al, 2019). Flexible working hours or telecommuting options can alleviate the pressure of balancing work and family commitments, reducing stress and improving job satisfaction.

Social support is another effective strategy for managing stress. Strong social networks provide emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging, buffering the negative effects of stress (Bender et al, 2022). Support from colleagues, friends, and family members can validate individuals' experiences and provide resources to cope with challenges effectively.

Methods

The study employed a descriptive survey approach. This design was justified as it provided a snapshot of current conditions and perceptions, facilitating the identification of patterns and relationships between career demands and parenting responsibilities. The study focused on female lecturers from colleges of education, universities, and polytechnics across Anambra and Enugu States, located in southeastern Nigeria. A total of 2,297 respondents from various tertiary institutions, including colleges of education, universities, and polytechnics in Anambra and Enugu States, participated in the study.

To address the research questions, data were collected using a validated questionnaire titled the “Scale for Balancing Psychological Impacts of Career and Parenting” (SBPICP), which was developed by the researcher and structured in a 4-point Likert scale format. The instrument was carefully validated by three experts in the field. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha statistics, yielding an index of 0.76. The data collection process was facilitated by six research assistants, who were postgraduate students, supported by two lecturers from each participating institution. All facilitators were briefed on the administration procedures.

The data analysis for this study involved several methods to examine the relationship between marital status, age, and female lecturers' coping strategies for managing the dual demands of career and parenting. Initially, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and describe the basic features of the data. This included calculating the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for various survey items related to career and parenting pressures. Descriptive statistics helped provide a clear overview of participants' demographic characteristics, such as marital status and age, and their perceptions of the challenges they faced.

To test whether there were significant differences in the perceptions of career and parenting pressures based on marital status and age, non-parametric tests were used. The Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to compare the responses across multiple groups within each demographic variable. This test was chosen because it does not assume a normal distribution of the data. It was used to determine if there were significant differences in the perceptions and coping strategies between the four marital status groups and the four age groups. Additionally, the Jonckheere-Terpstra test was applied to assess ordered differences between the groups. This test is particularly useful when the groups have a natural order, such as age or marital status. It was used to identify whether there were consistent trends in the way participants' responses varied across these ordered groups.

Finally, machine learning techniques, specifically decision trees, were considered for detecting nonlinear relationships in the data. Decision trees are useful for identifying complex patterns and interactions between multiple variables. These techniques were considered as an exploratory method to uncover deeper understanding into the relationships between demographic factors (marital status and age) and the participants' coping strategies for

balancing career and parenting. The researcher prioritized ethical considerations by obtaining consent from Vice-Chancellors/College Provosts and Polytechnic Rectors of the participating tertiary institutions. Special attention was given to address potential socio-cultural biases or issues that may emerge during the research process.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	1397	60.8	60.8	60.8
	Single	572	24.9	24.9	85.7
	Divorced	44	1.9	1.9	87.6
	Widowed	284	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	2297	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents were married (1,397; 60.8%), followed by single individuals (572; 24.9%). Widowed respondents accounted for 12.4% (284), while divorced individuals were the least represented, making up only 1.9% (44). The cumulative percentages indicate that 85.7% of respondents were either married or single, with the total distribution encompassing 2,297 respondents (100%).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	22-32 years	75	3.3	3.3	3.3
	33-44 years	634	27.6	27.6	30.9
	45-55 years	1326	57.7	57.7	88.6
	56-65 years	262	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	2297	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 indicates that most respondents were aged 45-55 years (1,326; 57.7%), followed by those aged 33-44 years (634; 27.6%). Respondents aged 56-65 years accounted for 11.4% (262), while the least represented age group was 22-32 years (75; 3.3%). Cumulatively, 88.6% of respondents were aged 33-55 years. The total number of respondents was 2,297 (100%).

Research Questions 1: What coping strategies do female lecturers employ to manage the dual demands of career and parenting?

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 reveal varying levels of agreement on challenges faced by female lecturers in managing career and parenting. "Family responsibilities add significant stress" had the highest mean score (3.05; SD = 0.501), indicating that it was the most agreed-upon challenge. Similarly, "Career-parenting roles cause conflict" (mean = 2.99; SD = 0.875) and "Long working hours create stress" (mean = 2.98; SD = 0.976) were prominent stressors. Skewness and kurtosis values suggest the responses were moderately distributed.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Coping Strategies Employed by Female Lecturers to Manage Career and Parenting Demands

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety, burnout, and stress.	2.55	.970	-.234	.051	-.938	.102
Time constraints from both roles negatively impact psychological well-being.	2.92	.697	.108	.051	-.941	.102
Female lecturers feel overwhelmed, fatigued by balancing career and parenting.	2.61	1.114	-.010	.051	-1.383	.102
Career-parenting roles cause conflict, negatively affecting psychological well-being.	2.99	.875	.018	.051	-1.693	.102
Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety, burnout, and stress.	2.55	.970	-.234	.051	-.938	.102
Time constraints from both roles negatively impact psychological well-being.	2.92	.697	.108	.051	-.941	.102
Long working hours create stress for lecturers.	2.98	.976	-1.004	.051	.106	.102
Family responsibilities add significant stress for female lecturers.	3.05	.501	.097	.051	.939	.102
Valid N (listwise)						

Research Questions 2: How effective are work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions for female lecturers?

The statistics in Table 4 highlight the perceived effectiveness of work-life balance programs. "Childcare options are major stressors" received the highest mean score (3.38; SD = 0.485), indicating that childcare remains a significant challenge despite work-life balance efforts. "Social expectations of perfect performance" also ranked high (mean = 3.28; SD = 0.635), emphasizing societal pressure as a stressor. Lower mean scores for items like "Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety" (mean = 2.55; SD = 0.970) suggest limited relief provided by existing programs, reflecting opportunities for improvement. Skewness and kurtosis values suggest a moderate response distribution.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on the Effectiveness of Work-Life Balance Programs for Female Lecturers

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Childcare options are major stressors.	3.38	.485	.504	.051	-1.747	.102
Social expectations of perfect performance increase stress for female lecturers.	3.28	.635	-.309	.051	-.685	.102
Balancing career and parenting increases stress, reducing psychological well-being.	2.59	1.266	-.200	.051	-1.626	.102
Female lecturers feel emotionally exhausted from managing career and parenting.	2.85	1.180	-.428	.051	-1.363	.102
Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety, burnout, and stress.	2.55	.970	-.234	.051	-.938	.102
Time constraints from both roles negatively impact psychological well-being.	2.92	.697	.108	.051	-.941	.102
Female lecturers feel overwhelmed, fatigued by balancing career and parenting.	2.61	1.114	-.010	.051	-1.383	.102
Career-parenting roles cause conflict, negatively affecting psychological well-being.	2.99	.875	.018	.051	-1.693	.102
Valid N (listwise)						

Research Questions 3: What is the impact of balancing career and parenting on the professional performance of female lecturers?

The data in Table 5 suggest significant impacts of career-parenting balance on professional performance. "Family responsibilities add significant stress" had the highest mean score (3.05; SD = 0.501), followed closely by "Social expectations of perfect performance increase stress" (mean = 3.01; SD = 0.949) and "Childcare options are major stressors" (mean = 3.00; SD = 1.007). Lower mean scores for items like "Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety" (mean = 2.55; SD = 0.970) indicate these pressures were less frequently linked to reduced professional performance. The skewness and kurtosis values indicate moderately distributed responses.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Balancing Career and Parenting on Professional Performance of Female Lecturers

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety, burnout, and stress.	2.55	.970	-.234	.051	-.938	.102
Time constraints from both roles negatively impact psychological well-being.	2.92	.697	.108	.051	-.941	.102
Long working hours create stress for lecturers.	2.98	.976	-1.004	.051	.106	.102
Family responsibilities add significant stress for female lecturers.	3.05	.501	.097	.051	.939	.102
Childcare options are major stressors.	3.00	1.007	-.989	.051	-.049	.102
Social expectations of perfect performance increase stress for female lecturers.	3.01	.949	-.847	.051	-.110	.102
Career and parenting pressures cause anxiety, burnout, and stress.	2.55	.970	-.234	.051	-.938	.102
Time constraints from both roles negatively impact psychological well-being.	2.92	.697	.108	.051	-.941	.102
Valid N (listwise)						

Nonlinear Data detection (Decision Trees)

The decision tree in Figure 1 reveals variations in coping strategies across age groups and marital status. The overall mean coping score is 22.566. Female lecturers aged 22-32 and 33-44 years (Node 1) reported the highest mean (23.812), while those 45-55 years (Node 2) had a lower mean (21.881). Within this age group, married lecturers (Node 4) had a significantly lower mean (20.715) compared to single, divorced, or widowed lecturers (Node 5, mean = 23.138). These findings indicate stress disparities based on age and marital status.

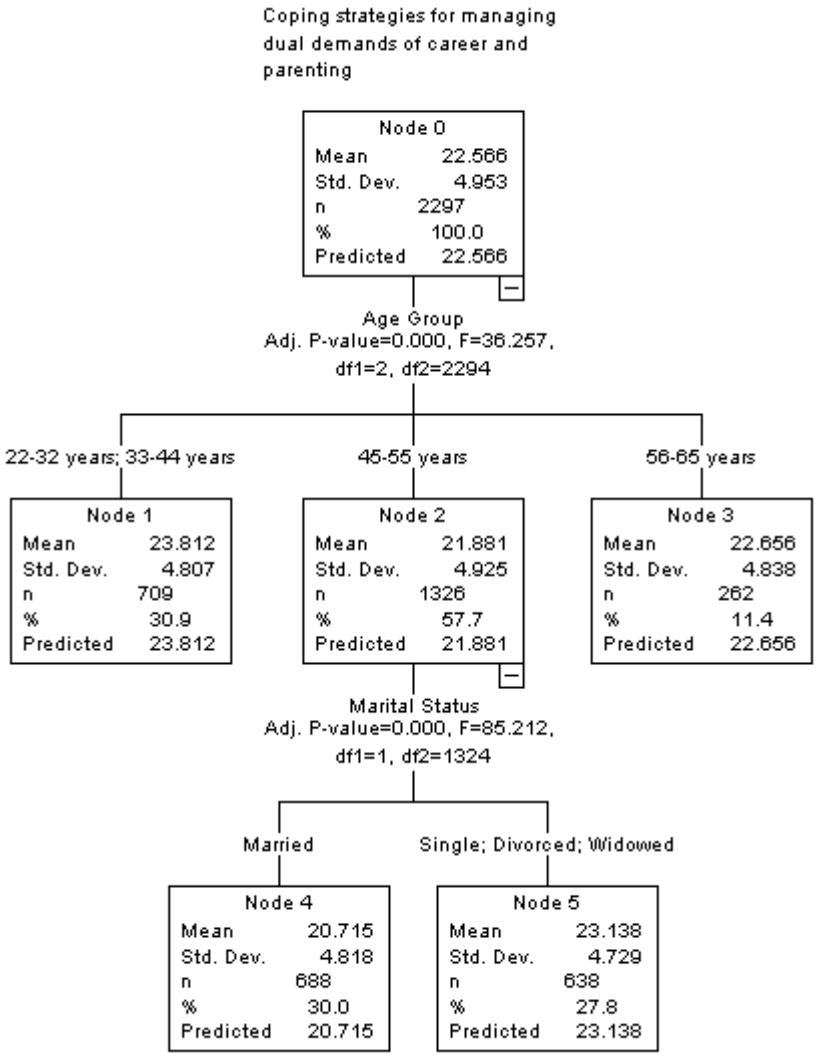
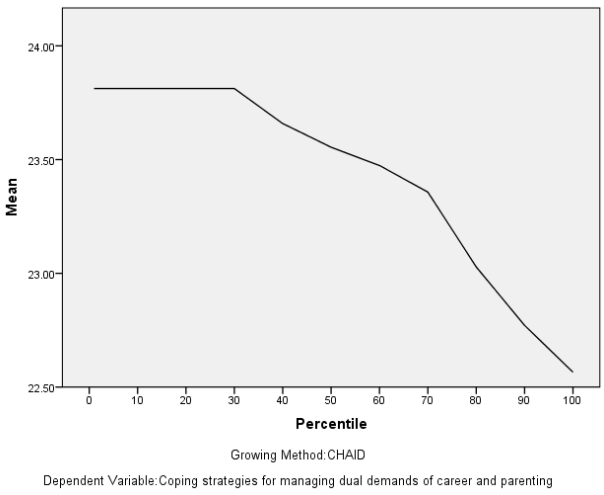


Figure 1: Decision Tree for Coping Strategies in Managing Dual Demands of Career and



Parenting

Figure 2: Percentile Distribution of Coping Strategies for Managing Dual Demands of Career and Parenting

The graph in Figure 2 illustrates the mean coping scores across percentiles, showing a declining trend. Initially, the mean remains stable at around 24.00 from the 0th to the 30th percentile. Beyond the 40th percentile, the mean begins to decrease gradually, dropping significantly after the 70th percentile and reaching approximately 22.50 at the 100th percentile. This suggests that female lecturers in higher percentiles face greater difficulty managing career and parenting demands, leading to lower coping strategy scores.

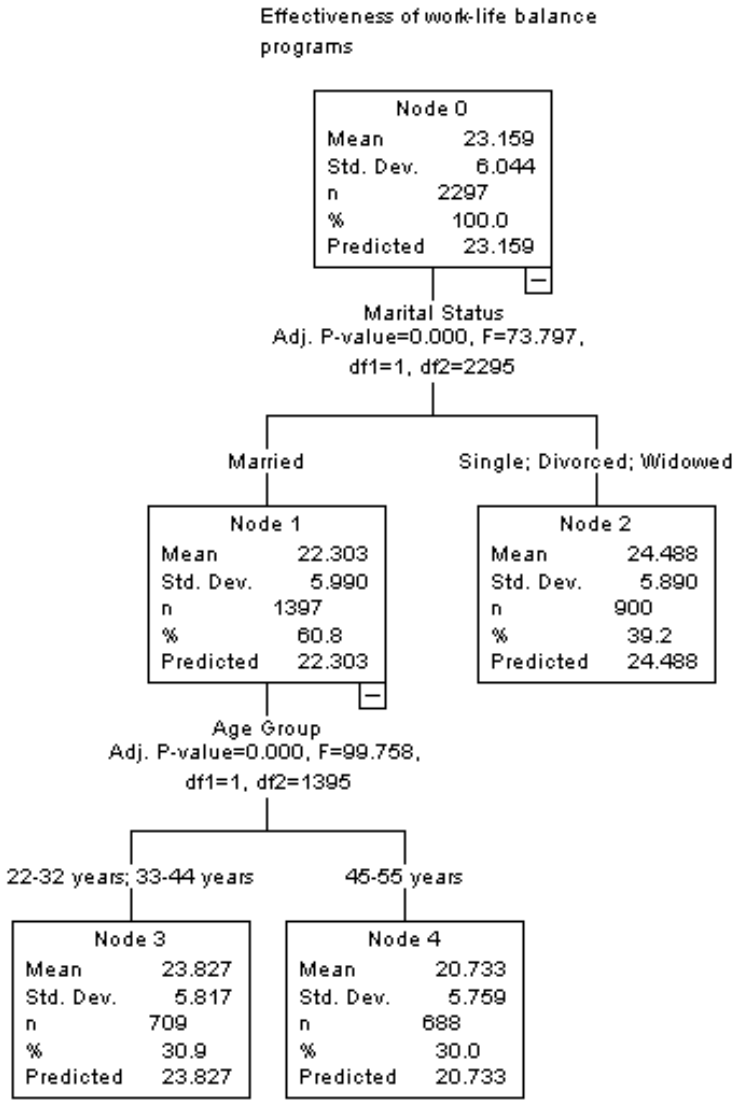


Figure 3: Effectiveness of Work-Life Balance Programs Based on Marital Status and Age Group

The decision tree in Figure 3 shows that marital status significantly affects work-life balance effectiveness (p=0.000). Single, divorced, or widowed individuals (Node 2: Mean=24.488, SD=5.890) report higher effectiveness than married individuals (Node 1: Mean=22.303, SD=5.990). Among married individuals, age further influences outcomes: younger respondents (22-44 years) report higher effectiveness (Node 3: Mean=23.827, SD=5.817) compared to older respondents (45-55 years, Node 4: Mean=20.733, SD=5.759). The overall mean for all groups is 23.159 (SD=6.044).

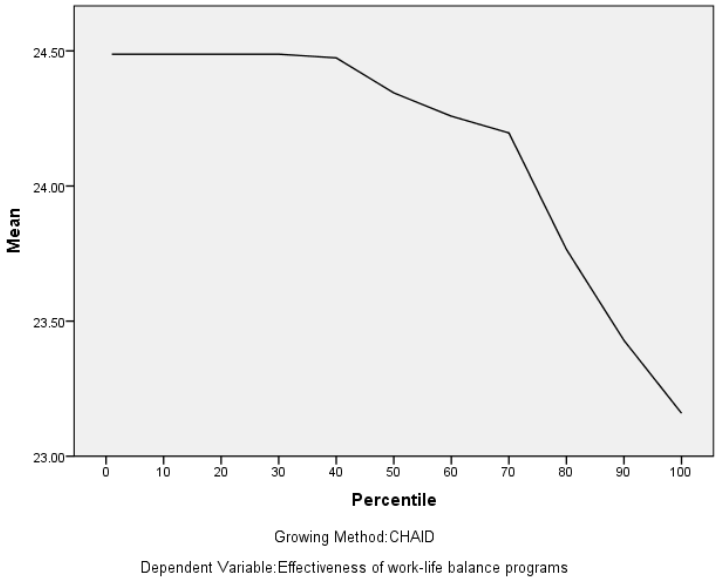


Figure 4: Mean *effectiveness of work-life balance programs*

The chart in Figure 4 shows the mean effectiveness of work-life balance programs (dependent variable) across percentiles using the CHAID growing method. The mean remains constant at approximately 24.5 between 0–40th percentiles but begins to decline after the 50th percentile. A significant drop occurs beyond the 70th percentile, falling below 23.5 at the 100th percentile. This trend indicates decreasing program effectiveness at higher percentiles, suggesting diminishing returns or challenges for work-life balance at the upper percentiles of this dataset.

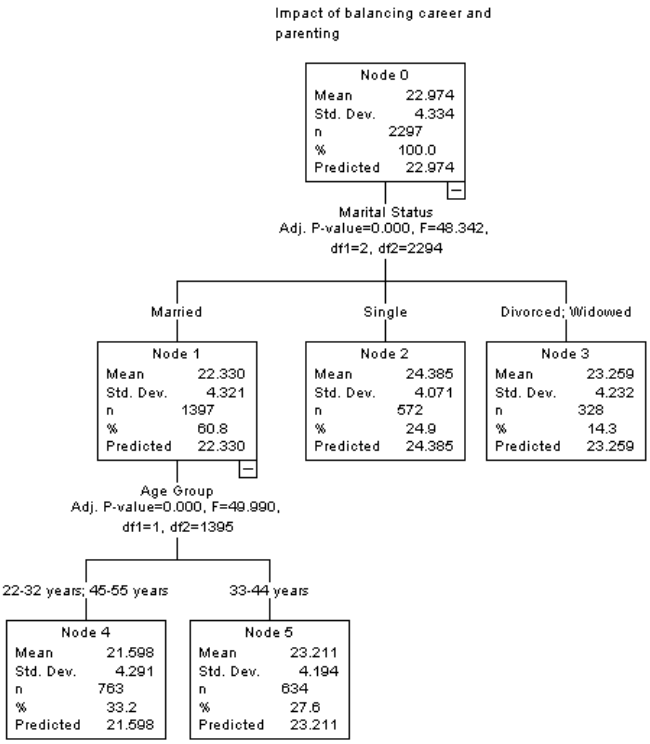


Figure 5: *Impact of Balancing Career and Parenting: Decision Tree Analysis (CHAID)*

The chart in Figure 5 explores the effect of marital status and age group on balancing career and parenting. Node 0 represents the overall mean (22.974) for 2,297 participants. Married individuals (Node 1, 22.330) dominate with 60.8%, further split into age groups: 22–32 and 45–55 years (Node 4, 21.598) and 33–44 years (Node 5, 23.211). Single participants (Node 2) show the highest mean (24.385), while divorced/widowed (Node 3) score slightly lower (23.259). Age and marital status significantly impact outcomes.

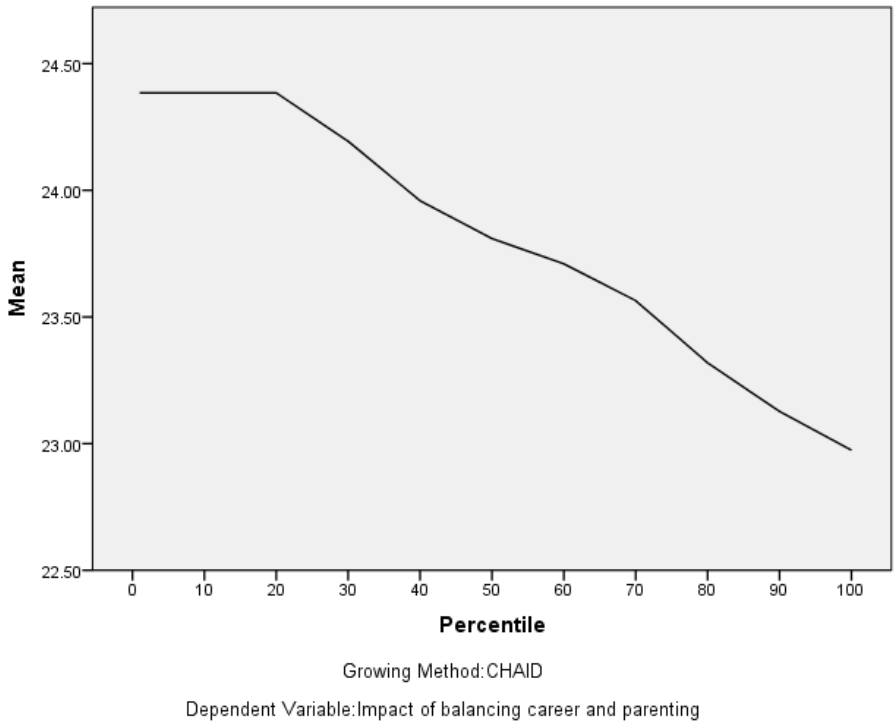


Figure 6: ***Percentile Distribution of the Impact of Balancing Career and Parenting***

The chart in Figure 6 shows the mean impact of balancing career and parenting across percentiles. The mean starts at approximately 24.5 at the 0–20th percentile and begins to decline progressively. A notable drop is observed beyond the 30th percentile, reaching around 23.0 at the 100th percentile. This trend indicates that higher percentiles experience a reduced impact, suggesting varying perceptions or challenges of balancing career and parenting as percentiles increase.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies for managing the dual demands of career and parenting based on marital status and age.

The results from the Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests in table 6 reveal significant differences in coping strategies for balancing career and parenting across both marital status and age groups. For marital status, the analysis shows a clear variation among the groups, with married, single, divorced, and widowed individuals displaying significantly different mean ranks. This is further supported by the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, which confirms a consistent trend in the differences, with a highly significant p-value of 0.001. Similarly, age group comparisons highlight substantial differences in coping strategies among the age categories (22–32, 33–44, 45–55, and 56–65 years). The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a

highly significant result, further reinforced by the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, which indicates a declining trend in coping strategies as age increases, reflected in the negative standardized statistic and a p-value of 0.000. The evidence is strong enough to reject the null hypothesis, as both marital status and age significantly influence how individuals manage the dual demands of career and parenting.

Table 6: Results from both the Kruskal-Wallis Test and Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for Marital Status and Age Group

Test	Grouping Variable	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Observed J-T Statistic	Mean J-T Statistic	Std. Deviation of J-T Statistic	Std. J-T Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ranks	Marital Status	2297	-	18.424	3	0.000	-	-	-	-	-
	Married	1397	1107.10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Single	572	1245.96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Divorced	44	1114.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Widowed	284	1165.23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Marital Status	2297	-	-	-	-	779690.500	728706.000	15830.571	3.221	0.001
Ranks	Age Group	2297	-	81.259	3	0.000	-	-	-	-	-
	22-32 years	75	1299.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	33-44 years	634	1328.39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	45-55 years	1326	1050.44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	56-65 years	262	1170.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Age Group	2297	-	-	-	-	654047.000	760427.000	16114.065	-6.602	0.000

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions based on marital status and age.

Table 7: Combined and compact table based on the data you provided for the Effectiveness of Work-Life Balance Programs across different Age Groups and Marital Status:

Test	Grouping Variable	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Observed J-T Statistic	Mean J-T Statistic	Std. Deviation of J-T Statistic	Std. J-T Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ranks	Age Group	2297	-	38.974	3	0.000	-	-	-	-	-
	22-32 years	775	1279.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	33-44 years	634	1228.80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	45-55 years	1326	1077.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	56-65 years	262	1282.23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Age Group	2297	-	-	-	-	729414.500	760427.000	16106.047	-1.926	0.054
Ranks	Marital Status	2297	-	74.396	3	0.000	-	-	-	-	-
	Married	1397	1054.32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Single	572	1305.35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Divorced	444	1270.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Widowed	284	1280.98	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Marital Status	2297	-	-	-	-	859522.000	728706.000	15822.695	8.268	0.000

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests in table 7 indicate significant differences in the effectiveness of work-life balance programs based on marital status but not entirely for age groups. For marital status, the Kruskal-Wallis test shows a significant difference (Chi-Square = 74.396, p = 0.000), with married individuals reporting the lowest mean rank (1054.32) compared to single (1305.35), divorced (1270.75), and widowed participants (1280.98). The Jonckheere-Terpstra test further confirms a significant trend among marital status groups (p = 0.000), suggesting that marital status significantly influences perceptions of work-life balance program effectiveness. For age groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test also reveals significant differences (Chi-Square = 38.974, p = 0.000), with participants aged 22–32 years and 56–65 years having higher mean ranks (1279.70 and 1282.23) compared to the 33–44 years (1228.80) and 45–55 years groups (1077.13). However, the Jonckheere-Terpstra test yields a borderline result (p = 0.054), indicating a weaker and less consistent trend across age groups. The null hypothesis is partially rejected. There is a significant difference in work-

life balance program effectiveness based on marital status, while the influence of age groups is less pronounced and marginally significant.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant impact of balancing career and parenting on professional performance based on marital status and age.

Table 8: Combined and compact table based on the data you provided for the Impact of Balancing Career and Parenting across different Age Groups and Marital Status:

Test	Grouping Variable	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Observed J-T Statistic	Mean J-T Statistic	Std. Deviation of J-T Statistic	Std. J-T Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ranks	Age Group	2297	-	8.375	3	0.039	-	-	-	-	-
	22-32 years	75	1030.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	33-44 years	634	1185.78	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	45-55 years	1326	1125.95	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	56-65 years	262	1210.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Age Group	2297	-	-	-	-	761911.000	760427.000	16103.905	0.092	0.927
Ranks	Marital Status	2297	-	106.395	3	0.000	-	-	-	-	-
	Married	1397	1044.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Single	572	1377.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Divorced	44	1172.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Widowed	284	1198.43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jonckheere-Terpstra Test	Marital Status	2297	-	-	-	-	859620.000	728706.000	15820.590	8.275	0.000

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra tests in table 8 indicate significant differences in the effectiveness of work-life balance programs based on marital status but not entirely for age groups. For marital status, the Kruskal-Wallis test shows a significant difference (Chi-Square = 74.396, p = 0.000), with married individuals reporting the lowest mean rank (1054.32) compared to single (1305.35), divorced (1270.75), and widowed participants (1280.98). The Jonckheere-Terpstra test further confirms a significant trend among marital status groups (p = 0.000), suggesting that marital status significantly influences perceptions of work-life balance program effectiveness. For age groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test also reveals significant differences (Chi-Square = 38.974, p = 0.000), with participants aged 22–32 years and 56–65 years having higher mean ranks (1279.70 and 1282.23) compared to the

33–44 years (1228.80) and 45–55 years groups (1077.13). However, the Jonckheere-Terpstra test yields a borderline result (p = 0.054), indicating a weaker and less consistent trend across age groups. The null hypothesis is partially rejected. There is a significant difference in work-life balance program effectiveness based on marital status, while the influence of age groups is less pronounced and marginally significant.

Discussion

The results show that female lecturers employ coping strategies to manage the dual demands of career and parenting. Descriptive statistics reveal that career and parenting pressures lead to anxiety, burnout, and stress, with significant time constraints affecting psychological well-being. Female lecturers report feeling overwhelmed and fatigued, as conflicts between career and parenting roles negatively impact their mental health. Long working hours further exacerbate stress, while family responsibilities remain a major contributor to their struggles. In a related study, Oderinde et al, (2024) found that female academics experienced burnout due to role overload and inadequate support systems, particularly during peak academic seasons. Similarly, Diego-Medrano and Salazar (2021) agreed that long working hours and family obligations resulted in significant stress among female lecturers, aligning with the current study's findings. In contrast, Trask (2017) observed that flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies in some institutions reduced stress and improved coping strategies. This finding also agreed with Aik (2022), who reported that time constraints and conflicting roles led to high stress levels among female professionals in developing countries. However, Cecchini et al, (2019) argued that effective time management and spousal support mitigated stress for women juggling career and family demands, providing practical coping strategies.

The results indicate that work-life balance programs in tertiary institutions have limited effectiveness for female lecturers. Major stressors include inadequate childcare options, societal expectations of perfect performance, and emotional exhaustion from balancing career and parenting. The findings also reveal that career-parenting pressures, time constraints, and conflicting roles reduce psychological well-being, causing anxiety, burnout, and fatigue. In a related study, Nwagbara (2020) found that institutional work-life programs in Nigeria were largely ineffective due to their lack of implementation and insufficient resources, aligning with the current findings. Similarly, Adisa et al, (2021) agreed that societal expectations placed a heavier burden on female lecturers, exacerbating stress despite formal policies on work-life balance. In contrast, Nwagbara (2021) observed that well-structured childcare services and flexible scheduling in developed countries improved work-life integration for female academics. This finding also aligns with Jamison-McClung (2022), who reported that inadequate institutional support caused emotional exhaustion among female professionals in Southeast Asia, particularly when managing dual roles. However, Santos et al, (2021) highlighted that targeted work-life balance policies, such as reduced workload and supportive leadership, effectively alleviated burnout and stress for female lecturers, showing the potential for improvement when programs are adequately implemented.

The results from the analysis of research question 3 revealed that balancing career and parenting significantly impacts the professional performance of female lecturers. Career and parenting pressures lead to anxiety, burnout, and stress, while time constraints and family responsibilities further undermine psychological well-being. Long working hours and societal expectations of perfect performance exacerbate the stress,

leaving female lecturers emotionally drained and fatigued, which impairs their professional output. This finding agreed with Adejugbagbe et al, (2024), who reported that time constraints and family demands reduced productivity among female academics in Nigerian universities. In contrast, Bender et al, (2022) noted that flexible work policies in Western institutions mitigated burnout, enabling female lecturers to balance roles effectively. Similarly, Cecchini et al, (2019) found that societal expectations of perfection placed immense pressure on female lecturers, leading to reduced focus and performance at work, aligning with the current study. In a related study, Chen et al, (2022) observed that long working hours and limited childcare support caused emotional exhaustion, impacting teaching quality among female educators in Southeast Asia. However, Debruijn (2020) argued that structured family support systems and reduced workloads in developed countries allowed female lecturers to sustain high professional performance, highlighting the role of institutional intervention in minimizing career-parenting conflicts.

Conclusion

Work-life balance programs are designed to support employees in managing personal and professional responsibilities. However, for female lecturers, the adequacy and effectiveness of these programs in reducing stress and improving productivity remain underexplored. This study has provided a clear picture into the coping strategies, work-life balance programs, and the impact of balancing career and parenting on the professional performance of female lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra and Enugu States. The findings underscore the significant challenges faced by female lecturers, including anxiety, burnout, and stress due to the dual demands of career and parenting. These challenges are compounded by time constraints, family responsibilities, and societal expectations, which negatively affect their psychological well-being and professional performance.

The study also highlights the limited effectiveness of existing work-life balance programs in addressing these stressors, with childcare options, long working hours, and inadequate institutional support being major stressors for female lecturers. Despite these challenges, the coping strategies employed by the lecturers, such as time management and social support, have been crucial in mitigating some of the negative impacts. However, the need for more robust and targeted work-life balance programs, as well as institutional support, is evident. Therefore, it is recommended that tertiary institutions in Anambra and Enugu States prioritize the development of comprehensive work-life balance programs that offer practical solutions, such as flexible working hours, childcare support, and counseling services. These initiatives would not only enhance the well-being of female lecturers but also improve their professional performance, benefiting the institutions and the broader academic community.

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