



**Working Mothers in the Educational Field in the UAE:  
Issues and Coping Strategies**

الأمهات العاملات في المجال التربوي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة:  
القضايا واستراتيجيات التأقلم

by

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## **Abstract**

Evidence shows that working mothers in today's world face several challenges such as work demands, domestic responsibilities, and raising children. This research investigates the difficulties working mothers come across in their daily lives. It particularly looks at working mothers in the educational field in the United Arab Emirates. A small-scale study was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires and interviews. The main findings revealed that working mothers do not have a balanced life, and they struggle with constant guilt towards their children. The majority of mothers also felt the need to be more appreciated. Furthermore, findings also identify the strategies they develop, implement, and adapt to overcome these challenges.

*Keywords:* working mothers, life balance, education, children

## ملخص

تواجه الأمهات العاملات في الوقت الحاضر عدد من المعوقات كمتطلبات العمل والمسؤوليات المنزلية وتربية الأبناء وذلك على حسب المعطيات والملاحظات. لذا يسلم هذا البحث الضوء على بعض هذه الصعوبات التي تواجهها المرأة العاملة بصورة يومية في حياتها، وعلى وجه التحديد تختص هذه الأطروحة بالأم العاملة في قطاع التعليم في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، وقد تم إجراء دراسة كمية ونوعية على نطاق محدود عن طريق الاستبيانات والمقابلات لجمع المعلومات، ومن أهم النتائج التي توصلت لها هذه الدراسة هي أن المرأة العاملة لا تمتلك حياة متوازنة مما يشعرها بالذنب بشكل متواصل تجاه أبنائها، بالإضافة إلى ذلك تشعر معظم الأمهات العاملات بأنهن لا يحصلن على التقدير الكافي لجهودهن، وتتضمن الورقة معلومات عن الاستراتيجيات التي تتخذها الأم العاملة لتخطي هذه الصعوبات والتكيف معها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمهات العاملات، الحياة المتوازنة، التعليم، الأبناء

## **Dedication**

This piece of work is dedicated to every working mother in the world – You are a hero! You should always raise your head with pride for being who you are and for what you do.

My soulmate, the father of my children, and my biggest supporter... Your belief in me and the pride I see in your eyes is what kept me going until the end... Thanks for all the support and encouragement!

My three little angels... Hamdan, Ahmed and Asma, I hope my achievement inspires you in your life. For you young men, I wish you turn out like your amazing father, supportive, respectful and appreciative of the women in your lives. As for you Asma, I have no doubt that you will grow up to be an amazing strong mother and a successful professional. God bless you all!

Lastly, and most importantly, this humble piece of work is dedicated to the main people behind my success, Mom and dad. Words cannot express my gratitude towards everything you have done to make me who I am today. It is only because of you, your belief and prayers that my sisters and I are all amazing mothers and very successful employees. It is because of your pride that we never, and will never stop our journey towards being the best we can. I love you!

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

The history of human development suggests that women have been playing a key role in making history. It has been indicated that women in relation to the employment and their work performance in alignment with the society appear to be an important indicator of the progress of a country as a whole (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010). This is particularly true in the UAE, a country whose leaders believe in the value of women's contribution towards the development of its nation. Women in the UAE are described by our beloved leaders as “partners in development, generation makers, mothers of martyrs and the pride of the nation.” In a statement made on the occasion of Emirati Women's Day, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum said that “we do not only empower women, but we empower the whole community through women” (Emirates 24/7, 2016). He also believes that Emirati women are playing an important role in developing the economy of the UAE through their strong attitude towards their work. This has given women a big responsibility and encouraged them to rise up to the leaders' expectations by becoming actively involved in the development of this country. According to Langlois and Johnston (2013), “government is successfully drawing focus on empowering women by education, providing leadership jobs in the government sector, which are positive trends” (p. 992).

Traditionally, men have always been the main providers for their families, not only in the UAE but also in the Gulf region. The man of the household has always been responsible for all financial matters and expenses, whereas the woman's only job was to care for her family and raise her children. Life nowadays has changed and along with it the family structure. Khan

(2014) states that “the socio cultural landscape has witnessed a gradual and positive shift of the traditional roles of women.” This shift of roles was one of the many results of the demands of modern life. The increased financial burdens caused women to share the responsibility of providing for their families as spouses, mothers and care givers. Today, women help their husbands with the financial burdens by becoming active members in the workforce. With this, working women have successfully contributed towards the economic, political, social and educational growth of our country.

It is assumed that the life of women in the UAE is comfortable as it is among the top ranking in gender equality among Middle Eastern countries, but life is tough too, especially for working women or mothers (Miller, Kyriazi & Paris, 2017). However, I believe that working women, working mothers in particular, are being exposed to a wide number of challenges because of the increased family responsibilities. According to Hewlett and Rashid (2010), “female talent is underleveraged in emerging markets” (p. 102). They believe that this is due to the fact that the family “pulls” and the work “pushes”. Therefore, working women and mothers are forced “to either settle for dead-end jobs or leave the work force.” From first-hand experience, working mothers today face various challenges including mental stress and pressure, financial stress, domestic responsibilities, handling and raising children, other family and social expectations, gender biasness, duality of roles, time management as well as the struggles of meeting deadlines.

### **1.1: Purpose of the Study**

As a working mother, my struggles have been going on since I gave birth to my first child six years ago. As much as motherhood and my children are my pride, joy and strength, trying to be a “good mother” and achieve my goals and professional dreams have been a constant battle.

This battle has been non-stop, especially as my family grew. Along with the growth of my family, demands from my children, work, family, and social circles grew causing me increased stress. This stress has, to some extent, pressured me to find and develop ways and techniques to deal with my situation and use strategies to help me reach a reasonable balance in my life. Realistically, I have never fully achieved this balance, yet I still carry a huge burden and feeling of guilt, especially towards my children.

Therefore, the key aim of my research is to identify the challenges working mothers in the education field in the UAE are exposed to and the preventative strategies they follow to overcome these challenges. To evaluate my theory, I have designed the following research questions for this study:

- A. Do working mothers in the education field in the UAE have challenges?
- B. What are the challenges that mothers working in the education field in the UAE face?
- C. How do working mothers cope with the challenges?

## 1.2: Context

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the result of the unity of the seven Emirates: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Al-Ain, Umm Al- Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. It is one of those countries in the world which are known as oil-rich countries. Oil and gas profits are very helpful in the development of the social welfare of the nation. All UAE citizens are able to enjoy the benefits equally, as educational and professional chances are the same for everyone (Langlois & Johnston, 2013).

Although the UAE is blessed with natural gas and oil, the country also considers education a main resource of the nation instead of depending on natural resources alone. Moreover, the government of the UAE is diversifying the economy for education and educational activities. In recent years, the UAE gave 22.5 percent of its national budget to the education sector, due to which Emirati students along with expatriates are achieving their educational aims for a better future (Miller, Kyriazi, & Paris, 2017). It is an Islamic country, but comparatively in an international Muslim world, the UAE is considered one of the most liberal countries in the Gulf (Murtoirinne-Lahtinen et. al, 2016). Nevertheless, there are still some restrictions as to what a woman is allowed to do.

Due to the fact that the United Arab Emirates is a small country, it has invited a vast number of expatriates and welcomed them to contribute thankfully to the growth of the country. However, latest statistic reports show that the number of expatriates increasingly exceeds the number of the UAE nationals in the country. According to *Gulf News* (2016), the percentage of expatriates in the United Arab Emirates is around 80 percent of the total population. Langlois and Johnston (2013) stated that the UAE has a large number of expatriates because of the numerous professional opportunities especially for females.



## **Chapter 2:**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **2.1: Introduction**

The literature shows that there has been a lot of research investigating the status of working mothers around the world. The situation has also intrigued the curiosity of researchers to look into aspects of the lives of working mothers in the UAE. Therefore, this literature review will begin by looking into the history of women's roles in society. Next, this review will identify and analyse literature on the challenges working mothers face and the coping mechanisms they develop and apply in order to live a balanced life. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the literature.

#### **2.2: History of women's role in society**

Throughout history, it was commonly believed that women's sole duties were to adhere to their domestic responsibilities as well as rearing their children. Delina and Prabhakara Raya (2013, p. 274) stated that women were mainly restricted "to their kitchens". Furthermore, Lewis (2008, p.83) indicated that in many countries around the world the man was considered the "bread winner" of the family and was expected to work "full time", whereas the woman's job was to care for the family and "was not expected to be employed". In addition, Lewis (2008, p. 268) explains that in the early twentieth century the working role was "hammered out" only in respect of men; "women and children were treated as dependents and it was assumed that women would take primary responsibility for housework and carework."

“The full-scale arrival of women to the world of work was one of the greatest social changes of the last century” (Harsch, 2006, p. 123). With the beginning of the twenty first century, more and more women entered the task force taking up different positions. Woodfield (2007, p.1), in her book *What Women Want from Work : Gender and Occupational Choice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, explained that women have made remarkable progress professionally, but their options continued to be limited to a small number of occupational choices. She also stated that positions women took were “under-represented in the highest-paid and most senior and powerful positions”. This is because women were expected to be homemakers as described by Cikara and Fiske (2009, pp. 77-78) and are only considered cooperative when taking up traditional tasks normally conducted by women. Whenever a woman attempted to take up a professional position traditionally affiliated with men, her success and efforts were penalized and interpreted as negative behavior.

### **2.3: History of working women in the UAE**

The situation of women in the UAE is not much different than that of women in any other country. Langlois and Johnston (2013, p. 995) explained in their research paper, *The Development and Progress of Female Leadership in the United Arab Emirates*, that “most Arab men consider households, child raising and domestic activities more suitable for women”. Back when the UAE was formed, the roles of women were very limited and restricted within the walls of their houses. Similarly, Alwahedi (2015) illustrated that the roles of women in the UAE in the past were limited mainly to caring for the family and carrying out daily household tasks.

Gradually, the roles of women in the UAE developed to allow them to pursue any career they desired and aspired to work in with the full support of the government (Clowes, 2017). This

support of the UAE government was a natural development and a reflection of the strong belief of the founder of this country, His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, which is that “Women have the right to work everywhere” (Gulf News, 2005). As a result, strategies have been followed by the UAE that aim at energizing and making use of the role of women in the public sector as well as the private sector to assure the career tracks are open to them and challenges specific to working mothers are prevented as much as possible. With this, UAE women are now creating their mark in all fields (Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, 2013).

Nowadays women occupy various positions, many of which give them the power to influence, actively contribute to, and lead the development of the country. The UAE has become home to many powerful women holding positions such as “business owners, ministers, parliamentarians and pilots; they also gained access to the judiciary system and diplomatic corps” (Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, 2013). Furthermore, in *Khaleej Times*, Tashakova (2016) reported that, according to Maryam Mohammed Al-Rumathi, Chairwoman of the Emirates Business Women Council, seven out of forty seats in the National Union Council are occupied by women. An article by Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding also reported that two-thirds of the government personnel consist of women (Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, 2013). They also share examples of women who are the pride of the nation such as Her Excellency Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid bin Sultan Al Qasimi, who made history in 2004 as the first female minister, Kholoud Al Dhaheri who was the first woman to be appointed as judge, and Maryam Al Saffar, the first Emirati woman who worked as a Controller of Dubai Metro.

The list continues to include women who broke barriers in sport as well as civil and military aviation. These women not only challenged themselves locally, but also proved to the world that women are capable of reaching peaks and finish lines. One example is Elham Al Qasimi, who was not only the first Emirati to get to the North Pole, but also the first Arab woman to accomplish such an achievement, while Nahla AlRostamani was the first female to be a Formula1 driver in the UAE (Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, 2013). Another example is Major Mariam Al Mansouri who joined the UAE Air Force as the first female Emirati fighter pilot and was referred to as “an example of the country’s soft power” by *The National* (2014). Furthermore, Al Hamli, who was listed as the UAE’s first female commercial pilot, accredited the success of Emirati women to the rulers of the country and expressed:

*“UAE leaders have encouraged women to work in sectors which were restricted to men. The leadership has had great confidence in the capabilities of women, who make half of the UAE society, to take up major challenges and to assume senior positions”.* (Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, 2013)

The previous examples, as well as many more in the country, prove that women are contributing to the development of the UAE. These examples of women’s accomplishments in the country also justify the fact that the UAE was classified as one of the top in the Middle East and the North African region for having the narrowest gender gap in women empowerment, based on *The Global Gender Gap Report* (World Economic Forum, 2017, p. 21). The UAE continues to demonstrate its commitment to empowering women by providing stronger roles for them to attain while maintaining tradition and culture. Women in the UAE are proving their presence in every sector and will continue to develop and thrive. They will also confidently knock down any obstacles they are faced with (Al Marashi, 2017).

Even though there are many professions for women in the UAE, the most common for years has been teaching (Saqr, Tennant, & Stringer, 2014, p. 6). Woodfield (2007, p. 165), in her case study done on teaching as an occupational choice for mothers, revealed that most of the participants stated that teaching was not their first option; however, it was a career that “offered a range of satisfactions”. The educational field has always appealed to females, mainly because of the shorter working hours and longer vacations that can be spent with their children. In addition, Saqr, Tennant, and Stringer, (2014, p. 7) accentuated that people accept teaching as career options for Emirati women because of the cultural beliefs related to working in a segregated environment and the responsibility of educating future generations. Nevertheless, working mothers are facing challenges in their lives where they have to meet the demands of their families, the workplace, and the society.

#### **2.4: Challenges faced by working mothers**

The literature shows that working mothers face many challenges when they have to deal with both their families and their professional careers. “When it comes to life choices about career and family, our available options are changing and increasingly diverse, with some growing and others shrinking” (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000, p. 10).

No matter what parts of the world they come from, women will always be faced with obstacles and challenges when trying to “break the glass ceiling” (Langlois & Johnston, 2013, p. 1004). The authors also report that the phenomenon is sometimes referred to as *breaking the cement ceiling* when it addresses the topic of female Muslims working within the Gulf region in a world where men are the dominators (Langlois & Johnston, 2013, p. 997). Working mothers are facing challenges in their personal and professional lives where they have to deal with their families, health and social responsibilities while they also have to focus on their careers.

### **2.4.1: Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance is a widely used concept in the workforce. According to Heathfield (2018), it refers to “the effort of employees to split their time and energy between work and the other important aspects of their lives.” She also explains that this effort is constant. It allows employees to spend time with their friends and families. It also grants time for “community participation, spirituality, personal growth, self-care, and other personal activities”, besides the daily workload.

In the chapter titled “Choosing Work or Family ... or Both?” of their book *Work and Family – Allies or Enemies*, Friedman and Greenhaus (2000, p. 38) state that the two main “spheres” of a working mother’s life are work and family. They also demonstrate that there is always going to be a battle between the two as they both demand time as well as physical and psychological commitments. Moreover, they state that the more a working mother decides to focus on or invest in one part, the less she will contribute to the other. As there are expectations from their families, there are also various challenges facing working mothers when it comes to pursuing their careers. As a consequence, “motherhood turns out to be a career liability as things exist today” (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000, p. 4).

The effect of having to cope with a multitude of responsibilities at once often means that the women suffer. According to Delina and Prabhakara Raya (2013, p. 274), the privilege of having more work opportunities and extended freedom has turned into a great challenge given that these women are also pressured by their sole duties and expectations that often conflict with each other due to the various roles and demands working women deal with. They also explain that it is hardly possible for a working mother to create a perfect balance between her family

and work. “There is real balance only when the individual feels that she has done justice to all her roles and is satisfied about it” (Delina and Prabhakara Raya, 2013, p. 275). Furthermore, Friedman and Greenhaus (2000, p. 5) state that “tradeoffs” between the differing demands of work and family are unavoidable and it is a major challenge to be highly involved in both.

Gunavathy and Suganya (2007, p. 99) in their study on married female employees of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies outlined the causes and consequences of work-life imbalance. According to the study, the three major consequences of the imbalance between life and family were stress and burnout, ill-health, as well as poor work performance. They also reported that the participants of the study experienced guilt for not being able to spend time with their families, anxiety about their poor performance at work, and channeling their negative emotions towards family members and co-workers.

The consequences above, in addition to several more, occur when the stress that arises in one role “spills over into the other role detracting from the quality of life in that role” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2103). The writer views two ways in which work and family clashes happen; “Work-to-family conflict” and “Family-to-work conflict” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2103). The first occurs when “experiences at work interfere with family life (e.g. an unexpected meeting late in the day may prevent a parent from picking up his/her child from school)” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2103). Family-to-work conflicts take place when what happens in the family affects work situations like when a “parent may take time off work in order to take care of a sick child” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2103).

#### **2.4.2: Personal, family and social related challenges**

Emirati women are getting a formal education to meet their aims of becoming working women, but being professional is not enough in today’s world. According to Muslim society, a woman

has to assume the essential roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother in her life. The most difficult challenge for working mothers exists due to the fact that they are expected to succeed in their careers as well as fully tackle the different family needs. These beliefs are not limited to the Arab Muslim world, but also extend to other parts of the world. For example, the Department of Labour of the United States of America, in *The Family and Medical Leave Act*, recognized the roles of parents by stating:

“Due to the nature of the roles of men and women in our society, the primary responsibility for family caretaking often falls on women, and such responsibility affects the working lives of women more than it affects the working lives of men.” (Lamphier and Welch, n.d, p. 298)

In addition, Hibel and others (2013) explain that the working days in the life of a working mother begin with a “collision” between her motherhood responsibilities towards her children alongside her professional life. Emirati working mothers in the education sector have to cope with the demands of both their jobs and family by performing multiple roles, which in many situations conflict with each other (Khan, 2014, p. 207). In the Muslim culture, the word ‘family’ is not limited to the spouse and children; it extends to include aunts, uncles, grandparents and most importantly parents and in-laws (Aycan, 2004, p. 456).

Moreover, there are many challenges professional mothers face on a daily basis in the case of personal as well as social life such as lack of family time, inability to interact with relatives, and the most pronounced is the upbringing of their babies. Their feeling of guilt is strong for not allocating sufficient time to their spouses and children especially when their babies start their pre-primary education (Murtorinne-Lahtinen et al., 2016, p. 127).

“One obstacle is that traditional values continue to shape the division of labor at home, which means it is easier for men than women to invest



time and energy in both work and family. As a result, working mothers are the most vulnerable to suffering career penalties and work-family stress.” (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000, p. 4)

### **2.4.3: Work related challenges**

Despite the governmental initiatives that have been followed in the UAE, working mothers are still exposed to a broad mix of challenges in the educational field related to maintaining the quality of life for their children. Challenges also include sustaining the energy to handle other domestic responsibilities (Sultana & Noor, 2011, p. 727). On top of that, issues that stress working mothers in the work place include a heavy workload, rigid hours, high demands and inflexible schedules (Reifman, Biernat & Lang, 1991; Crouter, 1984; Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Tingey & Kiger, 1996).

Working mothers often have to deal with high levels of stress when their workload is heavy (Reifman, Biernat & Lang, 1991). Their stress is elevated when the heavy workload is accompanied by regular demands from their jobs (Galinsky & Stein, 1990). In general, working mothers feel that their working hours are overwhelmingly strict (Crouter, 1984). This inflexibility of working schedules imposes extra burdens upon them as it restricts the time frame during which they need to put in a lot of effort to balance the two main aspects of their lives, family and work (Tingey & Kiger, 1996).

## **2.5: Coping mechanisms**

When exploring how working mothers deal with their day to day challenges, the term ‘coping’ comes up repeatedly. Thus, the term ‘coping’ needs to be defined. Snyder and Dinoff (1999,

p. 5) defined coping, after studying a number of different views, as “a response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional, and psychological burden that is linked to stressful life events and daily hassles.” To add to this, Pearlin and Schooler (1978, p. 2) viewed coping as a “behaviour that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experience, a behaviour that importantly mediates the impact that societies have on their members.” They then explain “By coping we refer to the things that people do to avoid being harmed by life strains.”

To contextualize the previous definitions, a study by Elman and Gilbert (1984) was examined. Elman and Gilbert (1984, p. 317) illustrate that women who choose to combine career and family believe their multiple roles are nourishing and rewarding. However, they state that working mothers must “cope with societal values and with their own internalized beliefs about what is required of the "competent professional" and "good mother"—values which are sometimes incompatible.” Their study was carried out to investigate how working mothers dealt with conflicts between their different roles as professionals and parents and was based on a coping model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (Elman and Gilbert, 1984, pp. 317-318).

The results of the study by Elman and Gilbert (1984, p. 324) revealed that “Increased Role Behaviour” was the highest recognized coping strategy. This strategy includes working harder and more efficiently by the individual "to do it all," and the demands of the roles do not change. Other coping strategies were “Cognitive Restructuring” and “Personal Role Redefinition.” These strategies involve “thinking about the situation differently and altering personal role conceptions. They, too, do not alter external demands”. Consequently, these working mothers

naturally “used coping strategies in which responsibility for conflict reduction remains with the individual.”

Moreover, from their study, Elman and Gilbert (1984, p. 324) included that a number of women thought their accomplishments in handling the combination of career and family was definitely an individual issue, due to the lack of social and organizational help. They also added that working mothers avoid assigning their parental responsibilities to others because they have a stronger obligation to fulfill their children’s need out of guilt towards their children. Hence, the strategies followed by working mothers are “intuitively wise” knowing the reality of these women’s world.

A similar study was carried out in Nigeria by Aluko (2009, p. 2096), titled *Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategies Adopted by Women in Academia*, and investigated work and family conflicts and coping strategies of two hundred women working in 6 different universities and 4 banks. The findings of the research study demonstrated that, similar to the participants in Elman and Gilbert’s (1984) research, working mothers considered childcare issues to be their own problems and independently developed coping strategies to manage their lives in ways “that would not draw attention to themselves” and keep them from being “marked” for being wives and mothers (Aluko, 2009, pp. 2118-2119). According to the research, “marking could take the form of clear-cut cases of discrimination, or be more subtle, like deliberate omission from partaking of certain benefits” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2119).

The coping strategies shared by Aluko (2009, p. 2118) all showed that women had to make changes in their lives in order to accommodate all the demands of their personal and professional aspects of life. Examples of coping strategies consist of working mothers

employing helpers at home to help with the day-to-day domestic work or nannies to assist with childcare responsibilities. Also, mothers reported that another way of coping with the demands of their lives was to plan their families around their work duties by “organizing their teaching around childcare needs.” At the end of the study, the writer stated that the “individual decisions continue to reinforce the idea that the home sphere is the responsibility of women, and it is therefore up to them to negotiate home and work balance” (Aluko, 2009, p. 2119).

## **2.6: Summary**

This chapter reviewed the international history of women’s roles in society. It then took a specific look at the history of working women in the United Arab Emirates. It also explored a number of challenges working mothers face in their daily lives such as trying to achieve work-life balance, personal challenges, family and social related challenges as well as work related issues. Finally, this chapter illustrated coping mechanisms developed by working mothers to allow them to achieve a certain level of balance in their lives.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1: Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology and consists of a description of the research participants, explains the procedure followed to collect data, describes the research methods used to collect data to answer the three main research questions and discusses the ethical considerations made when conducting this research. To answer the research questions, it was best to implement a mixed-method approach, in which I combined both qualitative and quantitative research instruments to collect data. According to Sandelowski (2000), combining research methods enlarges the scope of study, and deepens a researcher's understanding of a topic.

#### **3.2: Participants**

This study specifically focuses on working mothers in the education field in the United Arab Emirates. Therefore, the subjects include mothers working in different educational institutes in the country. Some come from public higher education institutions, whereas others come from private universities and different levels of public schools as well as private schools. Mothers who work in childcare centers also participated in this study. All of these mothers come from different backgrounds and work in different academic or administrative positions in their institutions within the UAE. Table 3.1 illustrates the demographics of the participants.

Table 3.1: Demographics of the Research Participants

<b>Demographics of participants</b>		
<b>Age</b>	30-34	11
	35-39	8
	40-44	7
	45-49	8
	50-55	3
	55 or older	1
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	35
	Widowed	1
	Divorced	2
<b>Number of Children</b>	1	8
	2	13
	3	11
	4	2
	5	3
	7	1
<b>Educational Level</b>	High School	3
	Bachelors	13
	Masters	19
	PHD	2
	Other Certifications	1
<b>Employment Status</b>	Full time	35
	Part time	3
<b>Role within Institution</b>	Academic	34
	Administrative	4

The study was not limited to Emirati working mothers, but also sought the views of the international community within the UAE. Although the majority of participants were Emiratis,

the study included women from a total of 16 different nationalities as illustrated below in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Nationalities of Participants

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
The United Arab Emirates	9
The United Kingdom	6
Syria	4
The United States of America	3
Lebanon	3
Jordan	3
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	1
Canada	1
Brazil	1
France	1
South Africa	1
Zimbabwe	1
Egypt	1
Palestine	1
Yemen	1
India	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

The data collection for this research involved three stages: initial pilot interviews, a questionnaire and post-questionnaire interviews. The pilot interviews only included three respondents who were working mothers that came from different nationalities, backgrounds, and who have different numbers and ages of children. Once the first stage was over, a bigger sample of participants was needed to provide sufficient data. Thus, I sent out 55 online questionnaires through SurveyMonkey.com. Out of 55 questionnaires sent online, 40 women

responded to the questions, which give a response rate of approximately 73%. However, to give more accurate figures, responses of two participants were removed as they were incomplete.

### **3.3: Procedure**

My research methodology consists of both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. The main data collection tool was the questionnaire (Appendix 1); however the questions were generated after conducting informal pilot interviews with the intention of drawing questions for the questionnaire. After collecting data from the questionnaires, I conducted individual interviews (Appendix 2) that were more structured to allow the participants to further comment and elaborate on certain points that explain their answers on the questionnaire. The interviews, which consisted of 14 questions, also intended to find out how working mothers felt about different aspects related to their personal lives.

### **3.4: Research Instruments**

#### **3.4.1: The pilot interview**

Three informal pilot interviews were conducted with friends who are also working mothers in the education field in the UAE. These interviews were in the form of a casual conversation to grant the participants freedom to express their thoughts and feelings away from any interview formalities. Mothers who joined the conversation varied in their nationalities, ages, backgrounds, number of children and many other factors like family situations.

The first question in the interview intended to find out how the three working mothers generally felt. When asked “How are you?” The three participants’ replies were “tired”, “sleepy” and “exhausted” accompanied with a big sigh. When asked about the reasons, the explanations



were all related to pressures of their personal lives or work. They were even unsure how to “be fair” to both aspects of their lives and expressed guilt towards their families, especially their children. I allowed them to freely express their feelings and thoughts by asking very few questions. Their answers and emotions all helped in forming the questions of the questionnaire.

### **3.4.2: The questionnaire**

After conducting the informal interviews with the first sample of participants, the questionnaire was designed to collect data about the participants’ demographics, work and childcare arrangements with a number of questions aiming to find out if there were any issues related to the three main areas. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions beginning with an online consent form that all participants had to sign in order to participate in this study. With the aim of having a structured questionnaire, it was divided into three main sections: *Background Information*, *Work*, and *Childcare Arrangements*.

#### **3.4.2.1: Background information:**

Basic background information was collected with the intention of describing the participants. This was done through 6 basic questions asking for information about age, nationality, marital status, number and age of children and finally education level.

#### **3.4.2.2: Work**

This section consisted of 9 questions that asked about the participants’ employment status, the number of working hours per week, roles they were assigned in their jobs, whether or not they were the only providers for their families, and their means of transportation. Furthermore, two of the questions included a number of items in which women were asked to show their preferences related to their work environments. They were given a list of some changes that

might provide them with a better workplace environment and were asked to rate the importance of each item from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important). This question was followed by another that asked them to select those changes that already existed in their workplace.

At the end of this section, women were given two statements stating “I do only what’s expected of me at work” and “I want to do more at work but I don’t have enough time” for which they had to choose “Yes” or “No” and elaborate on their choices. These two questions aimed to find out how women performed at work and whether or not time was an issue when it came to accomplishment of tasks at work.

#### 3.4.2.3: Childcare arrangements

This was the last section of the questionnaire and it included 4 main questions. The first question was clearly stated to find out if the participant had any kind of child support. Following the first question was another one that aimed to specify the source or provider of childcare. Question 19 included 11 items for which participants had to show their level of agreement by selecting one of six options and these were *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, *strongly agree* and *not applicable*. Finally, the last question, which contained five items, asked general questions to find out how working mothers felt towards their families and how they thought their families felt towards them.

The questionnaire in general included a number of cloze ended statements which were answered using Liker-type scales of either five or six options. It also included comment boxes as well as open ended questions to allow the participants to state their opinions. Furthermore, to make it easy and quick for the participants to complete, multiple choices were provided for most of the questions so that the participants chose from options instead of having to write.

### **3.4.3: The post-questionnaire interview**

To complement the data collected from the questionnaire, and to go into more depth, I conducted five informal interviews with working mothers who came from different educational sectors and varied in their ages, nationalities, backgrounds, number of children and socioeconomic status. Three of the interviews were conducted at the participants' workplace, whereas two took place over the phone due to time constraints. Moreover, interviewees were encouraged to speak in either English or Arabic to allow them more freedom to express their thoughts and feelings.

During the interviews, I asked the working mothers questions and gave them time to answer each freely in their preferred language (English or Arabic). Meanwhile, I noted down their facial expressions and body language to help me support the analysis of my findings. Even though the interviews were recorded, only parts that were needed were transcribed exactly as said when answering.

### **3.5: Ethical consideration**

Considering ethics of research in any study is very important, otherwise issues arise due to a number of reasons such as the topics investigated and approaches implemented to collect data. Ethical issues also exist when the privacy of the participants is not taken into consideration during publication of research and when data collection instruments ask for information that is "highly personal and sensitive"(Oliver, 2003, p17, quoted in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, p. 76). Therefore, to minimize possibilities of facing ethical issues, factors like freedom and confidentiality of participants was carefully considered. This consideration was shared with the research participants in the form of an informed consent, which, as described by Howe

and Moses (1999) is “a cornerstone of ethical behavior, as it respects the right of individuals to exert control over their lives and to take decisions for themselves” (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2011, p. 77).

Before answering the questionnaire, participants had the choice to accept or reject a consent form (Appendix 3) that explained the purpose of the study and the reason why they were chosen to take part in it. The consent form also provided brief details of the researcher, the study which the questionnaire is a part of and the university for which the research is being done. Additionally, participants were informed that taking part in this study was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from it at any time without any penalties. Furthermore, the consent form assured them that all responses would be confidential and that the questionnaire would not include questions that would help easily identify their identities. Lastly, participants were also guaranteed that the results of this study would be used for scholarly purposes only.

### **3.6: Conclusion**

In this chapter, a description of the research participants was provided followed by an explanation of the methods used to collect data in order for the research questions to be answered. In addition, the main research instrument was described in relation to the aspects it focused on. This chapter ended with a discussion of the ethical considerations made when conducting this study.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### **4.1: Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the analysed data that was collected using both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. For the quantitative data, responses from the questionnaire *Working Mothers in the Education Field in the UAE* were collected for the three sections of the questionnaire: 1) background information, 2) work and 3) childcare arrangements. The data was described and then followed by an analysis of the collected responses. After that, the qualitative data collected from the interviews was described and analysed. Data from the interviews was classified into four major categories: 1) work/life balance, 2) family support, 3) stress and coping strategies and 4) other. After describing and analysing items separately, correlations between a number of aspects are discussed and analysed towards the end of this chapter. Where appropriate, the participants' comments were reflected using direct quotes. Since some of these participants are not native speakers, there were some spelling and grammar issues, and these errors were kept as they were originally written.

#### **4.2: Findings of Questionnaire**

The working mothers' questionnaire was intended to elicit mothers' views in general about their work/life situations.

#### **4.2.1: Background Information**

The biggest sample of participants in the questionnaire included working mothers who were between 30 and 34 years of age; this constitutes approximately a third of the sample. Following this with a percentage of 20% each are two groups whose ages were between 35 and 39, and 45 and 49. Only two of the participants (5%) were 55 or older. The majority of the participants were married working mothers, whereas only 5% were divorced and 5% widowed. Out of the entire sample, 12 of the participants (32%) were the only providers for their families and 26 had other sources of income that were not specified.

#### **4.2.2: Work**

Almost 90% of the mothers worked as teachers in different disciplines such as English, Math, Arabic and Science and the remaining 10% held administrative positions in schools, colleges and universities in the UAE. Most of the participants worked full-time (92%) and only three worked part-time (8%). For those who worked full-time, the approximate average number of working hours per week was 40. On the other hand, the three part-time employed mothers spent various numbers of hours at work that ranged between 15 and 35 hours weekly. One of the participants, a full-time teacher who worked 35 hours per week, commented “I also spend around 8-10 hours working from home to get my work done as there is hardly any time to do what is expected of me at school.”

The participating working mothers were provided with a list of some changes that might grant them a better workplace and were asked to rate the importance of each item by selecting a number from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important). The table below shows the overall preferences of the participants. The weighted average in the last column is an indication of how popular or unpopular an item is among the participants.

Table 4.2.1: Question 13

	1	2	3	4	5	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
More flexible work hours	5.26%	5.26%	5.26%	34.21%	50.00%	4.18
Daycare support for child	25.00%	5.56%	13.89%	11.11%	44.44%	3.44
Equal opportunity for development in the workplace	5.26%	5.26%	23.68%	13.16%	52.63%	4.03
Paid leave to care for newborns or seriously ill child	5.26%	7.89%	7.89%	10.53%	68.42%	4.29
On-the-job training opportunities to learn new skills	7.89%	0.00%	10.53%	23.68%	57.89%	4.24
Higher salary	5.41%	2.70%	5.41%	21.62%	64.86%	4.38
A positive work environment	7.89%	0.00%	7.89%	7.89%	76.32%	4.45

In general, the table shows that all provided changes are relatively important to the participants. However, they ranked *a positive work environment* the highest with 76% giving it the most importance. Another important item was *more flexible work hours* with exactly 50% of the respondents rating it as most important and 34.21% rating it as important. Furthermore, *a higher salary* was also given importance by the vast majority of the sample. As for the least important aspects of work, the participants felt that *daycare support for child* was not at all a priority with a quarter indicating it as the least important among the items.

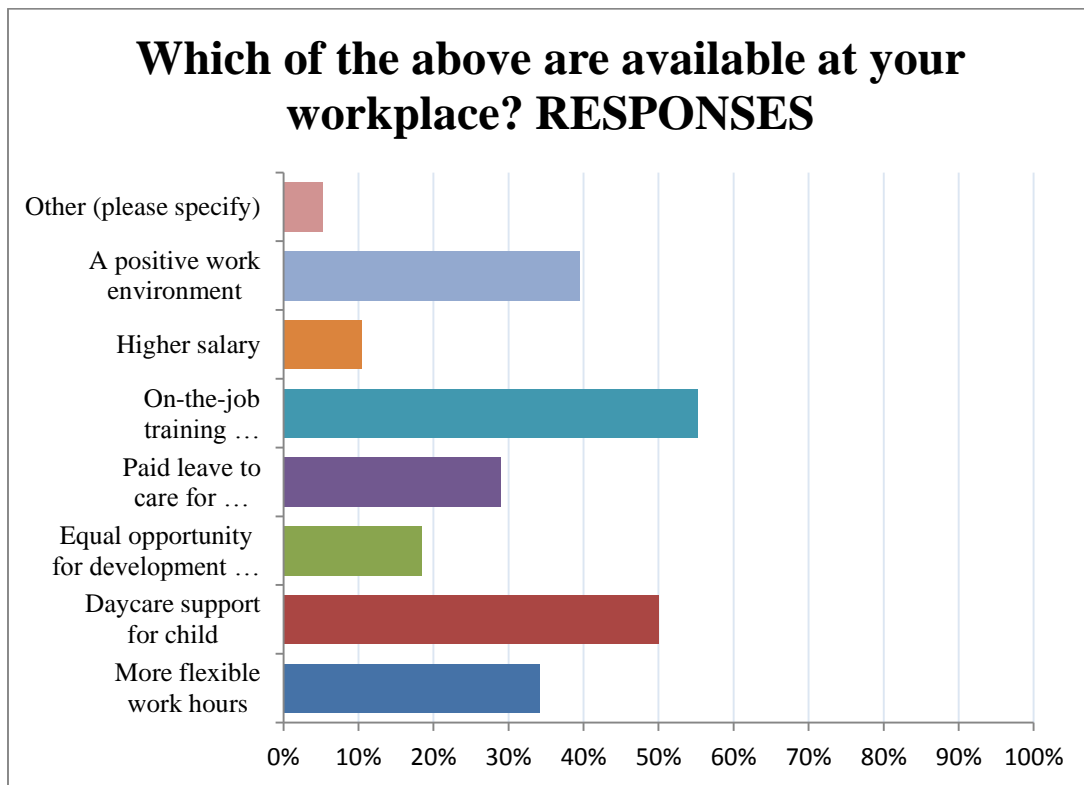
Participants in the questionnaire were given the chance to add more changes that are considered important to them when discussing how to have a better work place. One commented by stating “more education allowance”, whereas another added “Improving work ergonomics”. More

working mothers further commented by writing “respect and appreciation for a job well done” and “transparency regarding wages and other benefits”. The last respondent commented with more than one point explaining “the choice to work part time, an employee “ladder” for teacher promotions, a more genuine evaluation system.”

When asked which of the seven proposed changes already existed in their workplace, 21 out of the 38 employed mothers who responded to this question selected *on-the-job training opportunities to learn new skills*, giving it a response rate of approximately 55%. Exactly 50% stated the availability of *daycare support for child* and about 40% chose *positive work environment*. Around 34% of the participants chose *more flexible work hours*. The two lowest rated available features were *equal opportunity for development in the workplace* and *higher salary*. Roughly 18% chose *equal opportunity for development in the workplace* to be present in their work place and just about 11% selected the option of *higher salary*. The bar graph below shows all the answers selected.



Figure 4.2.1: Responses to Question 14



A respondent added a comment to show other available benefits. She stated “The paid leave is available as emergency leave and we are entitled to 3 days a year.”

“I do only what’s expected of me at work” is a statement the participants had to agree or disagree with and explain their answers. Eleven per cent selected “Yes” as an answer whereas nearly 45% chose “No”. Feedback on this statement varied. A number of comments explained that the participants did more than expected by adding “I sometimes do more than what is expected”, “I always put more effort into my work than is required”, “I like to do more than what’s expected from me, I think the positive environment is the reason for that”, “I feel my contribution to my work goes further than what’s expected”, “I do more”, “I do more than expected” and lastly, “I do my best to make sure help is given to all student even if it meant working extra hours.” Other comments included: “I always offer support and help for those in

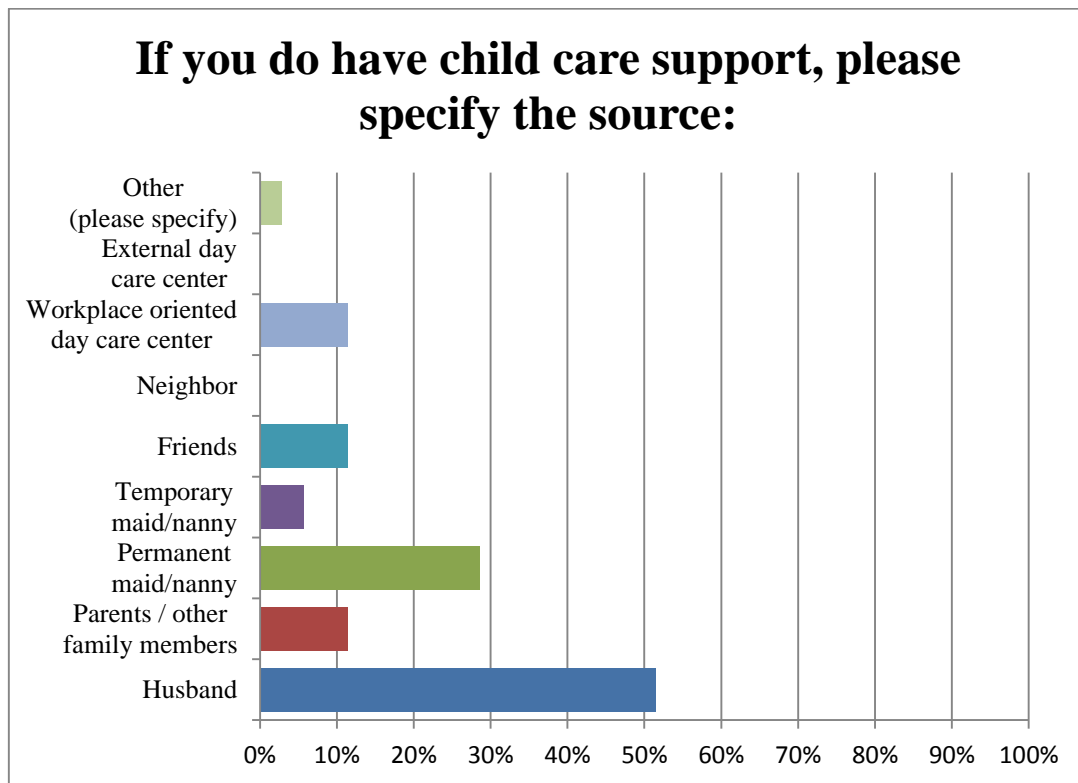
need” and “I try to promote my skills always looking for the best.” The last comment stated “Yes because my family is my priority.”

At the end of the second section of the questionnaire (work), the participating working mothers were requested to show relevance of a statement in relation to their personal experience. The statement was “I want to do more at work but I don’t have enough time”. Almost 58% responded with “Yes” leaving about 26% who chose “No”. The others commented, “Due to family obligations it is difficult to manage my time”, “I make time, but get stressed and exhausted because of too much work and not enough rest.” and “I wish to do lots and lots more like to stay more time at work but I think it’s the right of my family”. Further comments included “Yes due to timetable constraints”, “No resources” and lastly, “I have enough time to do more.”

#### **4.2.3: Childcare Arrangements**

The first question in this section asked “Do you have childcare support?” About 69% answered “Yes” while only 31% replied with “No”. Next, participants were asked to specify the source of childcare, if they had any. Thirty five women responded to this question. More than half the responses (51.43%) specify the childcare source as the husband. The second highest selection for childcare sources was a permanent maid/nanny, chosen by approximately 29% of the sample. Parents/other family members, friends and workplace oriented day care centre were all rated equally with around 11% each. Very few (5.71%) selected temporary maid/nanny and no one reported neighbour or external day care centre as sources of their childcare. Detailed answers are presented in the following bar graph.

Figure 4.2.2: Responses to Question 18



When given 11 statements about general life situations, participants had to select how applicable each one was in their lives. Table 4.2.2 below shows details of the participants' answers. The statement most women found relevant was "There are things I WANT to do that I don't have the time and energy for." Approximately 57% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement and around 29% agreed with it, while almost 6% disagreed and just one person (2.86%) strongly disagreed. The second statement women could relate to is "There are things I HAVE TO do that I don't have the time and energy for." Around 35% women generally agreed with this and 47% strongly agreed. Disagreement with this statement was not much; just under 12% disagreed and nearly 3% strongly disagreed. The third most relevant situation was "To do all the things which are expected of me, I need more hours in the day." None of the mothers strongly disagreed with this and only about 9% disagreed. A total percentage of about 77% was split between agreeing (about 34%) and strongly agreeing (almost 43%).

“I just can’t find the energy in me to do all the things expected of me” as well as “Sometimes I cannot meet everyone’s expectations” have the same overall weighted average, even though the detailed rating was done differently. The approximate percentage of working mothers who strongly agreed with the first statement is 34%, and nearly 46% agreed with it. However, just under 12% disagreed and thought it was not relevant to them. Not being able to meet everyone’s expectations was highly relevant to around 86% of the sample as almost 26% answered with strongly agree and exactly 60% chose agree. No one strongly disagreed with either of the statements. However, a small number had neutral feelings about both.

When presented with the statement “I sometimes do things in a rush with little attention in order to get everything done”, nearly 23% strongly agreed with it and roughly 54% agreed. Disagreement was not very high, with only around 14%. Responses to statements “I had to cancel commitments on many occasions due to lack of time” and “I have more commitments to attend to than some other women I know” were somewhat similar with almost 26% strongly agreeing with both. Also, about 11% equally disagreed with both. Reactions to the statement “I enjoy every part of my life” showed approximately 6% strong agreement, 54% agreement, just under 23% neutral, 14% disagreement and just 3% strong disagreement.

“I have a good way of keeping different aspects balanced in my life; I don’t let them affect each other.” was one of the statements that had fairly low agreement from the participants. Only 20% of the total number strongly agreed with it whereas just around 31% agreed. Almost 26% was divided between disagree (20%) and strongly disagree (6%). The statement that had the highest percentage of disagreement was “Work time, couple time, friend time, family time, leisure time-I find satisfaction in everything I do.” More than a quarter of the respondents

disagreed with it and one participant strongly disagreed. However, 40% of those who answered this question selected agree and just below 9% chose strongly agree.

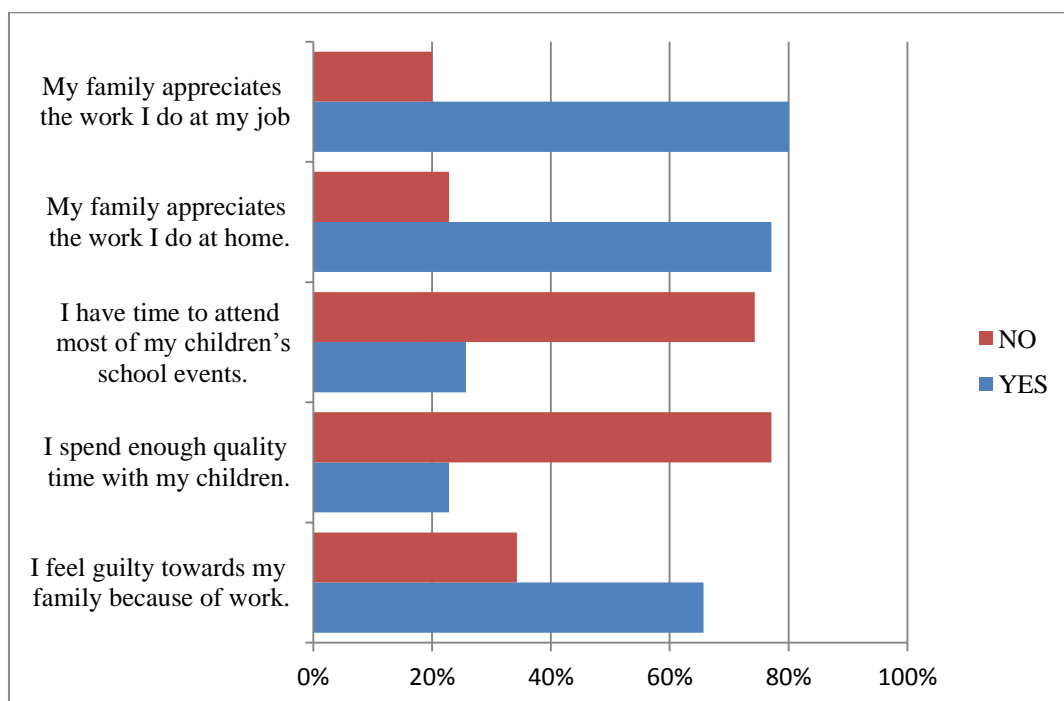
Table 4.2.2: Question 19

Question 19: Please select how applicable the following statements are in your life:							
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Weighted Average
I have a good way of keeping different aspects balanced in my life; I don't let them affect each other.	5.71%	20.00%	22.86%	31.43%	20.00%	0.00%	3.4
I enjoy every part of my life.	2.86%	14.29%	22.86%	54.29%	5.71%	0.00%	3.46
Work time, couple time, friend time, family time, leisure time- I find satisfaction in everything I do.	2.86%	25.71%	20.00%	40.00%	8.57%	2.86%	3.26
There are things I HAVE to do that I don't have the time and energy for.	2.94%	11.76%	2.94%	35.29%	47.06%	0.00%	4.12
There are things I WANT to do that I don't have	2.86%	5.71%	5.71%	28.57%	57.14%	0.00%	4.31

the time and energy for.							
To do all the things which are expected of me, I need more hours in the day.	0.00%	8.57%	14.29%	34.29%	42.86%	0.00%	4.11
I just can't find the energy in me to do all the things expected of me.	0.00%	11.43%	8.57%	45.71%	34.29%	0.00%	4.03
Sometimes I cannot meet everyone's' expectations .	0.00%	8.57%	5.71%	60.00%	25.71%	0.00%	4.03
I had to cancel commitments on many occasions due to lack of time.	2.86%	11.43%	20.00%	40.00%	25.71%	0.00%	3.74
I have more commitments to attend to than some other women I know.	0.00%	11.43%	28.57%	34.29%	25.71%	0.00%	3.74
I sometimes do things in a rush with little attention in order to get everything done.	0.00%	14.29%	8.57%	54.29%	22.86%	0.00%	3.86

The last question in the questionnaire included 5 statements and requested that the participating working mothers answer them with “Yes” or “No”. The bar graph below shows detailed answers to the questions.

Figure 4.2.3: Responses to Question 20



As the graph shows, almost 66% felt guilty towards their families because of work. Only 23% thought they spent enough quality time with their children, while the majority (77%) thought the opposite. More mothers did not believe that they had time to attend most of their children's school events than those who did have the time. In addition, Most of the sample felt their families appreciated the work they did at home (77%) and at their jobs (80%). Very few of them felt unappreciated for what they did at home (23%) or at work (20%)

### 4.3: Analysis of Questionnaire responses

As a working mother, it is important that I try to understand what other working mothers experience. Being a mother is a difficult full time job on its own, so adding work to it makes it more challenging. Gallagher (2017) stated "Everyone says being a mum is a full-time job, but how many people really think about the amount of time mums spend doing work for other people?" The writer concludes that mothers work two full-time jobs. In another study done

by Aman (2017), it was found that women have a big number of daily tasks to do for their children and that a mother's day consists of approximately fourteen hours. The writer then adds "And let's be real, you never really get to stop being a mommy."

The findings from my study revealed difficulties and challenges that working mothers face every day. It also showed how they cope with those difficulties. One of the most surprising findings is that a big number of those working mothers (31.58%) are the only providers for their families, which I believe adds to their burden. A study by Meisenbach (2009) examined how working mothers dealt with being the "breadwinners" for their families and revealed that "While they all valued their independence, on the downside, all of the participants felt keenly how breadwinning also meant experiencing pressure, stress, and/or worry."

Another result that I found interesting was that a fairly small number of mothers considered work-based daycare centres to be essential. I believe this was justified in their answers of question 18 where they identified the husband as the main childcare provider. They also reported that they use help provided by a permanent nanny. Moreover, especially for Emirati participants or those whose families are based in the UAE, the luxury of having the family around means that they could help with any childcare support that is needed. Another possibility that should not be neglected is the fact that not all mothers who participated in this study had children who were of ages that required daycare support. This category of mothers included approximately 62% of the sample.

From my personal experience, working mothers fear using the services of daycare centres because of the common belief that children's health is generally compromised as they can easily pick up any illness from the other children in the centre, especially the younger infants.



In addition, other families do not consider using daycare centres due to financial reasons as they can be very costly. Furthermore, trust is another barrier that holds families, particularly mothers, from enrolling their infants and toddlers in daycare centres. Lastly, an obvious reason that eliminates the use of certain centres is of course the general quality of the place and its services.

Even though it will enable them to be more actively involved in their family sphere, just half of the sample indicated that more flexible work hours will give them a better work place. In my point of view, this could be due to the fact that most people in the educational field do not have the privilege of planning their work day. The majority of mothers believe that they do more than what is expected of them at work. In my opinion, this might be because of three main reasons. The first reason could be that they need their jobs because they are the sole financial providers for their families. Secondly, these mothers could possibly prioritise their professional careers more than their families. Thirdly, they could simply be dedicated professionals. Additionally, those mothers who believed that they do more than expected might also have the time to contribute to their institutes.

What's more, according to one of the respondents, if the work environment is positive you would give more to your workplace. I totally agree with this participant as this is what I experience and witness in my workplace. To add to this, Poh (2018) asserts that "A positive work environment makes employees feel good about coming to work, and this provides the motivation to sustain them throughout the day." Employed mothers who have children that need care during working hours consider various sources of childcare. A surprising finding in my opinion was that husbands of 51% of the participants were the main care givers for their children. This was very surprising because, coming from an Arab culture, men are not

normally fully involved with the caring of their children. This fact is also supported by Lewis (2008, p.83) as she stated in her chapter that the man's role is to work and be the bread winner whereas the mother's job is to raise children and look after her family.

Coming from a very family oriented culture, it was interesting to find out that more women relied on the assistance of a full-time maid than using the help of their parents. This could be due to different factors: 1) parents living in distanced places, 2) participants not wanting to add burden on their parents, or 3) parents not being supportive. In her online article, England (2017) reported a study carried out in Dubai by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) through which the authority reported that the percentage of families that employed housemaids was 94%. According to them, the high percentage was due to the fact that it is considerably cheap to hire a full-time maid at home. They also added that it was more convenient for families to have a full-time nanny, particularly for those with more than one child. They then explained "it's much cheaper to hire a maid to care for your children than it is to fork out money for two or three lots of nursery or daycare fees."

None of the working mothers used the help of their neighbours. The reason behind this decision might possibly be driven by the time factor. In other words, because of the overwhelming load of their daily tasks, those mothers might not have the time or energy to socialise and, therefore, not get the chance to build strong relationships with their neighbours. Without those strong relationships, and most importantly trust, I do not believe that any mother in the world would comfortably rely on a neighbour to take care of her own children. Another possible reason for this decision could be that the neighbours are also employed, which means they would either not be available to care for the children, or they might be too busy to assist with childcare.

As sad as the last part of the questionnaire was, it provided me with comfort to know that I am not alone in this. Like myself, the vast majority of mothers felt guilty towards their families, and especially their children, because of their jobs. The reasons behind this are many and can be very personal, but they possibly all relate to the presumptions we all have about a mother's responsibility towards her children. I believe that not having the time to be there for a school activity to watch their children thrive, not being able to collect them after school or even attend parent-teacher meetings are only a few examples of the factors that trigger the feeling of guilt in every working mother. According to Murtorinne-Lahtinen et al. (2016, p. 127), "Not only was time spent at work felt to be at the cost of time spent with the child but having a strong work orientation and dedication also sometimes aroused feelings of guilt."

Looking at myself as well as my friends and colleagues, especially those who are teachers, one of the dominating issues a teacher deals with is the irony of not being able to closely witness the development of her own children when her main role is to help another person's child prosper. This sometimes leads a working mother to feel unfairly treated by life. Furthermore, a simple issue like not collecting a child from school can lead the mother to feel that she is not fulfilling her duties towards her children, or even not being the good mother she wants to be. This builds up the feeling of guilt, especially when the child is aware and expresses comments of frustration such as "all mothers picked their children up, why didn't you?" Such comments from children can be heartbreaking to a working mother and can very much result in the mother questioning her priorities in life.

Unfortunately, responses and comments of the questionnaire mainly show that working mothers are obliged to sacrifice a lot. Whether it is time, effort, or even mental well-being, I

trust that these sacrifices are all done to give a mother the comfort of being fair to the different aspects of her personal and professional life.

#### **4.4: Findings of Post Questionnaire Interviews**

The aim of the post questionnaire interviews was to complement the questionnaire and provide information that gives a holistic view of the world of working mothers in the educational field in the UAE. I approached six candidates who accepted being interviewed for the purpose of the study. However, only five interviews were conducted as one candidate could not be available due to serious health conditions. Conducted interviews were mainly done in the participants' workplace at their convenience. Only one of the interviews took place in a café based on request from the participant as she explained that it would provide her with more comfort and freedom to express her thoughts. To maintain anonymity of participants, they are referred to by pseudonyms.

##### **4.4.1: Mary**

Mary is a full time teacher in a government institute in the country. She is married and has three children. Their ages are 21 years, 7 years and 7 months. Mary is the only financial provider for her family. She does not think she has a balanced life because she has children. She explained "They come up with something new every day so even when I think I have some kind of balance everything changes with their needs and demands." She continued expressing that the imbalance in her life was also accredited to the fact that her workplace continuously "surprises" employees with regular changes. In other words, "sometimes I need to give a lot to my kids and other times I need to give a lot to my work. Therefore, I don't feel like I have balance." She thought she might have balance when her younger children grow up.

When asked about how members of her family felt about her work, Mary replied starting with the husband, “I never really asked him that question, but I believe he is ok with it because he never complains and he supports me when I need to work for long.” In addition, she happily expressed that her family is “100% supportive” and “proud”. As for her in-laws, Mary stated that they never interfere with her life and that she is lucky that they understand her situation and always appreciate her hard work and give her words of support. Her children, on the other hand, are not as happy about her working. That is because she does not have enough energy or time to spend with them after her long day at work.

Mary was unsure whether she was appreciated or not. Her answer came after a pause and was “Yes and no.” Her explanation of the answer was “I feel like I am always so tired and I try to do my best to make everybody happy yet I see in their eyes that you need to do more. They never said anything to me yet I get this feeling.” Regardless, she could not imagine herself not working and when asked how she thought her life would be without work, she said she might devote more time and effort to her kids. Her answer to the question “How do you think your professional life would be today if you did not have children?” was saddening. “Hmmm this is a very painful question because I would have finished my PhD and maybe took more adventurous job decisions in my life. But the truth is my kids are my happiness. If I had a successful professional life but no kids I don’t think I would be happy. I believe everything will come at its own right time.”

Stress in Mary’s life causes her to eat, and therefore gain weight. However, to deal with stress she always thinks positively and truly believes that she will “see the light at the end of the tunnel in the right time.” She was asked if she ever questioned her priorities in life and shared

that the only times when she did were when a family member was sick. Those times would frustrate her because she could not be with them due to work.

#### **4.4.2: Alisha**

Alisha is married and a mother of a teenage boy who is 13 years old. Her teaching job is her family's only source of income. Alisha would like to believe that she has a balanced life, but hates to admit to herself that she does not. She explained that she spends "far too much time at work, and the rest of the time taking care of others." She expressed that she would like to dedicate sometime for herself to do the things she enjoys, or just relax. After this statement, Alisha soon explained "I do enjoy working, don't get me wrong, and I need the money, so I don't want to be a housewife." However, the pressure at work drains her energy and results in her being "cranky and want to be left alone." She wishes she could afford working part-time, but she needs the money.

Alisha's family views about her work are different. Her husband, on the one hand, does not mind her working because he knows that she enjoys it. On the other hand, he does not understand why she is exhausted because he thinks that her job is very easy. He also believes that she is in the wrong profession and "should be doing something that is more fulfilling." With regards to her other family members, Alisha explained that working is expected in her family (everyone works), but then she added that her sisters agree with her husband that her job is easy because of the number of holidays. Her son, though, wishes she did not have to work in order for her to stay with him. She looked very sad and started tearing when she continued saying "On one occasion, he said "I wish I was your boss so that I could fire you. That way you could be home with me." Of course, that left me with a giant hole in my stomach!"

Home is a place where Alisha does not always feel appreciated and thinks that her husband and son take her for granted. “Although technically my husband is the one at home most of the time, I am still the one doing most of the housework. He helps occasionally with the cooking and cleaning, but I don’t think it’s nearly enough.” After expressing that, she pointed out that her husband thinks *his* contributions are not appreciated. After a few seconds of silence, she went on saying “However, there are times when they express gratitude and appreciation for little things like cooking a nice meal or buying little things for them.” When asked about work, Alisha seemed a bit more satisfied and explained that she feels appreciated by her boss, colleagues and most students.

When asked to imagine her personal life without work, she shared that she would be “miserable”, especially without a source of income. She would also be “disconnected from the world.” Having said that, she reconfirmed that she would never want to stop working, but would actually like to do it on her own terms. Moving on to how her professional life would be without children, Alisha confessed that she would be more willing to take risks and other decisions that do not revolve around her son. “Every decision I make is made with my son in mind. I think about how it would affect him, would it help him or would it be an inconvenience.”

Stress is something Alisha experiences when it comes to being at work on time, keeping up with the housework and adhering to all her other household and motherly duties. Even though she does not generally mind some stress, she shared her strategies to deal with it. The first strategy she shared was to stay alone, preferably outdoors. Once she calms down, she then starts to “tackle the source of the stress” by planning her tasks. Regarding her last technique,

she continued “I like to talk it out with my close friends. I rely on them tremendously.” Regardless of all the stress in her life, she never questioned her priorities and was confident saying that her child is her main priority. Everything she does is for him.

#### **4.4.3: Maria**

A wife, a mother of three boys, a full time teacher and a PhD student; all of this describes Maria. Her sons’ ages are 8, 6, and 4 years old. Both Maria and her husband have full time jobs and share the financial responsibilities of their family. Balance is an aspect that does not exist in her life as it is “very difficult to work for 8 hours, study, and then go home to start my parenting duties.” It is so much for her to deal with at the same time. She was unsure what might give her life balance, but then thought finishing her PhD “should” take things “back to normal.”

Maria’s husband and three children share the same feelings about her working. They are all unhappy due to the amount of time she spends at work; however, she justified “we cannot afford not having both of us working.” On the other hand, her parents encourage her to work as to them it is the right of every individual. Her in-laws also do not mind her being a working mother, but their reason is different, and was reflected with sarcasm in her answer. “I think they want me to work so I will not have to cause any financial “burdens” for their son or them.”

Appreciation to Maria was an aspect she was unsure about, but it did not matter to her whether she was appreciated or not. Appreciation to her comes in the form of a “bonus”, but even without it, she pointed out that she finds being busy and multi-tasking rewarding, enjoyable and satisfying. As per her personal life, she did not think that she would be happy if she did not work because she is a “workaholic” and loves her job regardless of it being overwhelming



at times. She thought that her life would be “boring” without work. Her reaction when she was asked how her professional life would be without children was a deep breath followed by “this is a very hard question”. Then she answered by saying “I think I would have completed my PhD a long time ago and maybe got myself a better job. A managerial position perhaps!”

When addressing stress, her answer was specifically related to not spending time with her children. Not spending quality time with each of her three children stresses her because “they are little and need all the attention they can get to lead a healthy life.” This stress, according to Maria, drains her energy and makes her permanently anxious. To deal with it, she takes a step back, leaves everything and simply relaxes somewhere away from all the stressors. She also travels for a week or so whenever time allows. Issues in her life make her question her priorities all the time. She explained her answer by expressing “I usually do question them because I tend to prioritize the wrong aspects of my life. My priority of all time should be my kids but right now, I feel that they are not because I put a lot of effort into my work and studies.”

#### **4.4.4: Laura**

Laura is divorced, and is the sole financial provider for her only child, a little girl who is 9 years of age. She teaches in a higher education institute in the UAE and, at the same time, is pursuing her doctorate degree. When asked if she thought she had a balanced life, she answered with no doubt or hesitation “definitely not”. She then added that she constantly tries to balance between work and home, but work is taking up all of her time. The long working hours and demands from her work sometimes force her to spend more time than required at work. Even with the adjustment of working hours and introduction of the new rule that allows her to work for a minimum of 30 hours per week (10 hours less than what was previously required), her

schedule does not reflect the flexibility given. To her, these extra hours spent at work definitely affect her family life.

She believes that balance might be achieved in her life once she completes her studies. Based on her previous job experience in another GCC country, Laura expressed that demands from work as well as the nature of the job can strongly affect life balance. For example, tasks like planning, material development, checking students' work and other demands of the teaching profession are time consuming and as a result cause imbalance in a working mother's life. Teaching is one job that demands more than other administrative, or "office jobs".

"My parents are very upset that I spend so much time outside the house" was her response when I asked how her family felt about her working. "I receive a lot of criticism from them for leaving my daughter", but she still felt that she was lucky for staying with her parents because they help in taking care of her daughter, "not that anyone can take the mother's place". To her, leaving her daughter with her parents was much better than leaving her with a nanny. As for her daughter, Laura said "she is of course proud of me and loves me, but she always feels that work takes me away from her." Laura went on to explain that when she is not at work, she spends the rest of her time in a public library to study because she cannot study at home.

Laura laughed when I asked her if she felt appreciated and then replied with "honestly, no." The appreciation that motivates her most at work comes from her students as she does feel they appreciate her. However, it frustrates her not to get any appreciation from the management of her institution. Soon after she expressed that thought, she modified her answer and said "I do get appreciation, but it is what everyone else gets, not what I feel I deserve." At home, she assumes she is being appreciated by her parents, but explained that "we come from a culture

that does not express feelings and this makes us want to hear that we are appreciated, especially us women.” She concluded her answer to this question by stating that she needs to be shown or told that she is appreciated because it gives her motivation to give more.

I asked Laura how different her personal life would be if she did not work and her answer made me emotional. “Staying at home is not bad, especially if you have a partner in your life. But regardless, one needs to have goals and do things to develop themselves.” She then expressed that she likes to be in the kitchen, but not all the time. Laura did not see herself as a housewife and clarified “I find myself when I do things that influence people, and teaching allows me to do so.” Therefore she likes her job, and because she only has one daughter, she does not believe that not having a child would affect her professional life. “Thank God I am working and studying and all is alright, but maybe... maybe if she wasn’t there I would not feel guilty.” According to her, if a mother has more than one child it would definitely affect her life.

What causes Laura stress at work is the big number of sudden decisions and demands of new strategy implementation without long-term planning. She likes to have a stable system and those short notices cost her time and effort. She likes to be professional and do her job well, but stress does not help her to do that. “I support change, but when it is done in a short frame of time it makes me feel unstable.” Stress makes her agitated all the time as she vents out on her family members at home, or goes into a “silent phase”. To overcome stress, she does her best to spend quality time with her daughter at least once a week. “Her biggest dream is spending time with me chatting, watching movies, or doing an activity together”. Another stress relieving strategy is her “alone time” every Friday morning. No matter how busy she is, she always goes out for breakfast, if not alone, with a friend. Her time alone is when she gets most creative and productive (she wrote a whole novel during her “alone-time”).

Laura favours reasonable stress and believes it helps people accomplish things in their lives and be creative. She chose to be creative as a result of stress because her other option was to “explode and lose her mind”. When stressed, she also walks and goes some place where she can get fresh air, watch a movie and read books. The last question about priorities in life gave her tears in her eyes. She always asked herself whether or not she had her priorities right. “Currently, I don’t feel like myself. I don’t think I have my priorities in the right order. My family has always been number one in my life, but when I got divorced it shook me and maybe that is why I made work my priority.” To her, that was a way to get out of her depression and turn that difficult time in her life into a phase for her to prove herself. She concluded by saying that life priorities must change based on individual situations that happen in our lives and that we all have to relook at our priorities from time to time to set them right.

#### **4.4.5: Sofia**

Married to a military officer and a business owner, Sofia has three children below the age of seven. Her youngest is a three year old girl. Her family’s sources of income are her husband’s full time job, her full time job and two side businesses. Her main job is teaching in an educational institute in one of the Emirates.

Sofia’s answer to the question *Do you think you have a balanced life?* was “honestly, no”. She explained by saying that she had too many things in her life to look after, which put her in constant struggle to “juggle” everything with fairness. She also stated that she has to divide her time equally between her children, husband, work, studies, home, her side business and her husband’s side business, as well as her extended family’s requirements and obligations. She always feels that time is never enough to deal with all of her duties. In order to give her life

more balance, she believes that she needs more time to spend with her children and definitely more time for herself. She also added that she should delegate tasks that are not as important and trust people to do them. “I should stop thinking that I have to do everything by myself!”

Sofia knew how the people in her life felt about her being a working mother. When asked about her husband’s feelings, she said “He is so proud of me and always shows off that I am a successful educator, a mother, and continuing my education.” She continued to talk about her parents and expressed “Along with my four sisters, I am their pride. They are very supportive, but at times when my sisters and I are under pressure, their protectiveness pushes them to ask us to quit and say “you don’t need this!” With regards to her husband’s family, Sofia stated that the females are not as supportive due to their traditional mindset; however, she stated “being the only working daughter-in-law, my father in-law and all of my brothers in-law are supportive and tell me they are proud of me and look up to me.” She then moved on to explain how her children felt about her work and that was when I heard a heartfelt sigh combined with a pause for some time. Her three children always ask her “Why do you have to leave us?” which breaks her heart. Nevertheless, after a few years her eldest son understood the reason after she discussed it with him and that made him feel proud of his mother. She explained that in order for her to give them the toys and luxury they want, she would have to work hard.

The fifth question in the interview asked if she felt appreciated in general and gave her the chance to express her thoughts. After taking a few seconds to think, she was confident in saying that she felt very appreciated by her husband due to the fact that he “doesn’t stop saying it.” On the other hand, she did not feel appreciated at work and specified “I don’t honestly feel appreciated at work, at least the way I should be by the higher management. My direct boss, though, appreciates everything I do.” After this question Sofia was asked to imagine how her

personal life would be if she did not work and how her professional life would be if she did not have children. Both questions had her thinking for quite some time. As an answer to the first question, she expressed “I would give my house and family more attention for sure! I will have more time to cook, which I enjoy. I will do many things I want to do but can’t because of time, like try gardening, baking, and other new things.” However, she did not think she would feel as powerful and accomplished. Working, studying and the other “crazy things” she has to tackle give her strength.

If she did not have children, Sofia thought that she would be working on her PhD and trying different career paths. However, the responsibilities towards her children force her to be “less adventurous and look for stability.” “Having said that, I absolutely have no regrets as my children are by far the best thing that happened in my life – God bless them!” Stress in Sofia’s life arises as a result of the expectations from everyone around her. “I am expected to be a superwoman, and be happy about it” she commented. Time is also another factor that causes her stress and results in her being emotional and easily irritated. In addition, stress badly affects her health.

Sofia’s strategies to deal with her life stress begin with her sitting back and taking a deep breath. Next, she shared “I cook for sure!” and also go out for a walk. “When I am at work, I leave everything and go for a walk behind the building. I like to withdraw myself from all the craziness, get some fresh air and think alone.” Lastly, she said “I also try to remind myself that everything happens for a good reason and this helps me keep my sanity.” The many times Sofia was “overwhelmed and tired” made her question her priorities in life. Pain was clear in her answer “When I don’t get the appreciation I deserve or expect... When my children suffer

because I'm not around... when they need me, whether because they are sick or just miss me... when I stop feeling happy.”

#### **4.5: Analysis of Post Questionnaire Interviews**

The process of the interviews was very emotional, particularly because I could relate to most of the answers and feelings that resulted from the questions asked. Each interview brought up emotions that I once thought I overcame and grew out of. Just like all participants in the interviews, I believe that balance has no place in a working mother's life if we look at things realistically. It is something we all aspire to achieve, but sometimes find ourselves trying too hard that it backlashes and affects us negatively. To achieve balance, all the answers referred to one factor that is needed - time. This indicates that one of the main issues working mothers face in their lives is time.

A further issue women face is the lack of appreciation, particularly in the workplace. To them, it is frustrating not to feel appreciated at work, especially when they work so hard and dedicate themselves to their jobs. Sometimes, though, even if appreciation is expressed by some of the people at work it makes a big difference. For instance, a teacher is satisfied when appreciated by her students or colleagues, or even just by the direct supervisor. That could possibly be because this is their direct circle of daily contact and the cause of motivation. Although appreciation at work could be satisfying, the same is needed at home. The mix of emotions I experienced when asking participants about appreciation at home was a bit overwhelming and at times saddening, yet normal. However, it was shocking to hear that it did not matter to one of the participants whether or not she was appreciated.

One of the most difficult confessions, in my opinion, was when mothers admitted not having their priorities in place, whether it was intentional or otherwise. Most of the answers showed that the participants unintentionally tend to prioritize work over family, which stresses them emotionally and results in a strong feeling of guilt as well as, in serious times, questioning of life priorities. Guilt experienced by the participants is stimulated by their feelings that they are not being fair to their children because of work demands. Wisdom of the mothers appeared when most of them stated one way or another that life priorities have to be revisited and thought about from one time to another. This is because different situations in our lives may force us to reorder our priorities temporarily.

Similarly to most working mothers I know, there are several factors that cause stress to the participants of my study. The common ones include the high demands and expectations from work, time constraints, inability to fulfil the needs of children and family members and failure to be with children, especially at times when they need their mothers the most. For a number of the interviewed mothers, having sick children at home and not being able to stay and take care of them due to work puts a strain on the mother's feelings. While I agree with some of the participants that some stress is good, I strongly believe that coping strategies should be present to avoid the serious consequences of stress.

Listening to the different ways of coping with stress was a part that I enjoyed, or perhaps was in desperate need of. I related to some and learned from others. If I were to summarize the most important, I would probably start with 1) do something you like. Other strategies shared by the interviewees included 2) step away and think, 3) take some time off, even if for a short amount of time, 4) revisit your beliefs and trust that everything will be just fine, 5) only deal with the stressors after you have calmed down and 6) spend time with your beloved ones. I



trust there are many more strategies and techniques that can be used to deal with our everyday strains, and I also believe that no one knows what works best for a mother, but herself.

Regardless of the issues shared, it was interesting to find out that, just like me, none of the mothers sees herself staying at home and being a 'full-time' housewife. To us (women), having a career gives us a sense of accomplishment and independence and staying at home takes away that feeling. Each of the interviewees had a list of things she would love to do if she had no job, but they all soon expressed that they would not want to be unemployed, for several reasons.

Every word I heard during the five conducted interviews was enlightening and perhaps confirmed things that I either wanted or needed to hear in order for me to feel that there are other mothers out there with the same, if not more issues as I have in my life. However, at the end I know that for every mother, a smile from her child makes all the trouble worth it. Hence, we should always remind ourselves that family always comes first. After all, this is what we live for, our children!

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This chapter concludes this research study. It portrays a summary of the study and its findings, and then provides implications of this research. After that, limitations, scope for further study and final thought are presented.

#### **5.1: Summary of the study**

As a working mother, it was important for me to understand what issues other working mothers, specifically in the field of education, go through every day. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the different challenges faced and coping strategies implemented by working mothers in the field of education in the United Arab Emirates. This study did not focus on Emirati working mothers; rather, it widened its scope to include those of different nationalities that live and work in the country.

The literature reviewed helped me to identify key aspects on which I focused on in my study: work-life balance and coping strategies. To find out what the participants in this study go through and their ways of dealing with the different challenges, quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were developed and used to collect data. Findings of this study inspired me to develop recommendations for both individuals and institutions to help working mothers achieve a better balance in their lives.

## **5.2: Summary of the findings**

Key findings of this study are listed below:

- Almost a third of the participating working mothers were the sole financial providers for their families.
- In order for them to have a better work environment, approximately 85% of the participants expressed that a positive work environment was important.
- Thirty out of 38 women who took part in this research thought that a paid leave to care for their newborns or ill children was an essential factor that provides a good work atmosphere.
- More than half the working mothers stated that they would like to contribute more to work but could not due to the lack of time.
- When mothers were at work, childcare was mainly provided by their husbands.
- Guilt towards children was present in almost 66% of the working mothers.
- A fairly high number of working mothers expressed that they did not spend enough quality time with their children.
- Almost three quarters of the employed mothers struggled to attend their children's school events due to time constraints.

## **5.3: Implications of research**

Generally, the study clearly shows that all working mothers have difficulties dealing with their personal and professional lives. In fact, the findings reflect that working mothers are overwhelmed, constantly feel guilty towards their children, have high levels of stress, feel unappreciated and do not have enough time to fulfil the requirements demanded of them. Even though the literature, findings and reality prove that there will never be balance in a working mother's life, the following recommendations aim to help all working mothers work towards a level of balance in the different aspects of their personal lives. Recommendations are also

provided for educational institutions in order for them to be more supportive of working mothers.

Mothers need to accept that feeling guilty, exhausted and overwhelmed will always be part of their lives. They cannot eliminate these feelings, but they can learn to manage them. To reduce the amount of guilt that mothers constantly battle with, they are highly recommended to make any time they get with their children quality time. In addition, they will never stop feeling overwhelmed unless they start delegating less important tasks to others and trust that they will be done. Moreover, even if not appreciated by others, a woman must appreciate and reward herself every once in a while as this will boost her energy and willingness to give more. Lastly, but most importantly, each working mother needs to set her priorities right based on individual situations in her life.

To lessen the work related issues working mothers face, institutions are strongly advised to implement flexible working hours and accommodate special requests, specifically those of working mothers with young children. Working mothers of young children, in particular, should be involved and consulted when scheduling their timetables as this allows them to somewhat manage their lives. In addition, policies should be put in place to accommodate working mothers with sick children in order to allow them time to take care of their unwell child. Furthermore, excluding working mothers from the odd duties on weekends is highly recommended because this is the time mothers usually spend trying to fulfil their family's requirements. Finally, having a proper cover system in place in which one colleague substitutes for another when needed. This will allow working mothers to take necessary leave without feeling bad.

## **5.4: Limitations**

During the period of this study, a number of limitations were present due to various factors. The first limitation faced was the starting time of the research because it was during the summer holiday when most educational institutions in the UAE were closed. This made it difficult to reach prospective participants as most people were on their summer vacation. In addition, as a teacher and a mother, I had a limited frame of time to work within. I could only focus on my study after working hours and after completing my home and childcare duties. A similar issue was that all participants were working mothers and so I had to take into consideration extra time allowance for them to complete the questionnaires.

Even though the interviews were very rewarding for me, they were the cause of a few limitations. Ideally, my aim was to conduct around eight to ten interviews to get more solid data. However, due to our schedules and the locations of the different participants it was unfortunately very difficult to reach my goal.

## **5.5: Scope for Further Study**

The literature read for the purpose of this study in addition to data collected using the research instruments led me to think about further areas of study. The first area that I believe is worth investigating is whether or not husbands' types of jobs and availability affect working mothers' responsibilities and stress. Another area worthy of investigation can be the possible relationships between a mother's age and how well she copes with stress. Further research could also look at the extent a woman's marital status affects her professional life.

## **5.6: Final thought**

Mothers work even when they are resting. They constantly think of their children no matter how old they are. As a mother, I believe that regardless of how much we do for our children, we will always remain guilty and wish we could do more. Therefore, I should always keep in mind that I am not “superwoman” and perfection cannot be achieved in every aspect of my life. I believe that only then will I be able to achieve a trickle of work-life balance. A woman’s decision to work is usually for financial gain, personal development or societal contribution. Working as an educator should not be a cause of stress or guilt, it should offer a source of accomplishment and pride that women will eagerly embrace.

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# Appendix 1: Questionnaire

## Working Mothers in the Education Field in the UAE

### Section 1: Background information

\*2. What is your age?

- 20 to 24
- 25 to 29
- 30 to 34
- 35 to 39
- 40 to 44
- 45 to 49
- 50 to 54
- 55 or older

\*3. What is your nationality?

4. Marital Status

- married
- divorced
- widowed
- Other (please specify)

\*5. How many children do you have?

\*6. What are the ages of your children?

\*7. What is your education level?

- high school
- BA
- MA
- PHD
- Other certification (please specify)

## Section 2: Work

8. Do you work full-time or part-time?

- full-time  
 part-time

\*9. How many hours on average do you work per week?

\*10. Is your role administrative or academic?

- Academic (teaching)  
 Administrative

\*11. Are you the only provider for your family?

- Yes  
 No

\*12. Do you drive to work?

- Yes  
 No

If no, please specify your transportation

\*13. Here's a list of some changes that might provide you with a better workplace. Please let me know how important each item is to you by rating it from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important).

	1	2	3	4	5
More flexible work hours					
Daycare support for child					
Equal opportunity for development in the workplace					
Paid leave to care for newborns or seriously ill child					
On-the-job training opportunities to learn new skills					
Higher salary					
A positive work environment					

Other (please specify)

**\*14. Which of the above are available at your workplace?**

- More flexible work hours
- Daycare support for child
- Equal opportunity for development in the workplace
- Paid leave to care for newborns or seriously ill child
- On-the-job training opportunities to learn new skills
- Higher salary
- A positive work environment
- Other (please specify)

**\*15. "I do only what's expected of me at work."**

- Yes
- No
- Please explain your answer

**\*16. I want to do more at work but I don't have enough time.**

- Yes
- No
- Please explain your answer

### Section 3: Child care arrangements

\*17. Do you have child care support?

- Yes  
 No

18. If you do have child care support, please specify the source:

- Husband  
 Parents / other family members  
 Permanent maid/nanny  
 Temporary maid/nanny  
 Friends  
 Neighbor  
 Workplace oriented day care center  
 External day care center  
 Other (please specify)

\*19. Please select how applicable the following statements are in your life:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
I have a good way of keeping different aspects balanced in my life; I don't let them affect each other.						
I enjoy every part of my life.						
Work time, couple time, friend time, family time, leisure time- I find satisfaction in everything I do.						
There are things I HAVE to do that I don't have the time and energy for.						
There are things I WANT to do that I don't have the time and energy for.						
To do all the things which are expected of me, I need more hours in the day.						
I just can't find the energy in me to do all the things expected of me.						

Sometimes I cannot meet everyone's' expectations.						
I had to cancel commitments on many occasions due to lack of time.						
I have more commitments to attend to than some other women I know.						
I sometimes do things in a rush with little attention in order to get everything done.						

20. Please answer the following statements with Yes/No

	Yes	No
I feel guilty towards my family because of work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend enough quality time with my children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have time to attend most of my children's school events.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family appreciates the work I do at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family appreciates the work I do at my job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview questions**

#### Work/ life Balance:

1. Do you think you have a balanced life? Why? Why not?
  - a. (If not)What will, in your opinion, give you more balance?

#### Family Support:

2. How does your husband feel about you working?
3. How does your family feel about you working? What about your in-laws?
4. How do your children feel about you working?
5. Do you feel appreciated? If yes, how? If no, why not?

#### Stress and coping Strategies:

6. What causes you stress as a working mother?
7. How does the stress affect you?
8. What are some strategies you use to cope with the stress in your life?
9. Have you ever questioned your priorities in life? What made you do so?

#### Other:

10. How different would your personal life be if you did not work?
11. How do you think your professional life would be today if you did not have children?



## **Appendix 3**

### **Questionnaire Consent Form**

The purpose of this research is to identify issues working mothers in the education field face and explore the different ways of coping with these issues. This research project is being conducted by Reem Saeed Khammas at the British University in Dubai as part of her MA Thesis. You are invited to participate in this survey because you are a working mother in the educational field in the UAE.

Your participation in this survey is totally voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. Completion of this online survey will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes. Please be assured that your responses will be confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the survey will not contain or require information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with BUiD representatives.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.**

**Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:**

- **you have read the above information**
- **you voluntarily agree to participate**
- **you are a working mother in education in the UAE**

**If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.**