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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE FACTORS THAT SUPPORT FEMALE EDUCATORS WHILE RAISING YOUNG CHILDREN

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE FACTORS THAT SUPPORT FEMALE EDUCATORS
WHILE RAISING YOUNG CHILDREN

By

CHRISTINE M. DEAN

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
in Curriculum and Instruction

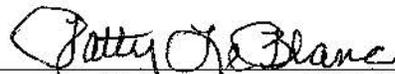
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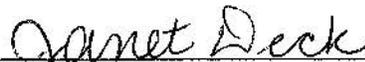
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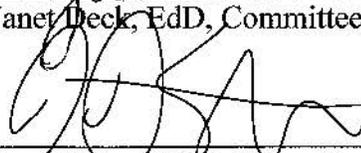
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DEDICATION

This work is first dedicated to the beloved memory of my grandfather, Gerald E. Walker. He instilled in me a passion for pursuing the highest excellence of knowledge I could achieve in a subject. That inspiration culminated in this work and undoubtedly will fuel my future research endeavors. It is also dedicated to his wife, my grandmother, Joan Walker, who never lost sight of who she was as a mother and as an independent woman. This research honors her and those like her who endeavor to achieve that balance.

Secondarily, this work is also dedicated to my husband, who, even prior to marrying me, relentlessly said, “I want you to pursue your doctorate.” Thank you for your unconditional and ever-faithful support to help make this dream a reality and for every effort that makes it possible to achieve the balance of motherhood and teaching that this research explored.

Finally, this work is dedicated to mothers with whom I have taught at Trinity Christian School. They helped shape the best in me as I learned to embrace my dual identity as an educator and a mother. Their outpouring of love and wisdom was a daily encouragement to pursue my love of education and my love for my children. I pursued this degree to serve them better and my future colleagues better than I could without it, but they laid the foundation and instilled the love that drove this work to completion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first wish to extend thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who upheld me through this academic journey and continues to uphold me in his grace and mercy every day. Secondly, to my husband and beloved children I have been blessed to have in my life: The hours of fun sacrificed so that I could write and complete this research study are appreciated and not in vain. I hope that whatever they gave up can be multiplied as this research is practically applied.

I want to extend my warmest thanks to Dr. Patty LeBlanc, my dissertation chair. This research and dissertation would not have been possible without her tireless editing and encouraging efforts always aptly applied when needed. I also extend grateful thanks to Dr. Doug Stump. His friendship, encouragement, and feedback on this research study meant a great deal to me on this journey. I also extend thanks to the Department of Education at Southeastern University, particularly Dr. Sarah Yates, Dr. Janet Deck, and Dr. James Anderson, whose encouragement to persevere toward completion taught me that I was more capable than I thought. I also wish to thank Dr. Cassandra Lopez and Dr. Kelly Hoskins for their editing and polishing skills to finely tune this work.

Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising young children. This study was designed as a bounded case study that included six women who taught in a Christian school while they were raising children. Their interview data revealed three major themes: conflict, personal supports, and professional supports. Participants reported conflicts such as conflicting obligations between their teacher and maternal roles, expectations, and priorities. Key supports helped to resolve or avoid these conflicts. Personal factors such as supportive and extended family members assisted teachers as they balanced the responsibilities of the dual maternal and teacher role. Additional personal factors in the workplace included the teachers' strategic organizational systems, planning, and reliable childcare arrangements. The teachers in this study had a strong sense of their personal identities and calling as teachers and parents, which helped them to persevere through challenges. Professional supports included supportive leadership, part-time work opportunities, professional development, and relationships within the institution. The results of this study suggest that certain factors can support teachers who are parents in their personal lives and in the workplace to reduce conflicts and dissonance identified in the literature and in this study.

Keywords: Work-family conflict; family-work conflict; working mothers; role-conflict; maternal role-conflict; maternal supports; teachers who are mothers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures.....	x
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Purpose Statement.....	8
Research Question	8
Research Design.....	9
Data Collection	9
Data Analyses.....	10
Limitations	10
Definition of Key Terms	10
Significance of the Study	11
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Theoretical Frameworks	12
Teacher Career Cycles	12
Self-Determination Theory	15
Role-Conflict Theory.....	16
Empirical Research.....	19
Challenges for Mothers in the Workplace	20
Supporting Teachers in the Workplace	24
Work-Family Conflict and Burnout Prevention.....	30

Supporting Teachers' Well-Being and Competence	39
Summary	43
III. METHODOLOGY	45
Research Question	45
Research Design.....	45
Overview of Research Methods.....	46
Participants	46
Data Collection	46
Data Analyses	47
Measures for Ethical Protection.....	47
Summary.....	48
IV. RESULTS.....	49
Research Question	49
Research Design.....	49
Methods of Data Collection and Analyses.....	50
Participant Profiles.....	50
Themes.....	52
Theme 1: Conflict.....	53
Theme 2: Personal Supports	57
Supportive Family	57
Strategic Organizational Systems.....	59
Faith as a Personal Support System.....	61
Confidence in Personal Identity	63
Theme 3: Professional Supports	68
Evidence of Quality	74
Summary.....	75
V. DISCUSSION.....	76
Methods of Data Collection and Analysis	76
Summary of Results.....	77
Discussion by Research Question.....	77
Personal Supports	78

Professional Supports	80
Study Limitations.....	83
Implications for Future Practice.....	83
Recommendations for Future Research	86
Conclusion	87
References.....	88
Appendix A.....	93
Appendix B.....	94
Appendix C.....	97

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1: Mean Scores of Women’s Responses by Ages of Children in Months and Grade Levels	22
Table 2: Correlations between Teachers’ Perceptions of School Leadership, Teachers’ Self-Efficacy, and Collective Teacher Efficacy	41
Table 3: Participant Profile	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Teachers' Career Cycles	6
Figure 2: Work-Family Role Pressures	17

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported that women comprise more than 70% of America's teaching staff. Many of these women may also enter motherhood at some point during their career if they are not already parents when they begin teaching. The opportunity to invest in a child's life as a teacher is rewarding; however, most educators agree that this investment comes with a degree of conflict when balancing personal and professional lives. For example, in a qualitative study by Whitmarsh et al. (2007), professional women in mid-life reported that when they left the workplace, they began a "second shift" of 4 hours or more in the home. In a sense, the women were not really ending their workday but simply changing their responsibilities. Further, O'Brien (2018) conducted a qualitative study of six teachers who reported that their identities as a parent took priority over professional identities.

Katz and Kahn (1966) first recognized that the duality of roles, especially the roles of parent and employee, can lead to conflict. Role conflict is frequently accompanied by dissonance and pressure, especially when children are young (Nomaguchi & Fetto, 2019). A qualitative study by Orgad (2019) of 30 mothers found that many women viewed their inability to manage both work and family life as a key factor influencing the decision to leave their careers at least for a time.

Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) reported that novice teachers who replace veteran teachers are often less effective than experienced teachers. In a more recent study, Ronfeldt et al. (2013) also found that novice teachers were less effective than veteran teachers, confirming Darling-Hammond and Sykes's (2003) research. Podolsky et al. (2016) uncovered the same results in a study of the effectiveness of novice teachers who replaced veteran teachers.

Reducing teacher attrition is valuable from an economic perspective as well as a pedagogical perspective; hiring and re-hiring teachers costs school districts as they work to develop each new teacher, introduce them to the school's culture, and provide foundational professional development (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Both students and educators can benefit from effective supports that facilitate a balance between work and home to enable parents to remain in the classroom throughout the different cycles of their teaching careers.

Work-family conflict is a documented source of dissonance, especially for female educators (Yasin & Naqvi, 2016). Investigating the factors that support female educators who are parents may provide invaluable information to assist administrators in their efforts to support teacher work-life balance. The current research study was designed to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children.

Background of the Study

In a 2019 longitudinal study, Nomaguchi and Fetto examined job characteristics and their influence on women's work-family conflicts among 744 working mothers. The women who participated in the survey reported greater family-to-work conflict when their children were young. Nomaguchi and Fetto concluded that job demands and supportive resources strongly influenced work-family conflict during different childrearing stages. For example, the women in the study reported greater job pressures when their children were 6 months old and 15 months

old compared to children in the third and fifth grades. The women also reported fewer career opportunities and less supervisory support when their children were infants and toddlers than when their children were school-aged.

Nomaguchi and Fetto (2019) made several recommendations to reduce the job-related pressures of working parents, such as reductions in the number of hours worked, the number of tasks required, flexible work hours, or job sharing. The researchers suggested that these accommodations could be implemented without eliminating career opportunities for women, especially when the pressure of caring for young children was high. In addition, the researchers suggested that employers could grant paid parental leave beyond the limitations prescribed by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (2006) to help female employees with young children adjust to the stress of balancing work and childrearing during its early stages. The results of this longitudinal study suggested that offering women the opportunity to temporarily reduce workplace pressures until they move through the early stages of parenting may eliminate or at least reduce women's dissonance and their desire to leave the workforce.

O'Brien (2018) conducted a case study of six female educators who were parents of young children to evaluate their perspectives on the pursuit of professional development opportunities for teachers. O'Brien's research underscored the importance of investigating the unique challenges and circumstances that accompany the teaching profession when the teacher is also a parent. The researcher employed qualitative methods to gain an understanding of the regard the teachers had for professional learning and its pursuit, teachers' unique experiences and challenges as they pursued professional development, and the ways each mother responded to the challenges of pursuing professional learning.

In the case study, O'Brien (2018) asked interview questions that explored the pursuit of professional learning among six female educators who were simultaneously raising young children. The interviewees uniformly reported the challenge of competing home and school commitments that proved to be a struggle to navigate; in particular, the teachers cited the additional time commitments required for professional development. The researcher concluded that administrators could cultivate greater understanding and actions, re-calibrate their perceptions of female educators who were parents, and support the educators' personal and professional needs. This recalibration might include recognition and compassion for the responsibilities carried by parents. From this understanding, administrators could offer professional development opportunities to accommodate the schedules of teachers who also had very demanding time commitments at home (O'Brien, 2018).

Kokka (2016) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the supports influencing teacher longevity in one urban, low-income school. Kokka interviewed 10 male and six female secondary math and science teachers who were in or beyond their fifth year of teaching to examine the conditions and factors that influenced the teachers' long-term employment at the school under study. Analyses of the interview data revealed that these ten teachers reported a lack of administrative support for disciplinary concerns and classroom management, which made teaching a major challenge on a daily basis. When asked if anything made the teachers want to leave the classroom, the interviewees all reported safety concerns.

In Kokka's study (2016), the teachers who remained in the school long-term attributed their tenure primarily to the connections they established with their students. These results were later corroborated by the results of O'Brien's (2018) study of six female teachers who were parents; links to parents, students, and colleagues were anchoring factors that minimized the

desire to leave the classroom. Although Kokka's (2016) analysis did not examine teacher longevity and well-being with respect to parenting, the results of O'Brien's (2018) and Kokka's (2016) research suggested a need for studies that explore the perceptions of female educators who were also parenting. This information could help identify the factors that promote teacher longevity and satisfaction as well as minimize teacher attrition among this specific group of professional educators.

Theoretical Framework

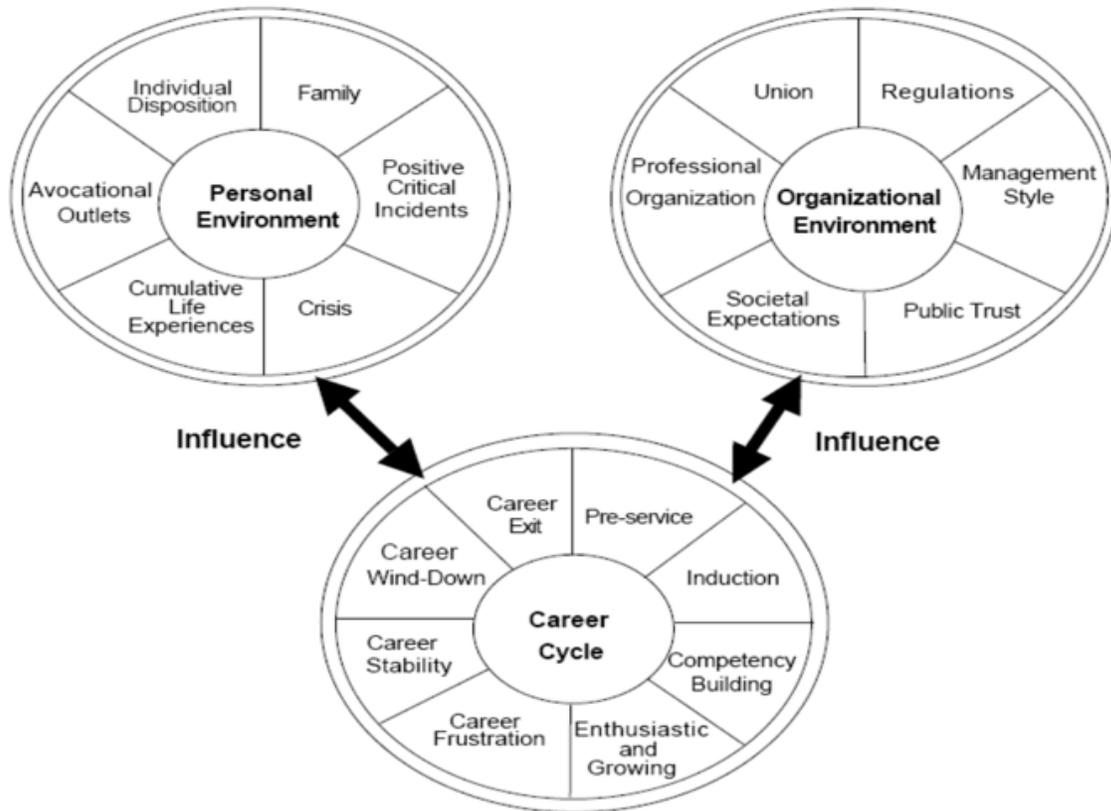
This research study was informed by three theoretical frameworks: teacher career cycles (TCC; Fessler & Christensen, 1992), self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and role-conflict theory (RCT; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Fessler and Christensen's (1992) model described teachers' common career cycles over time. These cycles were depicted as periods in the chronology of a teacher's career experience that represented typical struggles and growth patterns influenced by organizational and environmental factors. Fessler and Christensen subsequently developed the TCC model, which viewed teachers' careers in the context of a social system approach. Fessler and Christensen proposed that teachers' careers evolved more or less linearly through the following stages: preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, stable and stagnant, career wind down, and career exit. The authors identified and described important organizational and environmental influences on teachers' career stages, which are modeled in Figure 1.

An intimate acquaintance with each period in the TCC (Fessler & Christensen, 1992) can assist school administrators in anticipating flashpoints in which work-family conflict may require mediation or intervention to best support teachers. This awareness may ultimately help

administrators reduce teacher attrition, provide specific, relevant mentoring to teachers at all stages of their careers, and encourage teacher longevity.

Figure 1

Teachers' Career Cycles



Note. Adapted from “Following the Yellow Brick Road: A Teacher’s Journey along the Proverbial Career Path,” by S. K. Lynn and A. M. Woods, 2010, *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 29(1), 56.

Ryan and Deci’s (2000) SDT focused on ways that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are regulated by three basic psychological human needs: feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The historical root of SDT is humanistic psychology, which focuses on individuals holistically and their need for self-efficacy and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Whether an

individual's self-efficacy and self-actualization are fulfilled can strongly influence an individual's motivation. SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) described the important connection between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to achieve a goal. A number of research studies have been conducted since the 1970s to explore the interactions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their mediators. One of the more recent applications of SDT can be observed in mindset theory and research (Dweck, 2006).

Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed the organismic dialectic perspective as a macro-theory leading to SDT. According to these theorists, humans actively mediate their own growth and development by overcoming challenges and pursuing new experiences, ultimately in pursuit of a life balance that achieves and supports holistic well-being. Ryan and Deci also expanded SDT to include three basic psychological needs that must be satisfied to achieve life satisfaction, optimal functioning, and growth: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), these needs tend to be universal.

Gagné and Deci (2005) proposed that work environments that successfully meet humans' three basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness tend to increase intrinsic motivation among employees, leading to greater job satisfaction and long-term employment. Gagné and Deci summarized their research as follows:

With respect to organizations, we argue, based largely on laboratory experiments and field research in other domains, that work climates that promote satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs will enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and promote full internalization of extrinsic motivation and that this will in turn yield the important work outcomes of (1) persistence and maintained behavior change; (2) effective performance, particularly on tasks requiring creativity, cognitive flexibility, and conceptual

understanding; (3) job satisfaction; (4) positive work-related attitudes; (5) organizational citizenship behaviors; and (6) psychological adjustment and well-being. (p. 337)

The third theory underpinning of this research study is RCT (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Katz and Kahn (1966) argued that successfully maintaining individual and societal roles may be difficult or impossible when the roles are combined simultaneously. In addition, the responsibilities of the roles can either be real or perceived based on individual interpretations, societal norms, expectations, and pressures.

The three theoretical frameworks of TCC, SDT, and RCT were used to guide and inform the interpretation of the interview data and themes that arose in the current study and are covered at length in Chapter 2. The results of the current study contribute to efforts aimed at decreasing teacher attrition and improving teacher longevity and well-being. The strategies employed by and for female educators who successfully remain in the classroom during their parenting journey can provide valuable insight into the development of personnel policies, administrative supports, and advice to other female educators who are parenting.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising young children.

Research Question

What personal and professional factors support female educators while raising children? In this study, personal factors included support from a family member, childcare, mindset, organizational systems and planning, and social, student, and parent connections. Professional factors included professional development, education, administrative support, flexible work hours, and job sharing.

Research Design

This case study employed a qualitative case study approach. The examination of cases of females who were teaching while balancing parenthood aligned with protocols consistent with a qualitative case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order for the researcher to address the research question, the case study subjects were selected from a known group of female teachers who are parents. The stringent criteria for participation in the study are best aligned with a bounded case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher utilized semistructured interviews to explore each participant's unique experience.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Southeastern University, the researcher recruited a non-random, purposive sample from a known group of six female Christian school teachers who were actively parenting at least one child (see Appendix A). Written consent was obtained from each of the six teachers before conducting semistructured interviews either in person, over the phone, or virtually using Zoom (see Appendix B). The interview questions are provided in Appendix C. The interviews were either audio-recorded or video-recorded in Zoom with the participant's permission. When appropriate, the researcher solicited additional information by probing the subjects' responses to the interview questions. The interviews were transcribed, and each interviewee was provided the transcript for validation, verification, and authenticity. The names of the school and the participants were converted to pseudonyms to preserve anonymity and to protect the subjects' confidentiality and privacy. Other identifiers such as colleague names and names of schools or children were redacted. The researcher stored the transcripts, interview recordings, and other electronic data related to the

study on a password-protected computer in a locked office; in addition, the researcher also maintained a digital backup of the dataset on a password-protected Microsoft OneDrive folder.

Data Analyses

Interview transcripts were analyzed using qualitative, thematic analyses to address the central research question of personal and professional factors that support mothers while teaching. The researcher coded each of the individual transcripts to identify themes and commonalities and then analyzed the sample's common themes identified in the transcripts for each individual participant and for the group of teachers. In addition, the researcher investigated commonalities related to the factors participants identified as particularly helpful to supporting teachers who were also parents. As themes arose in the study, the researcher developed a code book to act as a guide for the recurrent themes. A coding book itemizing these codes and themes was used to organize the data trends, commonalities, and themes.

Limitations

A case study that explores the perceptions of six individual teachers presents certain limitations. The study's bounded nature necessarily limited generalizability to individuals who met the study's criteria of female Christian teachers who were actively parenting at least one child.

Definition of Key Terms

The following words and phrases are key terms used in this study.

- **teacher career cycles:** teacher career cycles (TCC) are periods in the chronology of a teacher's career experience that can be identified by common struggles and growth patterns (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

- **work-family conflict:** the perception that work-related responsibilities interfere, conflict, or create emotional or cognitive dissonance with family responsibilities or vice-versa (Nomaguchi & Fetto, 2019).
- **dissonance:** lack of agreement or harmony between people or things (Lexico, 2020).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. The results of this research study contributed to the body of knowledge and literature on teachers' work-life balance, especially among females and working mothers. The study explored specific factors linked to supporting the well-being of female teachers while parenting; according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), females currently comprise over 70% of America's teaching staff. The results of this study can inform school administrators, mentors, and educational policy makers in their efforts to maintain and support teachers as they strive for both professional and personal success.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this research study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising young children. The researcher examined theoretical models and current literature relevant to the research question to gain an in-depth understanding of work-life balance and well-being among female teachers who are also parents. The theoretical frameworks of TCC (Burke et al., 1987), SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and RCT (Katz & Kahn, 1966) were discussed to provide a firm foundation for data interpretation in the research study. The current researcher explored a mix of recent qualitative and quantitative studies that examined the following topics: challenges for mothers in the workplace, support for teachers in the workplace, work-family conflict and burnout, and supports for teacher well-being and teacher competence. Each of the studies examined in this chapter served to build a knowledge base from which the current study's data could be compared and interpreted.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks related to TCC (Burke et al., 1987), SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and RCT (Katz & Kahn, 1966) were reviewed in-depth and selected to provide a foundation for the design and conduct of the current study. Each of the theoretical frameworks is discussed in the sections that follow.

Teacher Career Cycles

Researchers and lay observers of education have observed relatively stable career

patterns of educators as they moved from novice to veteran teachers; these observations led to research studies on teachers' careers over time and ultimately led to a theoretical framework to describe the cycles of teachers' professional lives. Burke et al. (1987) were early researchers of teachers' career cycles; they conducted interviews with 160 teachers to determine whether any patterns existed in the teachers' career paths. From the interviews, Burke et al. subsequently synthesized a working model of a typical teacher's career cycle. The authors provided evidence of a model describing a functional, dynamic, and flexible paradigm that could predict or anticipate the trajectory of teachers' career journeys. The research pointed to the following stages or phases of teachers' development: preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and finally, career exit. The researchers also analyzed the interview data to explore the elements of organizational and personal environments that influenced the shifts from one stage in the career cycle to the next. Analyses of the interview data revealed some of the personal factors that influenced the teachers' shifts from one cycle to the next: family, support structures, positive critical incidents, life crises, cumulative life experiences, avocational outlets, and teacher disposition. The authors concluded that circumstances arising from these personal or environmental categories could push, pull, or stall a teacher's movement from one career cycle to the next cycle.

According to Burke et al. (1987), the personal contexts and organizational environments in which teachers operate can dramatically influence their motivation to remain in the profession. The researchers also surmised that personal or organizational environments were influential in either incremental or singular ways. For example, the death of a loved one is a singular, personal context independent of other workplace components. Some examples of incremental influences include school regulations, the management style of supervisors, the atmosphere of public trust

in the community, community expectations of the school, activities and professional growth opportunities, union politics, and policies within the system (Burke et al., 1987). The authors concluded that personal or workplace environments were related to driving forces that influenced job-related behaviors and teachers' career cycles.

Burke et al. (1987) discussed their research on teachers' career cycles within the context of guiding teachers' professional development. The research, therefore, is a valuable contribution to teachers, school administrators, mentors, professional developers, and policymakers. Understanding teachers' places within the career cycle can help maximize teacher growth, development, and effectiveness in each phase or stage of the career cycle.

More recently, Steffy and Wolfe (2001) acknowledged two personal environmental and organizational influences on teacher development and classified teacher career cycles into six distinct phases on the developmental continuum: (a) novice teacher, (b) apprentice teacher, (c) professional teacher, (d) expert teacher, (e) distinguished teacher, and (f) emeritus teacher. According to Steffy and Wolfe (2001), teachers' needs differ depending on their career stages. For example, novice and apprentice teachers tend to focus on survival and the myriad tasks related to teaching and managing a classroom. Mid-career teachers tend to stabilize and establish predictable routines for managing instruction and other teaching tasks; these teachers may feel sufficiently confident to experiment with instructional and curricular resources. Late-career teachers often experience a period of self-reflection to evaluate the challenges and the rewards of teaching as they prepare for the transition to retirement. The challenge for school administrators and professional developers should be to support teachers' continuous improvement as they progress through the various stages of career cycles.

White (2008) discussed the important link between human resource management and

teacher career cycles. The work of teachers involves a range of concerns outside the traditional factors of teacher motivation and reward systems. This concept of motivation further connects to SDT, which is examined in the next section.

Self-Determination Theory

SDT serves as a seminal theoretical framework to support the design of the current study. Deci and Ryan (2000) hypothesized a set of basic psychological needs that must be met to support healthy motivation. Originally, Deci (1971) discovered that the psychological constructs of competency, autonomy, and relatedness were critical for optimal human functioning. Autonomy relates to a sense of internal initiative and ownership of one's actions. Competence reflects an individual's perception of having mastered a skill and the sense that the individual can further grow and develop. Finally, relatedness involves the perception of belonging and connection within the individual's environment.

Deci and Ryan (2000) reported that humans are motivated by both internal and external forces to persevere through conflict. The will and energy for individual action come either indirectly or directly from satisfying these basic psychological needs of perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Fernet (2013) found that teachers who felt overworked reported reduced feelings of competence, often leading to emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of accomplishment. Bartholomew et al. (2014) demonstrated that teachers' work-related stressors were associated with burnout, which is often a consequence of frustrated psychological needs. Clearly, SDT and its concomitant elements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide important evidence of teachers' needs for all three factors to sustain and enjoy their careers over time, despite the numerous challenges they encounter daily.

Role-Conflict Theory

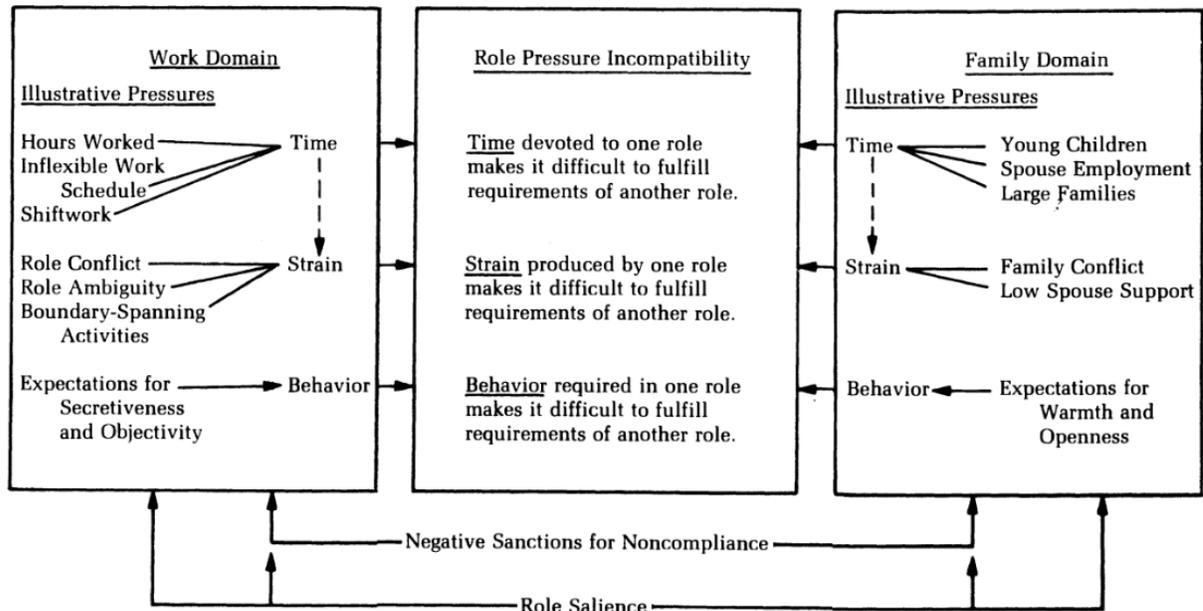
Katz and Kahn (1966) first identified workplace conflicts in their text *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. Katz and Kahn (1966) defined role conflict as “the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (p. 204). Katz and Kahn further proposed a relationship between individuals’ expectations and societal expectations; conflicts ensue when expectations are not met. According to the authors, role conflict occurs when there is a disagreement between two or more role-senders. For example, a woman who assumes the roles of both wage earner and parent may experience pressure from others to behave in ways that might conflict with the role of parent or vice versa. Perhaps a manager expects employees to travel and re-locate easily; this expectation may conflict with family needs. In this example, meeting the expectations of both roles may create conflict and dissonance.

The workplace has evolved considerably since Katz and Kahn’s (1966) publication on role conflict. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that in the modern workplace, many organizational leaders tend to overlook the influence of events and circumstances outside their organizations. Dynamics outside the workplace can play an important role in role conflict and its mitigation. The researchers’ paper provided a close examination of the conflicts specific to work roles and family roles. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) generated a definition of work-family conflict as “a specific type of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). In other words, the shared roles of work and family can create dissonance within individuals as they attempt to combine the two roles. Greenhaus and Beutell suggested that three forms of work-family conflict exist: time-

based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. The Figure 2 illustrates the interaction of work and family domains on role pressure incompatibility.

Figure 2

Work-Family Role Pressures



Note. Interconnection of work domain, role pressure incompatibility, and family domain. The diagram demonstrates the directions from which conflict can begin. From “Sources of Conflict Between Work and Family Roles” by Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), p. 78 (<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352>). Copyright 1984 by Academy of Management.

According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), time-based conflicts occur when multiple roles compete for a person’s time; the time spent on one activity necessarily takes time away from another action. Time-based conflict can take two forms: (a) the time pressures that arise from obligations in a particular role that make it difficult or impossible to comply with the expectations of another role, and (b) a preoccupation with one role that conflicts with the needs

of another role (Bartolomé & Evans, 1979, as cited in Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed that strain-based conflicts occur when the strain produced by one role creates dissonance between compliance with the demands of another role. Finally, the researchers proposed that behavior-based conflict occurs when the required or expected behaviors of one role are incompatible with the expectations of behavior in another role.

According to Creary and Gordon (2016), mitigation strategies exist for alleviating role conflict. The authors described role conflict as the events that simultaneously demand more resources than an individual has to offer. Role conflict can be mitigated by reducing demands, increasing resources, or both. Strategies such as role-sequencing, role-prioritizing, role change, additional social supports, and reasonable boundaries between work and family responsibilities can assist individuals in mitigating dissonance and achieving balance in their personal and professional lives. These types of solutions can reduce role conflict, overload, and strain, thereby supporting employees who experience work-family conflict.

Each of the three theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter provides a strong foundation for the study of work-life balance among female teachers who are parents. The research on TCC serves to contextualize the stages or phases of typical teachers' career development. SDT focuses on the elements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that support psychologically healthy motivation. RCT describes the inherent conflicts that occur when two or more role expectations collide. Perseverance through conflict requires motivation. The current research study explored the supports connected to teachers' motivation to persevere when the roles of mother and worker conflicted. The next section of the chapter presents an overview of the empirical research relevant to these theories and to this study.

Empirical Research

The Working Mother Research Institute conducted a survey entitled “What Working Dads Really Want” (Seramount, 2021). A national audience of 1,964 fathers and 1,036 mothers from a diverse sample of individuals responded to the survey that was designed to measure parental perceptions of family life and work balance using a 4-point Likert scale of agreement and satisfaction. The survey included statements such as “I find it difficult to manage the demands of being a parent with my work responsibilities” and “My status as a parent will make it more difficult to advance in my company” (Seramount, 2021, p. 7). The institute’s researchers used descriptive statistics to analyze the responses to the survey and reported that both women and men had equal needs for parental support in the workplace, but the benefits were inherently unequal. For example, fathers reported they wanted the same things that mothers wanted but believed that men could not take as much time off from the workplace as mothers. More than half of the men (55%) reported difficulties balancing parenting and career responsibilities. Both working mothers and fathers reported that flexibility, paid time off, sick leave, and backup care were all high priority needs that employers’ programs and policies could help meet (Seramount, 2021). All the survey respondents reported that corporate culture mattered and 50% of all dads said that being a leader in a company was incompatible with family life. Finally, both women and men reported that flexibility in the workplace was indispensable; 84% of the respondents said that flexibility was the number one factor related to meeting the demands of parenting and the workplace effectively. Although this research study was not specific to mothers, the results suggest that the demands of parenting were not gender specific. In other words, employer support offered to employees is not a matter of gender inequality but is desired by both mothers and fathers in the workplace (Seramount, 2021).

Women make up more than half of the American workforce (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The report recognized that many of these women were also parents. Both roles demand high levels of attention, focus, time, and energy. The current review of literature focused on the challenges of mothers in the workplace, support for teachers in the workplace, work-family conflict and burnout, and supports for teacher well-being and teacher competence.

Challenges for Mothers in the Workplace

In an important, relevant, and influential study, Namaguchi and Fetto (2019) explored ways that work-family role conflict was influenced by job characteristics as children aged. The researchers examined job characteristics and variations in mothers' work-family conflicts based on stages of childrearing. The researchers analyzed data from a quantitative, longitudinal study conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development entitled "The Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development" (as cited in Namaguchi & Fetto, 2019). The original longitudinal study explored work-family role conflict among 774 female workers with children. The average age of mothers at the birth of the child in the original study was 29 years (ranging from 18 to 46 years). Relevant demographics of the original study were included: 83% were non-Hispanic and White, 42% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 83% were married when the child was born (Namaguchi & Fetto (2019). The researchers did not control for the type of employment of the mothers when they analyzed the data.

Namaguchi and Fetto used Bakker and Demerouti's job-demands resource model (2007, as cited in Namaguchi & Fetto, 2019) to explore women's perceptions of work-family conflicts. The job-demands resource model categorized working conditions into two criteria: demands placed on the worker and the resources provided by the employer to support the employees' efforts to meet those demands. The researchers employed a fixed-effects model to examine the

variations in mothers' responses to items related to job demands and resources across four different stages of childrearing: when children were 6 months old, 15 months old, in third grade, and in fifth grade. The researchers explored one objective measure and two subjective measures of job demands in the study: work hours per week, the women's self-reported occupational status (management, professional, or other), and self-reported perceptions of job pressure.

Namaguchi and Fetto (2019) calculated job pressure as a subjective measure of job demands and the average of the women's responses to three items: juggling tasks or duties, having too much to do, and whether the job demanded too much of them. Subjects ranked each of the three items on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = not at all a concern, 2 = somewhat of a concern, 3 = of considerable concern, and 4 = of extreme concern). The researchers measured work-family conflict as an average of five questions included in the original study on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4:

- Working leaves you with too little time to be the kind of parent you want to be.
- Working causes you to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent.
- Working leaves you with too little energy to be the kind of parent you want to be.
- Because of the requirements of your job, you have to miss out on home or family activities that you would prefer to participate in.
- Because of the requirements of your job, your family time is less enjoyable and more pressured. (Namaguchi & Fetto, 2019, p. 295)

The researchers measured work-family conflict as an average of four different but similar questions using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4:

- Thinking about your children interferes with your performance at work.

- Because of your family responsibilities, you have to turn down work activities or opportunities that you would prefer to take on.
- Because of your family responsibilities, the time you spend working is less enjoyable and more stressed.
- When you spend time working, you're bothered by all the things at home that you should be doing. (Namaguchi & Fetro, 2019, p. 295)

Key results that are pertinent to the current study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Scores of Women's Responses by Ages of Children in Months and Grade Levels

Variable	Mean Composite Score	6 Months	15 months	Third Grade	Fifth Grade
Weekly Work Hours	28.32 (17.81)	24.75	26.23	30.55	31.75
Job Pressure [1-4]	1.73 (0.77)	1.89 (0.74)	1.84 (0.73)	1.64 (0.79)	1.56 (0.76)
Job Flexibility [-3.78 to 4.06]	-2.00 (1.00)	-1.00 (1.00)	2.00 (1.00)	4.00 (1.00)	6.00 (1.00)
Work-to-family conflict [1-4]	1.82 (0.77)	1.82 (0.75)	1.84 (0.75)	1.85 (0.78)	1.78(0.78)
Family-to-work conflict [1-4]	1.47 (0.51)	1.52 (0.52)	1.49 (0.49)	1.45 (0.51)	1.42 (0.51)

Note: $N = 774$; parentheses indicate the standard deviation; the numbers in brackets indicate the scales of the instruments used to survey participants. Adapted from “Childrearing Stages and Work Family Conflict: The Role of Job Demands and Resources,” by K. Nomaguchi and M. N. Fetro, 2019, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(2), p. 298 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12521>).

Namaguchi and Fetto (2019) reported that mothers with children in this sample worked fewer hours but self-reported more job pressure and less supervisory support when children were younger (6 months and 15 months). The women also reported significantly higher levels of family-to-work conflict when children were in the third and fifth grades; however, the differences by childrearing stage were not significantly different after controlling for perceived job pressure. Namaguchi and Fetto concluded that job demands, support, and resources could influence and reduce work-family conflict based on the ages and stages of children's development. In other words, the level of work-family conflict experienced by working women may be greater when their children are very young. These findings have important implications for workplace supports during the early stages of childrearing. Namaguchi and Fetto suggested that workplace policies can reduce job pressure without eliminating career opportunities for women. Workplace policies and supports can be instrumental in helping mothers with young children adjust to and balance the dual roles of work and childrearing.

Kelley et al. (2020) studied the work-life balance of mothers in the context of penalties and rewards associated with motherhood. Kelley et al. examined the differences in salary and other factors between mothers and non-mothers employed in academic libraries. The researchers collected survey data from a non-random sample of 808 female respondents; 343 women were mothers, and 465 were not mothers. The women reported that they had one or more children. The researchers asked the participants to answer survey questions to obtain information about their current annual salary and work-life balance. They used questions such as "How easily are you able to balance your work with your personal or family responsibilities?" (Kelley et al., 2020, p. 3). Perceptions of work-life balance were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not easily* to 7 = *very easily*). The researchers used multiple linear regression analyses to examine the

relationships between yearly salary differences before taxes between the mothers and non-mothers. The researchers discovered that the mothers in the sample earned nearly \$10,000 more than the non-mothers; however, the mothers also had an average of 5 years more experience in the workplace and were older than the non-mothers. The researchers conducted additional regression analyses to examine the relationships between the independent variables of workplace position, years of experience, race, marital status, and education and the dependent variable of average salary. Results of these analyses revealed that in all cases, mothers earned more than non-mothers. However, the differences between the two groups were not statistically significant ($p = .852$). In addition, there were no statistically significant differences between mothers and non-mothers related to the two groups' perceptions of their work-life balance ($p = .207$). When analyzing mothers' work-life balance based on the ages of their children, however, the researchers discovered that non-mothers and mothers with children aged 19 years and older had significantly higher work-life balance than mothers with children aged 5 years and younger ($p = .05$).

Kelley et al. (2020) concluded that their study did not provide evidence of a “motherhood penalty” related to salary. The authors reported that the implications of the study were hopeful: at least for the profession of academic librarians, women reported they could raise children without penalties related to salary and professional advancement.

Supporting Teachers in the Workplace

O'Brien (2018) conducted a qualitative case study of six female K-12 teachers who were parents of children under 10 years of age to examine their experiences and the pursuit of professional development opportunities for teachers. The researcher conducted interviews to explore the teachers' perceptions of the value of professional development and the challenges the

subjects experienced. The interviewees reported that returning to the classroom after maternity leave presented several challenges related to their sense of personal competency and relatedness. Some interviewees reported co-worker and administrator expectations that conflicted with their new maternal roles. The interviewees also discussed the importance of both personal and professional support. One subject had a very supportive teaching environment that contributed to her ability to continue teaching and provided a respite from maternal responsibilities. In this teacher's case, the blending of the two roles produced optimal personal and professional circumstances. A second woman reported a very different experience. She returned to workplace pressures and bullying from the senior leadership at her school. This interviewee noted that the school's administration pressured her to maintain her pre-maternity performance, disregarding her new identity as a mother. Another teacher reported that she perceived that her pregnancy jeopardized her job security as a teacher. When asked if she was genuinely concerned that her pregnancy might put her in a vulnerable position, she replied:

Definitely, definitely. And I knew I was taking a big risk coming back already pregnant anyway, it doesn't put you in a very good light, 'oh you've already been off for nine months, and now you are going off again ... The way I view it, I gave [several] years of my life to that school ... I have limited time to have my family now because I've given so much. (O'Brien, 2018, p. 85)

Another mother reported a similar experience when the announcement of a second pregnancy was received coolly by her superior without a word of support or congratulations (O'Brien, 2018). The women in this study reported a sense of dissolution in the community they enjoyed before motherhood. Tensions developed among colleagues when it became apparent that their maternal duties conflicted with their professional duties, and they were then bullied for not

meeting these unrealistic expectations (O'Brien, 2018). The participants concurred that the challenges of competing home and school commitments created difficulties in finding the additional time needed to participate fully in professional development. O'Brien (2018) also reported that all six female interviewees indicated a marked identity shift upon first entering motherhood. Three interviewees said that parenting became their primary identity, especially in the early stages of parenting; all other responsibilities became secondary, including teaching. The researcher concluded that school administrators and support staff could cultivate a greater understanding of the balance required in a teaching career and motherhood, recalibrate the perceptions of educators who were parents, and support the educators' personal and professional needs. Recalibration might include a greater understanding of the responsibilities of parents in the workplace and the need for greater flexibility in the delivery of professional development for teachers.

The results of O'Brien's (2018) research underscored the importance of investigating the unique challenges and circumstances that accompany the expectations of continued professional development in the teaching profession while balancing the role of parenthood. O'Brien summarized the interviews to conclude that management of home and school commitments are complex, and the women who participated in the study were all actively striving for balance in these sectors.

Specific supports for teachers were explored in a survey study by Gainey in 2020. Gainey examined the relationships between the proportions of students with special needs in elementary classrooms and regular elementary teachers' stressors and the teachers' needs for professional development support. Gainey surveyed a non-random, purposive sample of 52 regular elementary classroom teachers who taught students with special needs. The participants were

disproportionately female ($n = 51$). The researcher employed a 4-point Likert scale to measure ways that stress was related to six domains of teachers' concerns identified in previous literature by Forlin (2001, as cited in Gainey, 2020). The domains that the survey assessed included student behavior, parent concerns, administrative support, classroom resources, professional competency, and personal competency. Gainey's analyses revealed that all six domains of teachers' concerns were significantly correlated to the sample's mean composite stressor score.

Furthermore, the female teachers in Gainey's (2020) study reported that their concerns were specifically related to work required outside contract hours. The teachers also noted the need for further professional development to meet their students' needs effectively. Finally, Gainey discussed the need for educators and policymakers to study and implement strategies to alleviate teachers' stressors.

Kokka (2016) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the factors influencing teacher longevity in an urban, low-income school in Brookdale, California. Kokka interviewed 10 male and six female secondary math and science teachers who were in or beyond their fifth year of teaching to examine the conditions and factors that influenced the teachers' long-term employment at the school. Kokka's analyses of the interview data revealed that interviewees reported a lack of administrative support for disciplinary concerns and classroom management that made teaching a daily challenge. Teachers also reported severe safety concerns that they were ill-equipped to mediate (i.e., a student was robbed at gunpoint). When asked if anything made the teachers want to leave the classroom or profession, the interviewees consistently reported safety concerns.

In Kokka's (2016) study, the teachers who remained in the school long-term attributed their tenure primarily to the relationships and connections they established with their students.

These results were corroborated by O'Brien's (2018) study of six female teachers who were parents. In both studies, links to parents, students, and colleagues were anchoring factors that reduced the desire to leave the classroom.

Lopez (2017) conducted a descriptive, nonexperimental study to examine burnout among teachers working in Christian schools. Lopez defined burnout as "a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach et al., 2001, as cited in Lopez, 2017, p. 2). Lopez (2017) recruited a sample of 65 teachers from 25 different K-12 Christian schools. The non-random, purposive sample consisted of teachers from a variety of grade levels and disciplines. The researcher used open-ended items to gather information on each teacher's personal and professional characteristics, such as school enrollment, total student load, grade level taught, average class size, and perceived administrative support. She also provided a link to an online version of Maslach's Burnout Inventory for Teachers (Maslach et al., 2001, as cited in Lopez, 2017) to collect burnout data. The teachers responded to Maslach's Burnout Inventory for Teachers using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*).

Lopez (2017) analyzed the results of the demographic data and the burnout data using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analyses. Mean composite burnout scores were computed as well as mean scores on the three burnout subscales of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. The teachers' responses to the items related to personal and professional characteristics were then used as independent variables in multiple regression analyses to predict the dependent variables of mean composite burnout scores and mean subscale scores of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Teachers (Maslach et al.,

2001, as cited in Lopez, 2017). Lopez used the subscale scores to assess an individual's range of burnout.

Lopez (2017) also examined two broad categories of personal and professional teacher characteristics. Personal characteristics included age group, gender, ethnicity, and marital status. Professional characteristics included school enrollment numbers (size), teachers' total student load, grade level taught, and average class size. Both personal and professional teacher characteristics were found to be statistically significant predictors of burnout for teachers working in Christian schools.

The results of Lopez's (2017) analyses uncovered several important findings. The teachers' professional characteristics of school enrollment numbers (size) and the teacher's grade level were significant predictors of burnout ($p < .001$ and $p < .05$, respectively). The mean score for this sample of teachers on the emotional exhaustion subscale was a significant predictor of the teachers' mean composite burnout score ($p < .001$) as well as the most robust predictor of overall burnout scores. Scores on the autonomy subscale represented a weak, nonsignificant predictor of overall teacher burnout scores in this sample. The teachers in Lopez's study reported that administrative support was a significant predictor of teacher burnout; however, the relationship was inverse. In other words, when the teachers perceived that administrative support for their work was high, burnout was lower; when teachers perceived low levels of administrative support, burnout was higher.

Although Lopez's study (2017) does not measure burnout among teachers who are also parents, one can logically conclude that support systems (or lack thereof) can lead to emotional exhaustion. Lopez recommended that school administrators and supervisors work together to prioritize resources and supports to generate an employment environment that is flame retardant

or less likely to facilitate situations leading to teacher burnout.

Work-Family Conflict and Burnout Prevention

Kelly et al. (2014) investigated resources and supports designed to reduce work-family conflict as a potential precipitator of burnout. The researchers investigated the influence of deliberate organizational changes on work resources and the work-family interface. The researchers conducted a field experiment in the information technology division of a U.S. Fortune 500 organization that participated in an initiative called STAR, which targeted work practices, interactions, and expectations. The STAR initiative was designed to train supervisors to recognize the value of demonstrating support for employees' personal lives. The initiative also prompted employees to consider when and where they work to identify new work practices. The programs and recommended practices were intended to increase employees' control over work time and to focus on critical results rather than facetime at their desks or in the office. When the STAR initiative was implemented, employees were divided into 56 study groups throughout the organization, yielding a total sample size of 1,171. The experimental group that participated in the STAR initiative consisted of 609 individuals who were compared to a control group of 562 employees and supervisors. The control group engaged in a re-training of usual practices and did not participate in STAR training. The researchers developed and administered a survey that included self-reported measures of emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, perceived stress, and psychological distress at different time periods during the 12-month implementation of STAR.

Kelly et al. (2014) conducted estimated generalized linear mixed models to analyze the nested cohort data collected from the STAR treatment groups. The results of the analyses revealed that the STAR initiative group's mean scores were significantly different (higher) than the control group's mean scores in the areas of employees' increased perceptions of schedule

control and supervisor support for family and personal life ($p = .059$). The researchers also found that the implementation of STAR training encouraged employees to adjust their schedules based on personal needs and to work at home more. Employees in the STAR training group were twice as likely than employees in the control group to describe their schedules as “variable” in the 6-month follow-up survey. The researchers concluded that these results inform the development of future corporate and public policies as well as research on organizational change that can reduce work-family conflict using a top-down approach from supervisor to employee.

Mercado (2019) explored work-life balance and level of satisfaction among 210 female elementary teachers in a northern Philippine province. The researcher administered a modified work-life balance questionnaire based on an instrument from a previous study by Swarnalatha (2013, as cited in Mercado, 2019). In addition, Mercado conducted supplemental interviews to validate and contextualize the responses to the questionnaire used in the study. The elementary teachers reported that personal responsibilities such as household chores and cooking consumed the participants’ time to a “great extent.” Other duties, such as child-care and self-management, time for self-development, thinking, planning, day-to-day activities, and physical exercise, were reported to consume participants’ time only to a “moderate extent.” The teachers reported their time was consumed to a “moderate extent” by the pressures of work schedules and deadlines. In the interviews, some participants added that “they often get home late and felt like they had more things to do than they could handle” (Mercado, 2019, p. 6). Regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the mean composite score on the work-life balance items and the mean composite score on job satisfaction; the results revealed a significant relationship between work-life balance and level of job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.4867$; $p < 0.05$). The researcher recommended that managers and administrators in education must consider both the needs of

female employees in their workplaces and in their personal lives. Mercado suggested that a proper balance between work and home life can lead to a high level of job satisfaction and could increase teacher fidelity to the institution.

A recent study exploring work-life balance among mothers was conducted in 2019 by Stephens. Stephens (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore 10 single working mothers' approaches to work-life balance. She designed her research to explore ways single working mothers have attempted to attain work-life balance and resolve the challenges they encountered that impeded this balance. All the participants had some level of post-secondary education, though not all had completed college. Most of the interviewees were in a low-income bracket; over half of the subjects made less than \$25,000 per year. More than half of the participants were single and had never been married; the majority had only one child. Although Stephens collected data on race, she reported that the results of the study did not differ to any degree by race.

Stephens (2019) also examined the ways single working mothers in this sample believed their employers' policies, practices, and attitudes influenced their ability to balance work and family responsibilities. Stephens's sample consisted of 10 single mothers working either part-time or full-time in various jobs in two U.S. states. The researcher conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews that were analyzed using qualitative narrative analysis. The subjects reported that work-life balance was described as the ability to leave work at work, keep routines without interruptions, and focus solely on their children. Stephens also found that crucial time-management strategies, robust support systems, and time alone were fundamental components in the women's quests for work-life balance. The themes that emerged from Stephens's study of single working women included the ability to implement strategic planning, intentional self-care, and maintenance of sacrificial-mothering approaches. In addition, financial concerns and time

constraints were subthemes. The women described time constraints and always being on the go and rushed. In general, time limitations prohibited them from running their households the way they wished. Stephens uncovered two supports required or recommended by the single working women based on the interview transcripts: family within proximity and employers' efforts to create family-oriented work environments. Some of the interviewees stated that family-oriented job environments generated feelings of being understood and comfortable in both their roles as an employee and as a single mother, regardless of their position as a full or part-time employee.

Stephens's (2019) study provided a raw and authentic exploration of the challenges and struggles single mothers face in the workplace. However, only one woman in Stephens's study was an educator. The single mothers in this sample of working single mothers pointed to the ideal conditions for achieving work-life balance: the ability to leave work at work, to keep their routines at work and at home without interruptions, and the ability to fully focus on themselves and their children.

Whereas the participants in O'Brien's (2018) study of married and single female teachers who were parents were highly motivated to achieve work-life balance and believed it attainable, Stephens (2019) discovered that some participants in her study did not believe work-life balance was possible. The mothers in both studies exhibited resilient attitudes and desires to pursue work-life balance; however, Stephens's subjects perceived balance as elusive. One might reasonably question whether the idea of work-life balance is difficult or impossible to achieve for educators. Teaching involves extensive time after regular contract hours for grading papers, participating in professional development and extra-curricular activities, answering parent phone calls and e-mails, and conducting parent-teacher conferences (Gainey, 2020; O'Brien, 2018). These job responsibilities are not optional for teachers and can rarely be accomplished

effectively during contract hours. The inability to establish and maintain routines, especially after contract hours, may be related to the burnout and stress described by teachers in the research conducted by Gainey (2020). If school leaders can help teachers manage the external demands related to their jobs, teachers may experience greater job satisfaction, reduced feelings of exhaustion, and improved health and well-being.

Johnston and Swanson (2007) conducted a qualitative study to explore the cognitive mechanisms involved in shifting between worker and mother. The researchers conducted extensive interviews with 98 mothers of one or more pre-school children. The women in this sample included stay-at-home mothers, part-time workers, and full-time workers. The researchers did not control for the type of employment held by the mothers who worked outside the home. Narrative analyses of the interview transcripts revealed that all the mothers embraced intensive mothering expectations. The researchers adopted Hays's (1996, as cited in Johnston & Swanson, 2007) definition of intensive mothering as one that was expert-guided and child-centered, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive. The mothers in the study conducted by Johnston and Swanson wanted to parent intentionally and with excellence. Conflict ensued, however, when intensive mothering expectations created dissonance because the women frequently modified their expectations to construct an integrated worker-mother identity. Johnston and Swanson suggested that although mothers at home could effectively embrace intensive mothering expectations, employed mothers frequently engaged in exhausting cognitive acrobatics to manage the tension between employment and their own or social expectations of parenting. The researchers reported that their interviewees employed selection, separation, neutralization, or reframing to balance their worker-mother identities. For example, some women strategized by prioritizing career over maternal expectations or vice versa;

however, these choices came with the cost of ignoring or denying a portion of the women's self-identities. Some employed women in the study were able to draw clear boundaries between worker-identity and mother-identity. According to the authors, some women effectively used neutralization strategies to satisfy both worker- and mother-identity needs while simultaneously recognizing that neither identity was ever fully satisfied. Finally, some women used reframing strategies to construct an integrated worker-mother identity or redefined the two identities to reduce the tensions. The results of Johnston and Swanson's study suggested that a great deal of information is needed to determine the coping mechanisms that working mothers employ.

Ladge et al. (2018) conducted a multimethod study to explore the reasons some new mothers depart from the workforce while others remain in the workplace after the birth of their first child. The researchers used a combination of qualitative exploration and subsequent quantitative analyses. The authors began by conducting interviews to examine the experiences unique to working mothers. The researchers recruited participants for their qualitative study from a local organization that offered parenting classes to new parents. The researchers used snowball sampling methods to gain referrals for other participants who met the research criteria of first-time mothers with at least 5 years of professional work experience—to ensure a well-established career—and who returned to the same employer and job they held prior to the birth of their first child. The researchers further distilled the sample by limiting the participants to married, college-educated women in professional and managerial roles. Further qualifying criteria included that the women had taken an official 8- to 12-week maternity leave and were between 3 and 24 months postpartum at the time of the interviews. The final sample consisted of 40 first-time mothers ages 29-44 years who met the criteria. Apart from one participant, all participants were from the United States. The researchers conducted in-person, semistructured interviews using

open-ended questions to explore the new mothers' experiences.

Ladge et al. (2018) conducted two stages of analyses for the interview transcripts. In the first coding analysis of the interviews, a central theme emerged regarding the women's concerns about being a good mother while balancing work demands. Many women engaged in self-scrutiny and shared feelings of pride or guilt as they described their search for balance. In addition, many of the women who expressed concerns about the difficult or unsuccessful balance between the two roles also reported they intended to leave their organizations.

In the second stage of transcript analysis, Ladge et al. (2018) took a conceptual approach and condensed first-order analyses into an overall conceptual theme of maternal confidence. The researchers pursued this theme further by exploring related second-order themes. Secondary themes emerged from the analyses, including struggles to build a sense of confidence as a mother, greater perceptions of work-family conflict, and more frequent contemplations of leaving their organizations. The participants described the transition back to work as a period of intense scrutiny of oneself in the new working parent role. One participant noted, "I was surprised how easy it was to go back into my old routine [at work]. ... Professionally, you just get instant feedback about doing a good job, whereas at home you don't" (Ladge et al., 2018, p. 866). Another participant mentioned, "I wasn't very honest with folks. Everyone around you is like, 'Isn't it great being a mom?' And you would feel like coming out saying, 'It's great being a mother, but it's not easy being a mother'" (Ladge et al., 2018, p. 866). Ladge et al. also discovered that the women in this sample were proud of their ability to manage both mothering and work roles.

The women in Ladge et al.'s (2018) study did not express difficulty in completing job assignments; however, one-quarter of the new mothers contemplated leaving their organization.

The women who considered leaving the workplace ($n = 10$) also expressed intense levels of doubt in their ability to be “good” mothers. In other words, the women experienced high levels of doubt regarding their maternal confidence. One mother questioned her mothering abilities and her work choices:

I was feeling guilty ... I thought I would be feeling that I wouldn't even want to work. I should stay home with this baby all the time and be a stay-at-home mother and dedicate my whole self to raising this tiny being the best way possible. (Ladge et al., 2018, p. 887)

By the same token, Ladge et al. (2018) found that 17 women who expressed high maternal confidence also expressed high levels of intent to remain in their workplace. The results of these studies suggest that maternal confidence may influence work-family conflict. The researchers further concluded that maternal confidence was likely a function of the pressures the mothers carried from societal or personal expectations. The researchers also found that women whose managers were not supportive reported intentions to leave the workplace. One mother who had a high degree of maternal confidence reported that the lack of support from her boss made her feel high levels of conflict between work and home. The results of these qualitative analyses have important implications for managers and colleagues of working women who are also parents.

Ladge et al. (2018) expanded upon the qualitative studies by conducting a quantitative study designed to determine women's maternal confidence, intent to stay in the workplace, the relationship of work-family conflict, and the role managers play in influencing women's decisions to remain in the workplace. The researchers gathered quantitative data from a random sample of 802 mothers who had a child under 2 years of age and who had returned to work after taking maternity leave. The average age of the mothers in the sample was 35 years. To address

the study's purpose, the researchers measured the women's maternal confidence, work-family conflict, managerial support, and intent to stay in the workplace. To measure work-family conflict, the researchers administered a five-item survey adapted from a scale developed by Anderson et al. (2002, as cited in Ladge et al., 2018). To measure maternal confidence, Ladge et al. (2018) included survey items such as "I have the skills needed to be a good parent," "I am satisfied with my role as a parent," "I feel sure of myself as a mother/father," and "I feel confident in my role as a parent" (p. 892). To measure intent to stay in the workplace, Ladge et al. (2018) used a turnover intentions scale by Tett and Meyer (1993, as cited in Ladge et al., 2018). The researchers also administered a six-item instrument by Anderson et al. (2002, as cited in Ladge et al., 2018) to measure the women's perceptions of their managers' support. Each of the survey items was measured using a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Ladge et al. (2018) conducted analyses of variance to compare the women's mean response scores across the two dimensions of maternal confidence and intent to stay in the workplace. The researchers then used hierarchical regression analyses and found that maternal confidence was significantly correlated to the intent to stay in the workplace ($\beta = .074, p < .001$). The authors also found that high levels of maternal confidence were significantly correlated to low levels of work-family conflict ($p < .001$). Although no cause-effect relationship is implied in correlation analyses, these results suggest important relationships that merit further study. In addition, new mothers who reported low levels of work-family conflict expressed significantly higher intent to stay in the workplace ($\beta = .076, p < .05$). In this study, managerial support was not significantly correlated to maternal confidence and work-family conflict. However, when the researchers conducted ordinary least squares path analyses, the results indicated that managerial support was significantly related to work-family conflict ($\beta = -.239, p < .001$). The negative

relationship revealed that lack of managerial support was inversely related to work-family conflict. In other words, a low level of managerial support was related to a high level of work-family conflict; however, a high level of managerial support was also related to low levels of work-family conflict. Again, these results have important implications for women in the workplace. Finally, managerial support was significantly and positively related to the women's intent to stay in the workplace ($\beta = .293, p < .001$).

Based on the results of the quantitative study, Ladge et al. (2018) concluded that motherhood was not the primary factor predicting female parents' decisions to leave their careers, at least temporarily. Women's maternal confidence and managerial support were important factors influencing work-life balance as a mother of children under the age of 2 years. The researchers further discussed the need for both personal and professional supports in the workplace and in the home.

Supporting Teachers' Well-Being and Competence

Many factors influence teachers' well-being and efficacy. For example, Cansoy and Parlar (2018) examined the relationships between school principals' instructional leadership behaviors, teachers' self-efficacy, and schools' collective teacher efficacy. The researchers employed random sampling to achieve a sample size of 427 teachers; 309 were female, and 118 were male. These teachers taught elementary ($n = 157$), middle ($n = 157$), and high school ($n = 113$) levels in the Cekmekoy district of Istanbul. The authors used the following instruments to collect data on the key variables in the study: the Effective School Leadership Scale, the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Collective Efficacy Scale (Ata, 2015, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, and Goddard et al., 2000, respectively, as cited in Cansoy & Parlar, 2018).

The Effective School Leadership Scale (Ata, 2015, as cited in Cansoy & Parlar, 2018) consisted of 39 items and six subitems to measure teachers' perceptions of school principals' effective school leadership behaviors using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Six subitems included visionary leadership, personal characteristics, educational leadership, understanding and improving learning, and instructional processes (combining, planning, and evaluating resources). Cansoy and Parlar stated that high scores on the scale represented higher levels of effective leadership by school administrators.

The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, as cited in Cansoy & Parlar, 2018) was composed of three dimensions and 24 items measured on a 9-point scale of 1 = *nothing* to 9 = *a great deal*. The questions asked respondents to evaluate key self-efficacy indicators related to student engagement, classroom management, and problem-solving in the classroom.

The Collective Efficacy Scale was adapted by Goddard et al. (2000, as cited in Cansoy & Parlar, 2018) to include 16 items requiring teachers to consider the school's philosophy of education and the ability of students to learn overall. A 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*) was used to measure responses to questions such as "Teachers in this school really believe that every child can learn" and "Teachers here are skillful in implementing a variety of instructional methods" (Goddard et al., 2000, as cited in Cansoy & Parlar, 2018). Cansoy and Parlar (2018) used descriptive statistics and correlational analyses to explore the relationships between the teachers' perceptions of school leadership, the teachers' self-efficacy, and the school's collective teacher efficacy. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2; however, the reader will note that some cell values are missing from the primary source.

Table 2

Correlations between Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership, Teachers' Self-Efficacy, and Collective Teacher Efficacy

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Effective school leadership	Teacher self-efficacy	School's collective teacher efficacy
Effective school leadership (Scale = 1-7)	5.71	0.93	1.00	0.45**	0.42**
Teacher self-efficacy (Scale = 1-9)	6.92	1.09		1.00	0.49**
Collective teacher efficacy (Scale = 1-6)	4.63	0.71			1.00

Note: $N = 427$. Adapted from “Between School Principals’ Instructional Leadership Behaviors, Teacher Self-efficacy, and Collective Teacher Efficacy,” by R. Cansoy and H. Parlar, 2018.

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** $p < 0.01$

Cansoy and Parlar (2018) also conducted regression analyses to determine the best predictors of school efficacy. The results of the analyses revealed positive, significant relationships between school leadership ($p < 0.05$), teacher self-efficacy ($p < 0.05$), and school collective efficacy ($p < 0.05$). The results of this study point to the importance of school leadership and its relationship to teachers’ effectiveness and the school’s collective effectiveness. Cansoy and Parlar’s results reinforced previous research on school leaders and their ability to influence teachers’ self-efficacy by emphasizing common objectives, providing teachers with a variety of resources, and allowing teachers to be flexible within their classrooms.

Reitman and Karge (2019) conducted a grounded research study to determine the types of

support systems that were helpful to teachers and that helped teachers stay in the teaching profession. The researchers surveyed 20 men and 40 women between the ages of 28 and 49 years who were currently teaching. The researchers also interviewed 10 teachers who reported that they received satisfactory support in their first years of teaching, typically through mentoring. The researchers specifically assessed the teachers' experiences in a new teacher training program called Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA). All the subjects participated in BTSA. The services offered by BTSA included supports such as a 24/7 helpline for teachers, on-site visits, e-mails, and job-alike meetings (meetings between teachers who had jobs with similar characteristics). The researchers wanted to explore whether the BTSA assistance in the early years of teachers' career cycles was related to instructional performance and longevity in teaching. The survey used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not effective* to 5 = *very effective*) and asked questions related to demographics, program support, and strategies and techniques offered by the program. The qualitative interview questions asked participants to reflect on past professional experience and past professional support they had received. The researchers coded the interview transcripts to reflect descriptive, systematic, and reflective statements from the interviewees.

Reitman and Karge (2019) used descriptive statistics to analyze the survey responses. The teachers reported that the following BTSA services were very effective: the 24/7 helpline (48.65%), on-site visits (57.76%), and emails (75.68%). The job-alike meetings were the only BTSA service that did not receive an overwhelming percentage of very effective responses; 35.14% of the respondents reported that they did not participate in those meetings.

Reitman and Karge (2019) used triangulation to interpret the qualitative data and uncovered six primary themes related to teacher support: individual relationships, pedagogical knowledge, teachers' perceptions of professional competence, mentoring, professional learning,

and reflection. All the BTSA interviewees reported that these factors were indispensable to their longevity in the profession. Each of the themes uncovered in the interviews further pointed to valuable strategies for supporting teachers: peer mentoring, opportunities for professional development, team-building activities, time for reflection, learning communities, book studies, and more. In addition, the results of this study were consistent with SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and workers' needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. Each of these three factors can work together to motivate positive behaviors, reduce work-family conflict and dissonance, and achieve work-life balance and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Summary

The theoretical frameworks of TCC, SDT, and RCT were discussed in the context of working mothers who were also teachers. Empirical studies data related to the research question to examine studies that discussed challenges specific to mothers in the workplace, support for teachers in the workplace, the relationship between work-family conflict and burnout, and finally, supports for teacher well-being and competence were reviewed. The literature review suggested important conclusions related to the personal and professional supports of female educators who are also parents. Work-life balance challenges were greater for mothers in the workplace when their children were younger as compared to when the children were older (Namaguchi and Fetro, 2019). Women reported challenges such as not being able to work as many hours as they desired and generally experiencing greater levels of work-family conflict the younger their children were (Namaguchi and Fetro, 2019). Teachers benefit from supportive workplaces that are respectful of parental responsibilities and the time spent outside contract hours (Gainey, 2020). Regardless of women's maternal status, school administrators can offer effective systems and strategies that are program-specific to help minimize burnout (Lopez,

2017). Female educators are prone to higher levels of burnout attributed to the “second shift” when they shift roles from worker to mother. The women in Stephens’s (2019) study did not believe that work-family balance exists and is elusive. The research providing evidence of the critical supports for teacher well-being provides promise for the elusive search for balance between the two roles of educator and parent. Cansoy and Parlar (2018) reported that flexible administrators and clearly communicated objectives could help ensure teacher efficacy. Other institutional supports such as peer mentoring, professional development, and reflection time were important sources of help in the workplace.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this bounded case study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), cases separated by place, time, or some other physical boundary best fit the approach of a bounded case study. The simultaneous action of teaching while raising children in a Christian school placed a time and place boundary on the study; as such, the study's design aligned with protocols consistent with a qualitative case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Question

One research question was addressed in this study: What personal and professional factors support female educators while raising children? In this study, personal factors could include support from a family member, childcare, mindset, and social connections. Professional factors could include professional development, college education, administrative support, flexible work hours, or job sharing.

Research Design

The research design used to address the research question was a nonexperimental, qualitative case study using interview methodologies. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed five approaches for qualitative research, including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and case study. The processes are similar across these five types of qualitative research. The common elements include a research problem that proceeds to the research

question, data collection, data analysis, interpretations, and a concluding report. Case study research begins with identifying specific circumstances to be examined, analyzed, and described. In the current study, the circumstances experienced by female teachers who were raising children aligned with the protocols associated with a bounded case study as compared to other qualitative research approaches. These parameters define and describe the circumstances experienced by the participants.

Historically, the case study's origins date back to Sigmund Freud, although case study research has utility in medicine, law, behavioral sciences, and political science (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of case study research is to explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system (often described as a case) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, audiovisual material, documents, and reports (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Overview of Research Methods

Participants

The six participants in this study consisted of a non-random, known group of female teachers at a Christian school who were also parenting children. The known group consisted of teachers who met the parameters of the bounded case study: female and a parent of at least one child under the age of 18 years. All the subjects were females between the ages of 35 and 59 years when the researcher collected the data. The participants had varying levels of preparation and teaching experience in public and Christian schools.

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at Southeastern University, the researcher solicited a non-random, purposive sample from a known group of six female

Christian school teachers who were actively parenting at least one child. The researcher obtained written consent from the six teachers before conducting individual, semistructured interviews either in person, over the phone, or virtually using Zoom. The interview questions were developed in collaboration with the dissertation committee members (see Appendix C). The interviews were audio-recorded or video-recorded in Zoom with the participants' permission. When appropriate, the researcher solicited additional information by probing the subjects' responses to the interview questions.

The interviews were transcribed, and the researcher provided the transcript of the interview to each interviewee for validation, verification, and authenticity. The names of the participants were converted to pseudonyms to preserve anonymity and protect confidentiality and privacy. The researcher redacted other identifiers such as colleagues' names, names of schools, or names of children. All transcripts, interview recordings, and other electronic data related to the study were stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. In addition, the researcher maintained a digital backup of the dataset on a password-protected Microsoft OneDrive folder.

Data Analyses

Once validation was provided by the participants, the interview transcripts were analyzed using qualitative, thematic analyses to address the central research question of personal and professional factors that support educators while teaching. The researcher created a codebook that assisted in the coding of the quotes from each individual, the identification of individual themes, and cross-case analyses to identify common themes.

Measures for Ethical Protection

The student investigator participated in three research classes and was certified by the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative before the commencement of this research study. The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board of Southeastern University before data collection to ensure all necessary measures were undertaken for alignment with institutional research protocols. Each participant was provided a consent form (see Appendix B) that disclosed the nature and purpose of the research prior to data collection. The consent form also assured the participants that the researcher would preserve the subjects' anonymity and take measures to protect their privacy during data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the researcher converted the participants' names to numeric identifiers and redacted identifying information from the transcripts. The only persons who viewed the raw data were the dissertation chair and methodologist, both of whom did not know the subjects. All data records were on a password-protected computer locked in an office.

Summary

This bounded case study explored the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. This chapter presented the methodologies used to collect and analyze interview data from six Christian school educators who were actively parenting at least one child under age 18 years while teaching. The subjects consisted of a known group of Christian school educators who were selected based on their meeting the parameters of a bounded case study. Individual semistructured interviews were conducted with the six participants and were recorded, transcribed, validated, and analyzed using qualitative thematic analyses to identify individual and common themes and to address the research question.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this bounded case study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising young children. This study explored personal factors, including support from family, childcare, mindset, and social connections. Professional factors included professional development, education, mentoring, administrative support, and flexible work hours.

Research Question

One research question guided this study: What personal and professional factors support female educators while raising children?

Research Design

The research design employed in this study was nonexperimental and qualitative, using a case study approach. The purpose of case study research is to explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system (often described as a case) through detailed, in-depth data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study employed a qualitative bounded case study approach. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), cases separated by place, time, or some other physical boundary best fit the approach of a bounded case study. The simultaneous action of teaching while raising children in a Christian school placed a time and place boundary on the study; as such, the study's design aligned with protocols consistent with a qualitative case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Methods of Data Collection and Analyses

Six subjects were selected from a non-random, known group of teachers who were raising children while teaching. After receiving approval by the university's Institutional Review Board, the interviewees were contacted, and interviews were conducted during the summer of 2021. The known group consisted of teachers who met the parameters of the bounded case study: female and a parent of at least one child under the age of 18 years. Semistructured interviews were conducted after obtaining the written consent of the participants. The researcher asked the participants to recall their experiences when their children were young, and they were teaching, especially for the participants who taught while balancing motherhood earlier in their careers. The interviews were audio-recorded or video-recorded in Zoom with the participants' permission. When appropriate, the researcher solicited additional information by probing the subjects' responses to the interview questions.

The interviews were transcribed, and the researcher provided the interview transcript to each interviewee for validation, verification, and authenticity. Once validation was provided by the participants, the interview transcripts were analyzed using qualitative, thematic analyses to address the central research question of personal and professional factors that support female educators while teaching. The researcher created a codebook to distill the codes that precipitated from the transcripts. The codebook facilitated the coding of the individual transcripts, the identification of individual themes, and cross-case analyses to identify themes.

Participant Profiles

The participants in this study were selected from a known group of female teachers who were mothers and were known to the researcher. The teachers all taught for a portion or majority of their careers in a well-established Christian school and were asked to reflect on their

experiences while raising young children and teaching. Four of the six participants were long-term teachers, and two were mid-career teachers. At the time the interviews took place, three of the women were still teaching, two had stepped out of the classroom (one to pursue a higher degree and another for a minor career change), and one had shifted her responsibilities from the classroom to a staff position in institutional support. The participants' profiles are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Profiles

Participant	Primary grade-level/subject taught	Highest level of education	Number, gender, and age of children	Years of teaching experience
1	Secondary English	Bachelor's Degree	Two boys, ages 12 & 14	20 Years
2	Fifth Grade	Bachelor's Degree	1 boy, age 7 & one girl, age 6	12 Years
3	Secondary Art	Master's Degree	1 girl, 1 boy; Over 18	23 Years
4	Middle School English	Bachelor's Degree	1 girl, 1 boy; Over 18	25 Years
5	Administration	PhD Candidate	1 boy; Over 18	29 Years
6	Secondary Spanish	Master's Degree	1 girl, age 7 & 1 boy, age 5	9 Years

Participant 1 was a 40-year-old divorced mother of two middle-school boys. She began her career as a secondary English teacher but transitioned to a student support role in the school. Both of her sons were born after she was a well-established teacher. Participant 1 had 20 years of teaching experience in both a public school and the target Christian school.

Participant 2 was a married, Korean American fifth-grade teacher whose entire tenure in the educational profession took place in the target Christian school. She gave birth to her son and

daughter after she began teaching at the target school. At the time of the interview, both her children attended the same school where she was employed.

Participant 3 was Caucasian and taught art for 25 years in the target school. She was married and had begun her teaching career after her children were born. She began teaching with a bachelor's degree and earned her master's degree after teaching for 10 years. Her son and daughter were grown at the time of her interview; however, she began teaching when her youngest was in kindergarten.

Participant 4 was married and a mother to a son and a daughter who were college-age at the time of the interview. She had experience working in the district's public school system before transitioning to an English teacher position at the target Christian school after her children were born. She stopped teaching during her children's early years and returned to the classroom when her youngest was in kindergarten at the same school.

Participant 5 had served as both an administrator and teacher in the same Christian school as the other participants. She was Caucasian, married, and had one son who was born after she had established her teaching career. She held a master's degree and was working on coursework for her PhD at the time of her interview.

Participant 6 was a single, divorced mother of two school-aged children. She began teaching before her children were born and possessed a master's degree at the time of her interview. She had career experience in a public school and was a secondary Spanish teacher in the target Christian school.

Themes

Analyses of the subjects' interview transcripts uncovered three major themes: conflict, personal supports, and professional supports. The sections that follow provide the evidence that

supports these themes.

Theme 1: Conflict

The theme of conflict was predominant among all six participants. Conflicts appeared in a number of dimensions, such as the conflict related to priorities and expectations, conflict related to maternal and professional roles, and conflict from failed support systems.

The teachers in this study discussed conflicts that stemmed from perceived or projected societal expectations for them as mothers. Participant 1 recalled that she often needed to defend the reasons for working while raising children: “[I] feel like I have to defend a little bit or justify why I have always taught as a mom.” She felt judged by other nonworking mothers, sharing, “I definitely feel like the ‘mommy wars’ have been more present outside of wherever I worked. I haven’t faced that where I worked.” She also indicated that many nonworking mothers were skeptical of successfully achieving balance in the dual roles of parenting and teaching and stated that she was often interrogated:

[I’m often asked], “I don’t know how you can get everything done,” and like, “Is your house really messy, like, are you never helping your kids with homework?” You know, those kinds of questions. So, when it’s asked like [that], that tells me there’s an assumption that you think this [duality of roles] is a negative thing.

Participant 1 also reported feeling condemned by mothers who were raising children and not working outside the home: “I have definitely felt some judgment in some women’s circles, and I’ve struggled to partake in women’s ministry opportunities because so much of it happens during the day.”

Participant 2 reported feeling divided between the expectation and desire to excel at both roles of mothering and teaching but found that the time necessary to accomplish mutually

exclusive tasks led to conflict: “I was always divided, [asking myself] do I focus on doing more in the classroom? Because I can always do more when [I’m] at home and just finding the balance of, you know, where I want to invest my time.” She recognized that there was always more that could be done to achieve excellence, but the lack of time to address both roles with excellence created dissonance. She shared,

Obviously, I can always put in more time in lesson planning and in creating all these fun projects and things for the classroom, you know. But then that would [have to] be done at home. But when I’m at home, I want to spend time with the kids. So, it was just kind of like that balance of where should my attention go? Because I wanted to do well in both areas.

Participant 4 reported being able to accomplish the needs of both motherhood and teaching but recognized that the adjustments came after compromise and “shortcuts.” She reported: “I had to juggle the schedule and decide the shortcuts. Meetings did not help with that; those were challenges.” She recognized that there were pedagogical consequences to shortcuts as well: “So much of teaching is balancing. What I see with teachers is they reduce the writing assignments—those are some of the shortcuts—and it’s not good for the kids.” This teacher also suffered from the pressure to balance her role of teacher and mother in ways not necessarily governed by her personal standards but by expectations dictated by her superiors at work. She recalled a particular meeting in which her children needed her, but she was forbidden from leaving early:

I remember one time after carpool. We were running up to four o’clock. We got there [at school] at 7:30 a.m., and a department chair called a meeting at 4 p.m. [after school]. I got up—I gave it an hour, but at 5:00 o’clock, I said, “I gotta go. My kids are getting

out.” It was dark outside, but I was told [pause] to sit back down, that the meeting was not over yet, and it wasn’t in a very polite way.

Participant 5 reported conflict and dissonance created by projected expectations based on her Christian faith:

Honestly, I really remember wrestling with God because, keep in mind, I’m a young Christian, and I’m trying to figure things out, and you know, churches say all sorts of things for good reasons. You know, like the man is supposed to be the primary breadwinner and he’s supposed to take care of the family financially, etcetera. So, then I’m like, “Okay, and he’s doing the best he can, but it’s not enough.” And what do you do? And [pause] wrestling with that and being like “Okay, so then, am I a bad mom?”

She also addressed her struggle with compromise but described the compromise as prioritization to create the balance between motherhood and teaching:

I say compromise only because I think we’re taught that message, or we’re often told that all those things [working outside the home] are compromises. I don’t think it’s controversial, and that’s why I’ve always said [prioritization], because I don’t think it’s a compromise.

Despite the best efforts of participants to create a balance between their maternal and professional responsibilities, unforeseen or extreme circumstances created conflict for the working mothers in this study. Participant 1 reported a conflict that escalated exponentially during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, she experienced a minor degree of conflict when her children needed to stay home because of illness: “I’ve felt it being hard when they’re [the children] sick, and it’s difficult. You know, you first have to figure out, ‘Okay, who’s staying home today?’ You can’t just have anybody [stay at home with your children].” She recalled that

these circumstances were much worse when her sons needed to quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic: “For the first time ever, I went, ‘What do you want me to do?’ I felt really stuck. I had to teach virtually and [simultaneously] keep an eye on my kids doing [their] virtual school—oh, that has not been fun.” However, this teacher recognized that this situation was isolated and extreme:

That’s not a challenge I expect to have every year, obviously, but that [experience] has been a challenge for sure. In fact, last spring, my youngest was able to hide from me how poorly he was doing in some of his classes until the bottom was falling out. Then I was getting a phone call from his principal saying, “You need to be sitting with him when he’s in math.” I said, “Well, I cannot, because I am teaching a [virtual] class at that time.”

All the participants in the study had a consistent support structure of some kind to help them navigate teaching and motherhood; however, when these normally reliable support systems or historically dependable support systems failed, conflict increased for the participants.

Participant 1 reported conflict after the dissolution of her marriage, coupled with the expectations of her workplace. Previously, both her ex-husband and her workplace had been reliable supports that helped her balance parenting and her teaching career. She reported,

Now, being a single mother has definitely and drastically changed things. ... I am thinking of what my first slightly challenging situation was. ... I was kind of worked up about it. Both [my] boys had to quarantine because they shared a science teacher who had COVID, so both boys had to go into quarantine, and my ex-husband has been super paranoid. ... So, I called my ex-husband and asked, “Can they come to you?” and he’s like, “No, they can’t be in my house.” So, then I went to school and said, “May I have permission to work from home? I can do my EF [executive function] coaching virtually;

it's very easy to do." It [the answer] was not an immediate yes. So that was really frustrating. There was a period of 4 days that passed where I was literally in limbo.

Participant 2 taught fifth grade for 12 years at the time of the interview and was one of two fifth grade teachers in the school. She recognized that many of her colleagues simply chose to leave the profession, at least temporarily, because they were not able to achieve personal or professional balance in their lives. She recalled, "Whenever I would start working with someone [a fellow teacher], they would get married, have a baby and leave. For a while, it was like an every 2 year sort of occurrence: Get married, have a baby, and then leave." She observed that there was a carousel of turnover resulting from mothers leaving the classroom and selecting, for one reason or another, not to attempt to balance teaching and raising their children.

Theme 2: Personal Supports

Nonprofessional supports that served to diffuse the conflict experienced by the interviewees were collectively reduced to the second major theme of personal supports. The interviewees reported a number of personal supports that were key to the resolution of conflicts. Notable personal supports came from a supportive family, strategic organizational systems developed by the participant, the participants' faith, and the participants' personal fidelity to the calling of educator.

Supportive Family

The participants' personal and family dynamics connected to a number of important support systems available to them outside their work environments. Participant 1 noted that early in her marriage, she and her husband had very successful strategies that allowed her to step away from parenting and focus her efforts entirely on her duties associated with teaching: "[If] I had [lots] of grading, I realized I would need to leave the house in order for it to get done. I would

remove myself from the home environment. I trusted my ex-husband to keep the house going.” The same interviewee also recalled that her extended family was very supportive during the summer when she needed to focus on curriculum planning for the upcoming school year: “I’ve always been able to count on every summer that my kids have a place to go to one of their grandparents so I can focus on settling into school.” In addition, her spouse was a reliable support when her children were ill and needed a parent to stay home from work:

My husband just had a lot of flexibility with his work. He could work from home; he could catch up on hours. He’s not having to find a sub [substitute teacher], so he was always the first line of defense.

Participant 5 also reported a similar dynamic with her husband, saying, “[My husband], of course, could watch him [our son] when he didn’t have a job.” Participant 2 attributed the accomplishment of balance to her spouse. When asked about the personal supports that made it possible for her to teach, she answered, “Obviously, my family being supportive and my husband being supportive and understanding.” Participant 3 shared her appreciation for her husband’s support not only for her calling to teach but also for her calling as an artist as well: “My husband has always encouraged me to do what I’ve been called to do. But also, I was still making art [and that] helped a lot as well because that informed my teaching.” Participant 4 indicated that her husband was willing to reconstruct their home dynamic to allow her to take on her calling as a teacher in a way that also allowed the family to achieve its goal of sending their children to a private school:

I mean, my husband—can we talk about that? Because we were both working; my loving husband took it [the extra work] on at home. Up until that point, I did all the kids’ stuff, and we were kind of more traditional. I was home during the day; dinner would be ready

when he got home. I would do the shopping, cleaning, you know, etcetera. He was so very supportive when I went back [into the classroom]. It was a joint decision. We decided that we needed the money because of private schooling [for their children], and so I had invested in that. I had given my wages for that. We had to divide the work and labor at home. Both the public school and the private school held meetings on the same day of the week and the same week of the month, so I could always plan, and my husband could help out. He often helped out.

Familial support also came from extended families. Participant 1 recalled the familial support that came from shared experiences: “I have a lot of educators on both sides of my family, so people have been supportive of my being a teacher but also have just been encouraging and have given up their own time.” The presence of family in the local area served as notable support for several participants. Participant 2 attributed her balance to the presence of a large number of local family members:

I think one of the factors that enabled me to continue [teaching] was having family in the area. If I’m working, I can’t just leave the classroom if my kid is sick. Having my parents and my in-laws all in the area for them to watch the kids at the last minute was one of the biggest blessings going through that transition. ... And my husband has a big family; he has like a hundred family members just in the immediate area.

Strategic Organizational Systems

Strategic organizational systems developed by the participants also proved indispensable to their ability to balance parenting and teaching. Participant 1 mentioned methodical planning and strategic deployment of tasks:

I will say it [successful balance] comes down to having systems and processes in place. I

think the ones [mothers] who can't do it [work and raise children] are the ones who just don't excel in those particular areas, you know? I planned out all my meals for 2 weeks. And then, I made the grocery list, and I wrote the meals for the week on a chalkboard so I would know exactly what we're having. On Sunday afternoons, I set aside 3 hours, and I'm prepping food for the week. Some people are like, "I don't wanna do that." So I think it's just forethought. There is organization, putting other systems in place. Do I have to rearrange more rides for my own kids? Yes, I do. But it's just being willing to ask for help and having good systems.

Participant 3 noted that the reliability of whatever system that worked for balancing a career with motherhood was likely to be an invaluable resource: "It [balance] really depends on the support system that the person has, and I think a lot of the longevity [in teaching] has to do with your support system." Participant 4 noted that sometimes a reliable strategy required making compromises and prioritizing decisions that benefited her children while still allowing her to be an effective teacher at the same time:

I had to juggle the schedule and decide the shortcuts. Being in the same school with my kids was really, really a heart saver for me. In my part-time job, I was going in early. I couldn't stay late, so I'd have to go [in] early. I didn't wanna bring work home. If you can get a job like that, that's wonderful.

Participant 5 reported that finding educational opportunities to help her grow professionally needed to fit her family's schedule:

Thankfully, I found a master's program where you're there on-site for three summers: 3 weeks for three summers. Then you do schoolwork [assignments] during the school year [remotely]. What I loved is that you applied the schoolwork to your settings. It was very

much a practical, practice-based master's in educational administration and leadership. It worked perfectly because I could find a place for my son during the summer through a variety of ways, and then the rest of the year, I didn't have to worry about it. I'll tell you how I managed it. When I started pursuing my master's, I made a promise to myself and to God that I would not work on it until my son went to sleep because I was not going to let it change my time with him.

A reliable system of childcare was indispensable for teaching and parenting at the same time. Participant 6 reported:

I didn't feel like I was missing too much of the baby stage [while working]. I had a great nanny in the area who was willing to watch my daughter. I felt like she was safe. And she [the child] was happy.

When recalling a time when her husband was between jobs, Participant 6 noted that reliable childcare gave her the peace of mind needed to successfully balance her responsibilities:

Then [when her husband was watching our son], he couldn't go out and apply for jobs. So, we felt we had to find someone to watch our son so that [my husband] would be available to go look for jobs. So that's what we did, and it was really hard. Then we moved. Again, through church members, thankfully, we found this wonderful, wonderful preschool that would take children three and older. It was a faith-based preschool, and it was right on my way to school. So that's where our son went up through kindergarten, and then he went to our school, so that was phenomenal.

Faith as a Personal Support System

Several participants in this study referred to reliance on their faith to persevere through conflicts when it was difficult to achieve balance or when the way to achieve balance was

unclear. When asked what personally supported her efforts to teach while raising children, Participant 2 indicated, “Obviously my faith, just because of the whole sanctification process of being able to handle a load at school and then having to come home. It’s a lot to handle.” She also recognized, “This is the season that God called me to, and so I’m thankful for the grace and the strength to be able to do it.” Participant 5 recognized the importance of leaning into her faith to reconcile the dissonance experienced when attempting to prioritize the tasks to be balanced as a working parent:

I remember going back through scripture and looking at the Proverbs 31 woman. She’s in the market. She’s making money, and I’m like, “Okay, okay.” You know, stuff like that. But it was really hard because I was really wrestling with it, and I still don’t have all the answers. But I finally just had to give it to God, and I’ve given it to God ever since then. I’ve always said that if there were times I felt I could stay home [financially], I would. But there never were [those times]. I would trust that just as God is providing that way for us as a family, He is going to provide care for my son, and that’s what I finally had to recognize and come to an understanding of. And He [God] really did. My son has zero horror stories about any of the care situations that he was in. You know what I mean? So, it was hard. I’m not gonna lie, very hard.

When asked for suggestions about how to best support mothers as they navigate their teaching careers, Participant 5 encouraged leaning into one’s faith system: “First, go to God. I mean, lean into Him. Lean into His Word.” She also referenced this same support system to diffuse the dissonance of being a mother and teacher:

This one [idea] is kind of controversial. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it. Be willing and okay to compromise. Here’s what I mean by that: Don’t compromise in terms

of your walk with Christ or things like that. But I think that it is really easy to live our faith works-based. You're not allowing for Him to work through things that aren't perfect. Where we're weak is where He shines, right? I had to be like, "No, it's okay to compromise. I don't have to have the perfect birthday party every year for the child, the perfect, you know, just all of those things." So, that's a piece of it. ... I kind of prioritize what is most important. The most important was my time with God, so my devotions were early, early in the morning. There was a time period where they were later at night, but I had to prioritize that. Then I had to prioritize time with my husband, time with my son, which often meant the schoolwork was done after people went to bed. I compromised on sleep. So that's what I mean by compromise.

Participant 1 recognized the need for mothers to be ministered to rather than marginalized because of their work schedule. Referencing her efforts to start a ministry for working mothers, she noted that they needed access to support: "I've raised some clamor about that [support for working moms] at church going, 'Hey, don't forget about the working moms' for women's groups or other events. Things like that."

Confidence in Personal Identity

Participants in this study attributed their desires to teach as a part of their personal convictions that they had been called to be an educator and that the benefits of remaining in the classroom were important to their overall development and well-being. Five of the six participants reported that their experiences as a mother made them better teachers; conversely, being teachers also made them better mothers. Participant 1 shared, "I've always known that the classroom was where I was supposed to be. So even before I had kids, I knew that I would probably be doing it [motherhood] very differently." She also shared that when she was out of

the classroom, she felt an uncomfortable level of dissonance because she was not doing what she was called to do. She stated: “I sat out one school year, the year my first son was born, because we were moving. It was the most restless school year I’ve ever had (pause). It was a very restless year.” When the opportunity to pursue a different career was presented, she could not find peace: “[I] took the [new] job, and then two weeks before I was supposed to start, [I] literally woke up in the middle of the night and went, ‘No, that’s not what I do. I’m a teacher.’” In that situation, she discussed the personal supports from others who recognized and affirmed her calling as a teacher: “I’ve always been in places, public and private (schools), where it’s like, ‘You need that time, you take the time [for your family].’ All of my family also has always supported me working full time.”

Participant 2 also experienced dissonance when she was out of the classroom: “When I was on maternity leave and was home, that kind of solidified that I needed to be out of the home [laughs]. I am just a very—I like to be productive; I like to be moving, you know?” She indicated that her mental health benefited from active involvement with students in her classroom: “So me just being home, I was like, ‘I can’t do this mentally, I just can’t.’ Even though it was hard to go back to work, it’s just my personality—I needed to.” Participant 5 likewise reported that she recognized her love of education as part of her identity: “I remember getting the master’s because I love school. Be it teaching or a student, I love school; it’s just who I am.” Participant 6 echoed this sentiment and recognized that she felt called to be a teacher: “Well, I have known I wanted to be a teacher since I was in undergrad [because] that is where my gifts pointed, and my skills were gonna lead me and where all my experience until then had been.”

Participant 2 noted that teaching was not only good for her mental health, but the benefit was holistic. Her family’s well-being and her spiritual growth as a teacher and as a parent were

best supported by her career. She continued, “Obviously, financially, it’s best for my family for me to continue to work.” Her career was important to her personal and professional growth:

Being a teacher and being a parent, you also learn from the students that you teach and the parenting styles. Once I became a parent, I feel like I was able to teach better.

Because before, I was very young, and I was like, “lesson plan this” and focusing on what I needed to teach. But not so much the child, you know? But once I became a parent, I was always just imagining, “What would I do if this was my child? How would I want [things to be addressed]?” It [her teaching] was more geared toward the child than my plans, and my perspective kind of changed. When I see a struggling student, I think, “What if this was my child?” So that was also helpful, too.

Participant 3 shared that reconnecting with her calling and passion for her subject matter pulled her out of a season of stagnation into a fruitful season of teaching. She said, “I think I lost touch with my subject matter and my love of art.” After completing a graduate program 10 years into her teaching career, she was able to connect with the joy of her calling as a teacher:

So, I re-found my love for artmaking, which greatly made me a completely different teacher. So, I think the personal experiences with the subject matter that I was teaching and then bringing those experiences into the classroom [were valuable]. I think it [the graduate program] really enriched my teaching and helped me become a better teacher.

Participant 3 also recognized the power of her calling to teach. When asked to advise teachers who are struggling to balance motherhood and teaching, she suggested, “Don’t lose your identity in the minutia of teaching. Constantly keep reminding yourself about why you are teaching.” Similar to other participants, she also recognized the potential mothers and teachers have in the classroom:

And I think, too, when you're a mom and a teacher, you approach your classroom with a different mindset. Not just teaching your subject matter, but also character development and personal formation and all those other things come alongside. I think it [teaching] comes naturally to some people who don't have children, but I think when you're a mom, and you're a teacher, you're never not a mom. You know? You're always sort-of mothering in some way, but you realize the difference between coddling a student and holding them accountable. You can do it in a loving way. "Students will rise to the level that the bar is set," is what I always say. So, if you don't set the bar high, character-wise, subject matter-wise, they're going to rise to the bar that is set. If the bar is low, they're going to rise to that.

Participant 4 shared that her experience as a teacher in a private school allowed her to continue her maternal role while her children attended the same school. She began her career in a public school but made the shift to a private school when her children started school: "[I worked] part-time with the county [public school] and then 9 years full time [in a] private school so I could be with my kids. So, a lot of my career was shaped by that." She shared that this arrangement helped her achieve her calling as a teacher and as a mother, which was particularly helpful to her emotionally:

Being in the same school with my kids was really, really a heart-save for me. I wanted to be with my kids. I wanted to be part of their day as much as I could. So, if I was gonna be working, I wanted to be with them. That was very, very important to me. They really shaped my career.

Participant 6 shared a similar value system when she taught in the same school that her children attended. She stated that teaching was well designed to work well with motherhood:

Once I had children, I would seek out a place where my children would be happy or have a schooling option that was either nearby or at the same place. It made a huge difference in my decision to continue at that school. So maybe it didn't impact my decision on whether to teach or not. Although it does actually, knowing that I can have summers and holidays with them. And really get extra quality time in that way. That [benefit] mattered a lot for the teaching career. Just the way that it molds and fits with being a parent is really beautiful. It's kind of always been in the background, "Oh, I can switch to something else." But if I did, what would that mean for my time with my kids?

Participant 5 also recognized that becoming a parent improved her understanding of the classroom:

One, I'm really thankful I became a parent because I think I became a much better teacher being a parent. In fact, I know that there were things that I thought I understood about kids as a teacher before I became a parent; when I became a parent, I realized, "Nope, I did not understand." And I hope that made me more gracious, which is a good thing.

The personal supports reported by the research participants ranged from family support to strategic organizational systems to confidence in their personal identity as teachers. These supports originated from the participants' personal family situation, cognitive efforts to employ highly functioning habits and planning strategies that enable work-life balance, and the encouragement that stemmed from their confidence in their identity as teachers. Other notable supports originated from certain elements of the target school itself, especially the teachers' place of employment.

Theme 3: Professional Supports

The participants in this study reported different and helpful support systems or strategies that made for a greater balance between their teaching responsibilities and parenting. These systems and strategies directly connected to the workplace, professional development opportunities, prior teacher training, and supportive administrators. The systems and strategies mentioned by the interviewees were distilled into the theme of professional supports. Analyses of the interview data revealed that professional supports came from strong, understanding, and relatable leadership; reliable, professional systems; teacher-training programs (either college preparation, mentorship, or professional development training); the fellowship or sisterhood with other teachers in the same walk of life; and student connections.

School leadership was described by the interviewees as a supportive mechanism when leadership was dependable and demonstrated awareness and understanding of the conflicts and responsibilities parents shoulder while teaching. Participant 1 reported a supportive and understanding hierarchy of leadership in her school:

She (my department chair) also had a really good understanding of the balance that was needed. She would often tell us as a department, “You know, I’m not a mom, but I have a family, you know? So, I understand.” So, she always was very family-oriented [and the department chair would say], “Do what you need to do.”

Participant 1 added that these leadership qualities were invaluable for supporting working mothers and advised leaders to “make sure that the environment, like the ethos and culture of the place where you’re going to be, is one that is family-oriented.”

Participant 4 valued the support from her school’s leadership and saw the role of leadership as indispensable for balancing the responsibilities: “My biggest advice for principals:

Protect [teachers'] time and make all of the [professional development] trainings very applicable." She also praised the efforts the leadership employed to streamline teachers' work:

But the best [adjustment] was when the principals actually appropriated common planning time and relieved us of our [teaching] duties at that point, and we had 45-minute meetings. They [the principals] even made some of them [the meetings] virtual, so you could watch it on your individual time, which was the best of the best. So that's the best thing that anybody did for us as far as protecting our time during the day.

In her case, these efforts allowed her to collaborate with peers in her grade level to discuss ideas or concerns with shared students and to plan for manageable assignment loads during dedicated times during contract hours.

Participants 1 and 6 reported that working part-time was an institutional initiative that could make the balance of teacher responsibilities with maternal responsibilities easier to achieve. Participant 6 shared, "I would encourage seeking out part-time work, if possible, because I think that [work schedule] offers a great balance of giving you room for flexibility with your children." About her personal experience, she said,

When I had a newborn, I was teaching part-time at the private school. So, I would go in each day, maybe around 9 a.m. and maybe be done by like 1 p.m. or maybe even a little less time than that. I loved it. I loved getting a chance to go in and use my creativity and get to see the students.

The interviewees in this study reported that teacher preparation programs and mentoring were helpful in supporting the teachers professionally. Participant 4 reflected that professional development opportunities during the school day were very helpful:

I had training during the school day [as opposed to her own time]. The county [district]

provided stipends for education such as conferences, so I would go to conferences. The things that I could apply right away to the classroom were the best. Most times, the school even paid for it, and they gave time off that was a part of our professional leave. It [the professional development] had long-lasting effects for my students 'cause it was all about the content and how we teach it. [Other] professional factors included my special education training classes, which were supplemented in small part financially by a stipend from the public school.

Participant 6 shared that she benefited from similar training as well:

I've gone to some summer learning webinars with a national organization for language and have gathered so much from all the ideas that have been shared with me. And I think that [professional development] would be a valuable resource for young parents who are in education—to find either a Facebook page with a group in their content area or join some sort of national organization and get a membership there to make use of professional learning opportunities.

Mentorship, both past and present, provided important professional supports to the teachers in this study. Participant 6 noted, “Receiving encouragement and guidance and mentorship meant a lot to me.” Participant 3 found her inspiration to become a teacher and attributed the success of the department she built to her high school mentor: “I was beginning the [art] program for the middle school and the high school, so I was kind of on my own. So I reached back to my high school art teacher who was actually my inspiration for becoming a teacher.” Participant 5 attributed her success as a teacher to participating in a district mentorship program:

You were assigned a year-long mentor for your first year [of teaching]. It was fabulous.

There were targeted times in which we met. They [the mentor] observed the classroom, they gave you feedback, and those observations had nothing to do with the formal observations [by the school administration].

Two types of professional relationships were uncovered during analyses of the interview transcripts and reported by all the participants: connections to colleagues and connections to students. The connections with students and colleagues were unanimously held as beneficial and supportive. The connection to colleagues in similar circumstances was a supportive and instructive professional connection for Participant 2: “You know, I mean our school is such a great community. I was able to learn a lot about just being a parent, you know?” She also recognized that watching other teachers navigate parenting and teaching before she became a parent was instructive:

Being able to teach for a few years before kids came and being able to see other teachers that did have babies and continued to work was helpful too. I don’t know if you remember [name deleted]. She had her daughter before I had my kids, so that was helpful. She helped me with just basics; how to handle this and that.

When recalling her experience of re-entering the classroom after considerable time had passed since her formal teacher training, Participant 3 recalled, “Other teachers really encouraged me to develop lessons, how to plan, and how to grade; those kinds of things. So, I really relied on my colleagues for that.” Participant 4 added that support from colleagues could make or break a teacher’s experience in a school: “I do think support as a teacher is everything. Support by other teachers that can get you through like a friend in life. You only need one or two people like that in your corner.”

The colleague connection was especially helpful when the circumstances were similar,

either in the present or past. Participant 5 recalled her experience with a school leader who was in a similar situation of balancing motherhood and a teaching career; in addition, her good friend who worked in the target school had children close in age to her son:

My friend [name deleted]. There were years as a mom where she didn't have to work, but then she did have to work as a single parent 'cause she was a widow. Her husband died when her kids were still at home. And so, she understood that and was really helpful to me. My first year at our new school, [name deleted] was a new mom. Now her oldest was two years older. I just went to her and remember meeting with her being like, "How do you do this?" So, it was really reaching out to godly women who had some similar experiences and listening to them and just following their advice. ... I would say those were really the key people in that process. So, one [colleague] was currently [parenting], and one was older and had already [completed parenting]. I think there's value in both of those [types of support].

Participant 6 echoed these sentiments: "I really think being in a community of other teachers makes a big difference. I kind of got the momentum I [needed] from being around other educators."

Participant 2 noted that the power of professional relationships extended to the students: "Being a teacher and being a parent, you learn from the students that you teach." When Participant 3 was asked to reflect on her underlying vision for being a teacher, she attributed [her vision] to the students and the potential she had to impact their lives in a positive way: "For me, it's the students." She related that one of her students was struggling with life challenges: "Art and just the act of artmaking changed her [the student]. It saved her, is what she says. It's those kinds of things. You find these kids who need to be found." Participant 4 shared her appreciation

for the privilege of watching the students grow as they progressed up from her classrooms to higher levels in her K through twelfth-grade private school:

I used to come home, and I would tell my husband, “[Name] did this or [name] did this,” and my heart was so into it. I just wanted them to succeed. As I got older and wiser, there was a joy in seeing the kids in first through twelfth grade in the same location. There was a joy seeing that what happened in seventh grade wasn’t the end result; there were so many good things that happened in eighth and ninth and tenth grade. Just see this Pigpen guy who couldn’t stay organized with all these papers in sixth grade go to Notre Dame and be the top of his class. It’s amazing!

Participant 5 shared that the connection with students and their families sustained her during some challenging periods in her parenting journey:

I’ll never forget, during the first year, there was one night where I got no sleep. I would teach and then [drive] afternoon carpool. One of the parents at our school just sensed my [distress] as she’s coming through carpool. She just looked at me, and she’s like, “Did you get any sleep last night?” Then she said, “I’m bringing you dinner tomorrow.” I mean, it’s just so sweet, you know?

The factors that supported teachers professionally stemmed from their professional training prior to beginning of their career, professional development during their career, and the supportive community that existed in the target school itself where the participants worked. These supports, though from the professional community, supported these women by encouraging them as they persevered to achieve a balance between their personal and professional lives.

Evidence of Quality

The purpose of case study research is to explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system (often described as a case) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple choices of information such as interviews, observations, audiovisual material, documents, and reports (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study research begins with identifying a specific circumstance to be analyzed and described. In the current study, teachers' perceptions of raising children while teaching aligned with the protocols associated with a bounded case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During data collection and analysis, the researcher remained mindful of her own preconceptions and assumptions of the lived experiences of teachers who are parents and bracketed her own perspectives to examine and report the evidence with fidelity to the research question. To further limit potential bias, the dissertation committee monitored the research process. Data collection occurred through interviews of the participants using a pre-approved set of interview questions. The researcher deviated from these when further clarity was required to understand the interviewees' responses. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and validated by the interviewees prior to analysis. The researcher maintained field notes to support the interview transcripts and notated the ideas that immediately connected to the research question during the interview.

The interview data were first analyzed by reviewing the transcripts as a whole, page-by-page. The researcher categorized the coded concepts into broad categories that were then collapsed into themes. A codebook was developed and maintained to organize the codes into a systematic collection of ideas and subsequent themes that were identified in the interview transcripts. The dissertation committee was integrally involved in the interpretation and reporting

of the evidence derived from analyses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. This study explored personal factors, including support from family, childcare, mindset, and social connections. Professional factors included professional development, college education, mentoring, administrative support, and flexible work hours. Three major themes were observed related to female educators who are also parents: conflict, personal supports, and professional supports. The conflict between the two roles was evidenced by circumstances that required mutually exclusive attention to maternal responsibilities and work responsibilities and the participants' personal convictions and societal role expectations. Personal supports included support from a family member, childcare options, personal mindset, and social connections between colleagues and students. Professional supports included supportive school leadership, professional development, community connections including relationships with colleagues, students, and parents of students, as well as flexible and part-time work hours. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter 5.

V. DISCUSSION

The goal of this bounded case study was to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. This study explored personal factors, including support from a family member, childcare, mindset, and social connections, and differentiating these from professional factors such as professional development, college education, administrative support, or flexible work hours. This case study employed a qualitative bounded case study approach. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), cases separated by place, time, or some other physical boundary best fit the approach of a bounded case study. The simultaneous action of teaching while raising children in a Christian school placed a time and place boundary on the study; as such, the study's design aligned with protocols consistent with a qualitative case study approach.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used a known sample of six females who met the criteria of a classroom teacher and parent. Semistructured interviews were conducted with each of the six participants using the approved interview questions (see Appendix C). The audio from the interviews was transcribed, and each interviewee reviewed her transcript for accuracy and meaning. The researcher then coded and analyzed the transcripts to identify connections to the research question and primary themes.

Summary of Results

Analyses of the interview data uncovered three primary themes: conflict, personal supports, and professional supports. The conflict between the dual roles of teacher and parent was consistently discussed by this group of teachers. All the interviewees discussed circumstances that created dissonance or that resulted in difficult situations that were less than ideal, leading to conflict. Some participants reported conflicts that were directly resolved by support systems, whereas other conflicts went unresolved and were directly related to a specific lack of support.

The participants also reported that elements from their personal lives helped to support them in their maternal and teacher roles. These supports included help from a spouse or extended family members, intentional, strategic organizational systems, faith in God, prayer, relationships with colleagues and students, and the women's personal identities as both teacher and parent.

The theme of professional supports revealed the importance of helpful systems and relationships in the workplace, professional development opportunities, supportive administrators, part-time work, mentorships, and relationships with colleagues and students,

Discussion by Research Question

One research question was addressed in this study: What personal and professional factors support female educators while raising children? Both professional and personal supports were frequently discussed in the context of strategies and systems to minimize, eliminate, or diffuse conflict between the two roles. These findings are consistent with RCT (Katz & Kahn, 1966), which discusses the high-stakes responsibilities of teaching and parenting that compete for teachers' attention, energy, and time. Johnston and Swanson (2007) found that intensive mothering strategies were more common among women in academic settings. All participants in

this study reported that the roles of both motherhood and educator constituted their personal identities and their calling, despite the conflicts and cognitive dissonance created by the two roles. The factors discovered in this study may help supervisors, leaders, and policymakers provide the needed support for women in similar circumstances.

Personal Supports

The availability of family support was a key factor in personal supports. Tangible family support was provided by family members locally, and emotional and moral support was provided by family members and colleagues who were acquainted with the demands of a classroom teacher and parent. Participant 2 had many family members in the local area that alleviated stress when the two roles of parenting and teaching conflicted. Participant 1 also indicated that her husband's job flexibility allowed him to be the first line of defense when one of their boys was sick. Without strong support systems, parents often face conflict when choosing between the job and the welfare of the child.

The collapse of familial supports introduced stressful conflicts for the teachers in this study. For example, Participant 1 shared that after her divorce from her husband, she experienced high levels of conflict when he was no longer able to provide childcare when their children were ill. The school quarantine measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic magnified the stressors. Participant 1 shared that her boys were exposed to COVID-19 and needed to quarantine; however, her ex-husband was unwilling to care for the children due to the exposure. This circumstance was further complicated during remote learning since her sons' classes met at the same time as her own classes. She was unable to provide the supervision that her sons needed. In this teacher's case, the failure of family support systems placed demands that only she could fulfill.

Strategic organizational systems were also personal supports enabling the teachers to reduce conflict. For example, Participant 1 planned and cooked numerous meals on the weekends, thus allowing some of the home-based tasks to be self-sustainable during the work week. The teachers reported that their organizational habits of planning, executing, and evaluating activities enabled the women to better juggle dual roles. Preemptive planning helped the teachers to balance the responsibilities of their roles. However, planning did not necessarily guarantee a solution for unforeseen circumstances; thus, limits exist to this type of support system. Participant 4 shared that she employed grading techniques and student peer-work to help make her classroom function more efficiently without losing efficacy to make more time available for parenting.

Parents who teach also develop important personal supports to reduce stress and maximize efficiency. Childcare arrangements, for example, should be developmentally appropriate, safe, and located close to the workplace or home to assist working parents to focus on their workplace roles. Participant 5 shared that quality childcare was critical to her well-being and teaching; she took comfort knowing her son was getting the care he needed to maximize his growth and development. In addition, the interviewee reported that the location where her son would spend the day was on the way to her school, reducing the pressure of time-consuming transportation concerns. Another participant stated that her child attended the same school where she worked, thus reducing commute time and stress and providing opportunities to connect with her child periodically during the school day.

Another personal support described by the women in this study was their personal identities. Recognition that the roles of mother and parent were mutually beneficial was considered important personal support for the teachers. This result is consistent with the

competency elements of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and maybe even more powerful than a tangible support system. The women in this study expressed confidence in their appointments as parents and teachers. The two roles transcended the conflict and lack of supportive factors, allowing them to rest on their faith rather than on their support systems. This confidence, in turn, motivated the women to persist during challenges and conflicts presented by the two roles; the participants recognized that perseverance in each role mutually empowered and equipped the other.

Professional Supports

A number of professional factors were reported by the participants to be supportive in their teacher-parenting roles. Professional development and degree-earning opportunities were especially helpful. Participant 3 indicated that her relationship with a former high-school mentor provided a springboard from which to establish the art program in her school. Later, connecting the art program to the content material she taught proved to be a beneficial reset for her as she struggled with stagnation in her career. Participant 4 shared that her training from the school district equipped her with the necessary skills to better serve students in her classroom. The additional compensation she earned, as well as the practicality and applicability of the new knowledge, was a bonus. She reported that offering professional development during her contracted hours made the in-service training a joy rather than an added burden. This finding was similar to O'Brien's (2018) study indicating that professional development during contract hours was especially valued by teachers as a means to reduce stress. Gainey (2020), in her study of teacher stressors, also found that work outside of contract hours can become a negative rather than supportive factor for teachers. Participant 5's pursuit of her master's degree was a chance to pursue her love of learning and allowed her to attend classes during a time when she was not

teaching (i.e., during summer).

The subjects in this study also reported that pedagogical skills gained in their teacher-training programs were powerful professional supports for teachers who were raising children. A strong foundation in the necessary skills required of a competent teacher serves to develop a professional who may be better able to anticipate certain conflicts and challenges common to the profession. Preemptive knowledge of conflicts and possible solutions allowed teachers to anticipate and be prepared to troubleshoot challenges. Avoiding derailment and burnout saved the teachers' cognitive energy and time for fulfilling their other roles outside the classroom.

Part-time work opportunities were reported by Participants 4 and 6 to be helpful, professional supports. However, part-time opportunities were only available in the target school when the circumstances of both the teachers and the institution were mutually beneficial. Part-time work opportunities at the target school were offered to any teacher or staff member who was interested and when the accommodation aligned with the needs of the school.

All the women in this study reported degrees of beneficial community support. This support stemmed from the administration, colleagues, and student connections. The teachers shared that capable administrators were responsible for establishing the work culture and climate, especially the creation of family-friendly environments. Participant 1 enjoyed a supportive department chair who frequently inquired about the teacher's family and encouraged her to feel free to do what she needed to fulfill her responsibilities. Conversely, Participant 4 did not perceive the same level of support, creating conflict between her maternal and teacher roles. Participant 4 discussed a long meeting after school that went overtime and her need to leave the meeting to retrieve her young children. When she voiced this need, she was refused permission to depart.

Community connections to colleagues and students were warmly recalled by all the participants in the study. Connections to coworkers provided a sisterhood of support as women navigated the blending of teaching with parenting. Participant 5 shared that she benefitted from the wisdom of other teachers who had previously walked a similar path but whose children were grown. These findings were consistent with the professional supports offered by the school community. Deci and Ryan (2008) reported that community was an important factor influencing intrinsic motivation. Women in similar communities can be encouraged and built up by these types of relationships. School connections allow teachers to be supported professionally by learning and observing other successful women as they navigate similar circumstances. These connections provide a group of friends who can offer moral support and encouragement as teachers persevere through conflict.

The connection to other members of the community, namely students and their families, was another important professional support among the teachers in this study. These results align with a qualitative study by Kokka (2016), who found that teachers stayed in difficult schools largely due to their desire to maintain connections with students. In this study, the relationships with students and their families sometimes provided teachers an opportunity to see the return of their investments in the classroom. Participant 4 warmly remembered how much she enjoyed watching her students mature after they left her middle school classroom: “There was a joy seeing that what happened in seventh grade wasn’t the end result; there were so many good things that happened in eighth, ninth, and tenth grades.” This return on investment is also connected to the personal support of recognizing one’s calling to the vocation to teach. Observation of other teachers’ work and the results can be a powerful learning opportunity and motivator.

Study Limitations

This study was designed as a bounded case study; therefore, the results of the research are not designed or intended to be generalizable. This study was exploratory in nature and included six participants in a singular target Christian school. As such, the results may not extend to other female teachers raising children in different circumstances. Two of the mothers in this study were single mothers; thus, the findings unique to their support systems and experiences may not apply to all similar circumstances in additional studies. The study was also limited to mothers who were raising children as young as kindergarten age. The supports needed by mothers raising older or much younger children may be different than the findings in this study. Research by Namaguchi and Fetro (2019) indicates that work-family conflict presents in different degrees depending on the age of the children while the mothers are working; hence, the age of the participants' children is a limitation of this study.

Implications for Future Practice

Teachers who are parents require a system of personal and professional supports to negotiate and thrive in the many roles required. These supports are, in fact, human resources. The discovery of some of the factors that supported the six participants in this study has provided insight into the development of a supportive working environment that minimizes conflict and enables female teachers who are parents to thrive.

No workplace can be conflict-free; however, strategic efforts to minimize conflict may lower teacher turnover and protect an institution's investment in its faculty and resources and can be implemented when on-boarding new hires (Gagné & Deci, 2005). School-based efforts to minimize conflict are investments that can preserve valuable human capital. The cost to employ particular supports should be judged by rigorous evaluation to determine the congruence between

the institution's financial resources and its overall efforts to maximize teacher retention. In addition, the school's mission and vision should be carefully aligned with efforts to retain teachers and rigorously evaluated to determine whether the efforts provide conflict-minimalizing supports.

Family support was found to be critically important to the balancing of maternal and teacher roles. In addition, the teacher's own organizational habits employed in the classroom can be beneficial to help balance the responsibilities associated with maternal and teacher roles. Meal planning, meeting schedules, and planning for the myriad needs of both the workplace and the home can assist teachers in balancing the dual roles.

The personal support of faith and prayer helped motivate the subjects in this study. The cultivation of faith-based practices in the workplace can be encouraged through book studies, church, or community involvement. In this way, perseverance in the meaningful roles of teacher and parent can be validated. Teachers should seek out connections and relationships with people who value the same calling. Participant 1 recalled that many acquaintances in her church did not work outside the home and tended to meet her introduction as a working mom with surprise and disbelief. Therefore, parenting teachers should seek relationships that support their ideas. Many churches have ministries geared not only toward women in general but also address the experiences of a subgroup of women (e.g., miscarriage support, widow-care). Churches could develop a ministry outreach to working mothers to encourage them.

Several professional factors can support parents who are teaching. Too often, professional supports are imposed on teachers top-down rather than reflecting input from teachers, thus reducing their effectiveness. The ability to maintain an awareness of the culture fostered by the institution can be helpful. Such awareness may allow leaders to anticipate needed supports and

deploy them. School leaders can thoughtfully motivate teachers to deploy effective supports. In the case of Christian or other private schools, teachers with school-age children can be offered tuition discounts to support and retain teachers. When considering the findings suggested by this research study, school leaders at all levels (e.g., division and department chairs) can encourage initiatives that serve to create a relational school environment.

An awareness of TCC (Burke et al., 1987) can help administrators strategically set up mentorships between new teachers and seasoned teachers to foster relationships, learning, and professional development as teachers mature in their career. However, the subjects in this study suggested that many working mothers of child-bearing age cycle in and out of the faculty community. Strong communication can help teachers maintain relationships with colleagues and supervisors when personnel dynamics change. Relational working environments can make it easier to employ personal and professional supports when teachers need help and motivation to continue. Human resources can help the employee while protecting the institution from expensive recruitment efforts when teachers exit the workplace due to role conflicts.

Teachers and administrators can foster relationships between colleagues to encourage opportunities for supporting one another. Faculty luncheons, shared lunch periods, professional learning communities, and shared responsibilities may help to foster these supportive connections. Professional development opportunities offered in small groups during shared planning times are also important means to ask questions, share experiences and strategies, and reduce stress. Based on the results of this study, these opportunities should be made available within the teachers' contract hours.

Professional development helped participants in this study reconnect with their subject matter and be better prepared to serve the specific needs of their students. The planning of these

events should involve teachers as well as administrators to make the professional development practical and applicable to teachers' daily work. Leaders should avoid the tendency to create professional development that becomes "one more thing to do" in a teacher's list of responsibilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted in a target school with a known sample of six female educators who were raising children at some point in their teaching careers. Future studies related to this research could include a similar design in public schools to compare the results. A quantitative survey could be developed to explore the perceptions of successful supports for mothers and fathers who are teaching.

TCC served as a theory base for this research and indicated that there were unique elements associated with each stage in a teacher's career. Considering what is known from the theory of TCC (Burke et al., 1987), a study designed to examine the perceptions of teachers at different stages of their development with regard to parenting and teaching could be conducted. A longitudinal study could examine ways work culture has changed for females in schools or other institutions over time.

This study explored the experiences of teachers who were mothers. A study with a similar design could examine fathers' perceptions of personal and professional supports in the workplace and possible relationships to females' perceptions. Though the discoveries of this study are beneficial for furthering the literature on working mothers, more research is needed to better understand how parents can achieve work-life balance while they invest in raising their children.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher explored the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising children. It was discovered that there were challenges experienced by the participants when their priorities and the expectations set before them were not in harmony, when their support systems failed, and when the maternal and teacher roles conflicted. Key supports help to resolve or avoid these conflicts. Personal factors such as a supportive family and extended family members assist teachers as they balance the responsibilities of the dual roles of teacher and parent. Personal factors in the workplace included teachers' strategic organizational systems, planning, and reliable childcare arrangements. The teachers in this study had a strong sense of their personal identities and vocation as both teachers and parents, which helped them to persevere through challenges. Professional supports included understanding and relatable leadership, professional systems, part-time work opportunities, professional development, degree-continuation opportunities, and colleague and student relationships within the institution. Though not generalizable across a broad spectrum, this study served to extend the growing body of research on working mothers.

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Appendix A

Solicitation E-Mail for Participation

The study is designed to explore the personal and professional factors that support you as a teacher and a parent. Please consider participating in my dissertation study. I am seeking participants who:

- Self-identify as female;
- Have taught students in grades K-12 as classroom teachers;
- Cared for children between infancy and age 6 while teaching either full or part time;
- Are willing to participate in a 1-hour interview to discuss your experiences as a teacher and parent.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Southeastern University. Any questions or comments related to the study can be addressed to Christine Dean at cmdean@seu.edu or Dr. Patty LeBlanc, the dissertation chair, at pbleblanc@seu.edu.

If you meet the criteria above and would like to participate, please respond to the researcher via email to indicate your willingness. The researcher will contact you to schedule a mutually agreeable time for the interview. The interviews may be conducted either face-to-face, by phone, or by Zoom meeting based on the interviewee's preference.

If you do not wish to receive further communication regarding this study, reply to this email and type "Unsubscribe" in the subject box. Your email address will be promptly removed by the researcher.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

A Study of Personal and Professional Factors That Support Educators While Parenting

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Patricia B. LeBlanc

Southeastern University

1000 Longfellow Boulevard

Lakeland, FL 33801

pblebanc@seu.edu

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

Christine Dean

cmdean@seu.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to examine the personal and professional factors that support female educators while raising young children.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The interview should take 45-60 minutes.

Each Zoom or phone interview will be digitally recorded for the purposes of transcribing our

discussion. I may also take notes during our conversation. I will contact you to validate the

transcript to determine whether it represents the conversation accurately. When the transcripts are

compiled for analysis, I will use a pseudonym or code in place of your actual name. When the

dissertation is written, a pseudonym will also be used.

RISKS

Minimal risks are associated with this study. I will solicit information about your experiences

balancing parenthood and your teaching career simultaneously. If these experiences were traumatic or unpleasant, revisiting these experiences could trigger unpleasant emotions. You are free to decline to answer any or all questions and are free to terminate your involvement in the study at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

There are no tangible benefits for your participation in this study. However, the results of the study may inform other educators and add to the body of knowledge about ways teachers can be supported while simultaneously raising children.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your comments and responses will remain confidential for the purposes of this study. The researcher will make every effort to protect your confidentiality by ensuring the following:

1. Employing a pseudonym for your name that will be used on all research notes, analyses, reports, and documents.
2. Transcripts, notes, analyses, and all associated data will be backed up to a password-protected computer and a password-protected file in Microsoft OneDrive.

I (the researcher) commit to making every effort to keep your information confidential except in cases where the researcher is obligated to report adverse incidents.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the doctoral student investigator, Mrs. Christine M. Dean, at cmdean@seu.edu or the principal investigator, Dr. Patty LeBlanc, at pbleblanc@seu.edu. Please sign and return this consent form to me at cmdean@seu.edu.

If you have questions at any time throughout the course of your participation, wish to withdraw your consent, or experience adverse effects as a result of participation in this study, please contact Dr. Patty LeBlanc, the responsible principal investigator, at pbleblanc@seu.edu. In addition, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at Southeastern University at irb@seu.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate, please sign and return the consent form. Even after you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw your consent at any time without obligation to provide a reason for your withdrawal.

Withdrawing your consent to participate in this research study will not affect the relationship you have with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed/deleted from the researcher's computer.

CONSENT

I have read, and I understand the information that has been provided to me about this research study. I have been offered the opportunity to ask questions about the research study. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and I have the freedom to withdraw my consent to participate at any time without reason and without penalty. If desired, make a copy of this form for your files.

I certify that I am at 18 years of age or older and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I also understand that this interview will be recorded.

Print name: _____

Sign: _____ Date: _____

Please return the signed form to the student investigator at cmdean@seu.edu.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your career as a teacher and a parent.
 - a. Can you tell me about the stage of life you were in when you began teaching?
 - b. Can you tell me about the changes to your career when children came (if you didn't have children when you began teaching)?
 - c. Did you take a leave while raising your children?
2. What professional factors contributed to your career as a teacher?
3. What personal factors contributed to your career as a teacher?
4. Were there specific challenges that made it difficult to sustain your career while raising your children?
 - a. Did you ever consider leaving your career as a teacher? Why or why not?
5. What advice do you have for other teachers to encourage their professional longevity while parenting?