



University of
Stavanger

**MAINTAINING THE EQUILIBRIUM: A STUDY OF GHANAIAN
IMMIGRANT MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH WORK-LIFE AND
CARE RESPONSIBILITIES IN NORWAY**

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ABSTRACT

The study explored Ghanaian immigrant mothers' experience with work-life and care responsibilities in Norway. The following research questions were investigated: What are the perceptions of work-family balance among immigrant mothers in Norway? How does their cultural context influence their perceptions? How do immigrant mothers perceive welfare institutions that work with immigrant families in Norway? How do these perceptions affect how they maintain a work-life balance in Norway and influence their decisions to access welfare resources and services? The research questions were investigated by employing the qualitative research method and phenomenology as the design. Convenience sampling was used to access six participants. The data, which were thematically analysed, were obtained through in-depth interviews.

The study revealed role conflict, time constraints, everyday routine, intensive mothering, and the impact of role conflict on self-care as factors that influenced work-life balance. Support systems, mothering practices, a shift in gender roles, and state welfare provision are some of the themes generated under the socio-cultural context. The women's resilience and coping strategies were characterized by conscientiousness and self-care, and shared household tasks. While none of the women were in receipt of child welfare services, they held conflicting views about the Norwegian Child Welfare System. Based on the study findings appropriate recommendations are made.

Keywords: work-life balance, care responsibilities, , immigrant mothers, Norwegian Child Welfare Services/Barnevernet, Integration, Social Support

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EU	-	European Union
UN	-	United Nations
NSD	-	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
WLB	-	Work Life Balance
CWS	-	Child Welfare Services
NAV	-	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Individuals born in another country to two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents are considered immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2022). Immigration and the immigrant integration are at the heart of global discussions in organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the International Organization of Migration (The European Commission, 2016; United Nations, 2017). Harder et al. (2018) and Oliver and Gidley, (2015) support the notion that these discourses dominate public debates in destination or host countries. Globalization has contributed to increased migration to Western countries including Norway in recent decades, resulting in social, cultural, economic, and political upheavals (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). In addition, climate change, human rights violations, war, and violence are all factors causing an increase in migration from developing to developed nations. This has sparked discussions about how to successfully integrate new immigrants into society.

Norway has long been noted for its democratic, egalitarian, and tolerant culture (Esping- Andersen, 1990). As a result of the oil discovery and Schengen zone membership, Norway has evolved into a multicultural society. Stavanger, located in the south-west of Norway, is the European oil capital. Due to its economic prosperity, it has a greater proportion of immigrants than the national average.

It is worth noting that when people move from their familiar surroundings to another, they must adjust to various changes in their new environment (Ims et al., 2021) That is to say that migration is linked to a number of difficulties, including the loss of support from extended family and other social networks, changes in financial position, the need to find jobs, culture shock, language obstacles, racism, and gender and generational role reversals within families. A welfare state such as Norway, according to Esping Andersen (1990), is one whose responsibility is to ensure people's well-being. As a result, policies and organizations seek to promote a certain idea of welfare which includes work-life balance. A study by the InterNations Expat Insider, as published by the Nordic Page, found that Norway is among the top ten nations that place a high importance on work-life balance. For migrants coming into contact with the Norwegian child welfare system and its norms can be jarring. Recent patterns demonstrate that this is true of immigrants from Europe as well, in addition to those from non-western countries (Korzeniewska et al., 2019). While some immigrant parents acknowledge they need assistance with fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities in the

home and, in some cases, they are happy with the support they have received from the government through the welfare institutions, many also voice mistrust of these institutions (Friberg & Bjrnset, 2019; Fylkesnes et al., 2015; Korzeniewska et al., 2019). Immigrants perceive their interactions with these welfare institutions as a constant threat and intrusion into their families' autonomy which creates tension (Friberg & Bjrnset, 2019; Tembo & Studsrud, 2018).

The fear and mistrust surrounding the Norwegian Child Welfare Services (CWS) might influence the immigrants' ability to access resources and services when faced with challenges in maintaining a work-life balance. Like many other welfare services, the CWS seeks to improve the living standards of people residing in Norway (Thrana & Fauske, 2014). Nonetheless, these services may be perceived, interpreted, and experienced differently by recipients who want to maintain work-life balance which the study investigated.

1.2 Research Questions

The main research question was: "How do immigrant mothers from Ghana maintain the balance in their work-life and care responsibilities at home in the Norwegian context?" The supporting research questions were:

- i. What are the perceptions of work-family balance among Ghanaian immigrant mothers in Norway?
- ii. How does their cultural context influence this perception?
- iii. How do Ghanaian immigrant mothers perceive welfare institutions that work with immigrant families in Norway?
- iv. How do these perceptions affect how they maintain a work-life balance in Norway?
- v. Do these perceptions influence their decisions to access welfare resources and services?

1.3 Problem Statement

Over the last three decades, work-life balance has drawn the attention of several scholars and practitioners across the world. These studies show that work-life balance helps in attracting and retaining employees, as well as lowering employee stress, and work-life conflict (Chaudhuri et al., 2020; Mordi et al, 2023; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the majority of work-life balance studies have focused on work-life policies and their effects on employees within an organizational context. Further, a number of researchers have looked at work-life balance from a

gender perspective in various contexts (Karkoulian et al., 2016; Lakshmi & Prasanth, 2018; Sundaresan, 2014;), with many focusing on the challenges women experience in obtaining work-life balance. However, few studies have been conducted on the work-life balance and care responsibility of immigrant mothers, despite the fact that there is an increasing number of migrant workers in various labor markets (Dyer et al., 2011). Migrant mothers must successfully balance their domestic, work, and other non-work duties in order to support their families and take care of their children (Au et al., 2019). As a result, it is crucial to expand work-life balance research to include migrant mothers in addition to childcare services. This study contributes to filling a knowledge gap by investigating the work-life balance and care responsibility of migrant mothers in Norway, with a specific focus on Ghanaian immigrant mothers.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this research was to understand how immigrant mothers give meaning to their life-world with regards to maintaining work-life balance in Norway. The objectives of the research were to:

- Investigate the perceptions of work-life balance among immigrant mothers in Norway.
- Seek knowledge about how the cultural context of immigrant mothers influence work-life balance.
- Investigate how immigrant mothers perceive welfare institutions that work with immigrant families in Norway.
- Gain understanding of how these perceptions affect how they maintain a work-life balance in Norway.
- Understand whether these perceptions influence their decisions to access the Norwegian welfare resources and services.

1.5 Significance of the study

The field of social work considers service users' perspectives as a valuable resource for gaining better understanding, and this applies to their conceptions of a well balanced family and work life as well. Understanding immigrants' experiences has important implications for social work, as it directs the attention of practitioners who can engage policymakers and stakeholders to understand, appreciate, and address the challenges and benefits of working immigrant mothers, by putting in

place appropriate measures that facilitate combining work and care responsibilities within the family.

Immigrant families from ethnic minority origins embrace various cultural values and experience unique issues associated with migration, particularly with a focus on the Norwegian ideal of work-life balance. Their perspectives have an influence on the development of professional relationships in social work. Thus, paying close attention to their perceptions is crucial for welfare institutions like Norwegian Child Welfare Services in order to improve its services. This study aims to bridge the gap between researchers, scholars, and practitioners as they collaborate on discourses to improve the efforts of users with an immigrant background in combining work and care roles within the family. This study will add to the English-language literature regarding non-western immigrants' integration experiences, the challenges encountered, and the achievements attained in maintaining a work-life balance and their ability to access welfare resources and services.

1.6 Definition of terms used.

The term “work-life balance” in this context refers to one’s ability to have effective control over their roles in the workspace and other aspects of their lives including roles within the family space (Kelliher et al., 2019). The terms “work-life balance” and “work-family balance” are used interchangeably in this study.

There are numerous ways to categorize caregiving responsibilities in the home. According to Craig and Powell (2012), caregiving duties can be routine or non-routine, involving conversations and play-based activities that are not confined to a set schedule, or routine or physical, involving the more physical aspects of caring for children, such as feeding, cleaning, regular bedtime activities, or picking up or dropping children at school. They added that caring for others can have an impact on one's physical and mental health. To reflect mothers' roles in the home in light of this description, the terms "care responsibilities," "caregiving roles," “non-work duties” and "unpaid care work" are used interchangeably.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which gives a background to the study and also consists of the research objectives and questions. Chapter two consists of a review of existing literature on the area of study. In chapter three, I present the research methodology, which comprises of research method and design, the sampling strategy, the

methods of data collection and data analysis, the ethical requisites of the research, the study limitations and the trustworthiness of the study. It includes the theoretical frameworks used, which are the resilience theory and bi-cultural socialization model of Acculturation. In chapter four, the key findings of the study are presented with an in-depth discussion of the findings. The concluding chapter summarizes the major conclusions and provides recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature that contextualizes my research. Bryman (2016) posits that a literature review aims to present a thorough and critical overview of prior studies in the field. The literature review is thematically summarized and influenced by my interpretivist epistemological position. Using inclusion criteria for research studies in light of immigrant mothers' experiences with work-life balance, an extensive literature search was conducted. This review deals with the shifts in social positions engendered by migration, conceptualizing work-life balance, women's labour force participation and gender role changes, informal support networks with a focus on the Ghanaian context and women's coping with family and work responsibilities.

2.1 Migration as a Shift in Social Position

Migration entails moving from one environment to another which requires leaving the familiar and acclimatizing to a new environment in many ways. Changing social positions or class status, losing extended family and other social networks, and other difficulties are all linked to migration (Ims et al., 2021). Immigrant families may encounter economic and social isolation that they did not experience in their place of origin due to socioeconomic changes, the need to locate jobs that are below one's educational level, confusing cultural changes, and racism (Wall & Jose, 2004). The study by Este and Tachble (2009) focused on underemployment and unemployment. For this study, they interviewed twenty Sudanese immigrant fathers about their experiences as fathers living in Canada. Despite having a formal education, many respondents were forced to work in low-skilled positions in Canada because their credentials were not accepted. Other significant themes that emerged included parents' worry that their children would lose their cultural identity, a lack of discipline, social exclusion, and a lack of support from extended family. These factors were discovered to be associated with fathers becoming more involved in childrearing (Este & Tachble, 2009). The men stated that they were strongly dedicated to actively participating in raising their children.

Finding decent work-life balance is challenging, and Mexican parents who participated in a study by Aldoney and Cabrera (2016) believed that their inadequate English proficiency and lack of education made it difficult for them to obtain better employment opportunities. They were driven by their desire to provide the best life opportunities for their children. Many thought that

maintaining their positive outlook would benefit them, as well as their children, during trying times. To integrate into American society and lead fulfilling lives, they desired for their children to have a bicultural mindset and to learn values that were representative of both American and Mexican cultures. By communicating with their children and setting a good example, parents can pass down their values (Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016).

Adjei et al. (2018) found that immigrants frequently face racism in their daily lives, and they expressed a desire that welfare workers comprehend their hopes, obstacles, and worries (Adjei et al., 2018). The children were taught to respect others and perform well in school by these parents, who also exercised strong discipline and close control over their out of home activities. This is consistent with research by Behnke, Taylor, and Parra-Cardona (2008) on Mexican immigrant fathers in the U.S., who found that parents actively tried to shield their children from bad behavior because their children had too much freedom and their legal rights limited their ability to discipline them, especially for the fathers. So, in order to overcome the difficulties they were facing, parents needed to become more actively involved in raising their children, emphasizing cultural values like family solidarity.

As a homogenous country, Norway has witnessed an increased in its five-fold immigration population. Evidence from immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents (2018) revealed that in early 2018 there was about 916, 625 people in the country, of which 17.3% were either migrants or have migrated parents. With this increase in immigrant population in Norway, migrant children, particularly those of African descent will receive increase welfare measures (Hollekim, Anderssen, & Daniel, 2016). Interestingly, the study by Kriz and Skivenes (2010) revealed that Norwegian child welfare employees displayed an oversimplified understanding of how racism and institutional oppression might affect the integration of immigrants' parents and their children.

2.2 Conceptualizing Work-life balance

This section defines work-life balance to give an understanding of what the concept means in this research. The literature presents a multitude of work-life balance orientations, and various scholars highlight the challenges in formulating a universally-accepted definition of work-life balance (Casper et al., 2018; Sirgy & Lee, 2018). The present study employs Greenhaus et al.'s (2012) conceptualization to explicate the notion of achieving equilibrium between work-life and caregiving duties, following a thorough examination of pertinent literature. As per the findings of

Greenhaus et al. (2012), the concept of "life" is characterized by ambiguity, whereas the definition of "work" is unambiguous. The term "life" in this research pertains to individual pursuits that are not work-related, such as domestic caregiving, as indicated by Hagqvist et al. (2020).

The conceptualization of work-life balance (WLB) in this study is founded on the extent to which individuals achieve a satisfactory level of 'fit' between the various roles they play in their lives, leading to a feeling of coherence (Greenhaus et al., 2012). According to Frone (2003) and Haar et al. (2014), individuals tend to subjectively evaluate the equilibrium between their work and personal lives, as opposed to the conventional belief that balance is objectively measured by a minimal level of role conflict, significant role enrichment, or an equitable allocation of time and attention among various roles that constitute an individual's life.

The concept of WLB is defined through a perception-centered approach that considers it to be a comprehensive concept that is specific to individuals and dependent on their life values, priorities, and goals, as noted by Haar et al. (2014) and Kossek et al. (2014). Previous research has primarily focused on the balance between work and family, while neglecting other aspects of individuals' lives such as their involvement in the community, leisure activities, cultural changes in attitudes, the interplay between work and family, diverse family structures, and other pursuits (Haar et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2014). Prior research in the field of work-life balance revealed that individuals continue to sacrifice their personal time in order to achieve equilibrium between their professional and non-professional lives (Hagqvist et al., 2020; Murthy & Shastri, 2015). This observation aligns with the research conducted by Cho et al. (2016), which highlights the gendered nature of the workplace. Specifically, their study found that women tend to experience greater negative effects from prolonged working hours and high job demands. Female individuals are known to encounter role conflict, as they undertake multiple roles in addition to their maternal duties, both within and outside their professional environment (Murthy & Shastri, 2015).

2.3 Women's Labour Market Participation and Gender Role change

The issue of women's position in society in relation to men, as well as their oppression and marginalization, is a subject of interest among scholars (Tiessen et al., 2017). In recent decades, there has been a call for the inclusion of women's economic contributions in development, as advocated by Parpart (2014) and Cho et al. (2016). The UN Sustainable Development Goals prioritizes the integration and empowerment of women across all domains of society. Choi (2019)

reports that the extensive growth of female participation in the global workforce can be attributed to the encouragement of women to break the glass ceiling and fulfill their career potentials. Tsikata (2009) asserts that in sub-Saharan Africa, women's engagement in various income-generating activities is predominantly in the informal sector. However, the researcher notes that women's participation in formal wage employment has increased due to improved access to education and economic opportunities, as well as urbanization and industrialization. According to Annor (2016) and Tsikata (2009), while the percentage of males employed in professional or managerial positions continues to exceed that of females, there has been an observable rise in the proportion of females in these roles.

Despite the aforementioned accomplishments, questions have arisen regarding the sustainability of the female workforce's participation in paid employment (Gutek, 1993). The movement of women into the paid labour force has resulted in the adoption of new roles, while their previous roles in the unpaid domain of the home continue to persist (England & Kilbourne, 2019). According to prevalent beliefs, this phenomenon has resulted in women occupying more stressful positions than previously, leading to their withdrawal from the formal sector.

The issue of balancing a demanding and promising career with the responsibilities of home life is a challenge that numerous women face globally (Hagqvist et al., 2020), despite the success that many have achieved in their professional pursuits. The researchers of a study on the departure of professional women from their careers observe that media coverage tends to focus on instances where mothers leave the formal workforce in order to attend to their children (Hamilton Volpe & Marcinkus Murphy, 2011). Long and inflexible work schedules have been identified as one of the factors contributing to women's departure from the workforce, as it poses a challenge to fulfilling conventional female responsibilities at home (Lott & Chung, 2016).

Women may perceive themselves as having limited choices and may opt to prioritize one aspect of their lives over another. Often, women may choose to prioritize their family responsibilities over their professional aspirations due to the fear of being stigmatized as “inadequate mothers”. The researchers of a study on Christian women who are simultaneously called to motherhood and career reference Ashcroft's work, wherein she observes that women are susceptible to losing their

sense of self due to dominant norms that place undue emphasis on the importance of family (Ashcroft, 1996). Therefore, despite men's increased involvement in childcare subsequent to women's entry into paid employment, women persisted in perceiving themselves as accountable for their children (Boeckmann et al., 2015). The aforementioned concepts have the potential to strengthen the feeling of culpability among women, particularly when they are required to assign tasks related to 'maternal responsibilities' to third parties (Sewpaul, 1999). This is in line with Yakhnich (2016) arguments that parental responsibility and the challenges in satisfying immigration responsibility left them with apprehensiveness and uncertainty.

Mothers may explore alternative options prior to resigning from their professional pursuits. Individuals may opt out from their formal employment to pursue self-employment opportunities within the informal sector (Thorsen, 2013). Nevertheless, the informal sector has its disadvantages. The expectation is that self-employment provides mothers with greater flexibility in comparison to formal sector employment. However, there have been concerns about the perceived flexibility with self-employment. This is consistent with a study conducted by Clark, (1999) who revealed that Ghana traders who worked during odd hours to optimize their business outcomes, encountered challenges in starting business ventures due to the obstacles imposed by state policies, thereby causing stress.

2.4 Informal Social Support – the Ghanaian construct of work-life balance

In the Ghanaian context, the perception of work-life balance sheds light on extended family networks as an informal means of support in response to the growing demand for childcare (Cudjoe et al., 2021). According to Namuggala (2015), the traditional kinship networks that once served as a significant source of support for employees have diminished, largely due to increased migration and urbanization. The provision of information, guidance, and other forms of aid with the objective of facilitating individuals in fulfilling their familial responsibilities is encompassed by this form of support (Cudjoe et al., 2021). Spousal support is a crucial form of support within the family domain (Annor, 2016).

According to Annor's (2016) research, there is a gradual increase in male participation in household chores and childcare in urban areas of Ghana. The results of previous studies indicate that husbands who exhibit supportive behaviour and participate in household chores are highly

valued by their spouses (Lee & Waite, 2010). In addition to the provision of spousal support, the involvement of extended family members is of paramount importance to working mothers, as they assist with the care of young children and contribute to the completion of household tasks. According to Annor (2016), individuals such as drivers, cooks, house helps, and nannies can be classified as domestic help, and can serve as supplementary means of assistance for working parents. According to Muasya (2014) the rigid work schedules prevalent in the urban formal sector of sub-Saharan Africa often compel individuals to engage the services of house helps as a means of reconciling their professional and familial obligations. These hired helps are typically assigned a range of tasks, which are remunerated at a comparatively lower rate (Mapedzahama, 2014).

Despite their affordability, Sarpong (2017) advises exercising caution when engaging the services of individuals of this nature. There exists a certain degree of parental apprehension towards the hiring of domestic aides, despite the fact that the ability to retain mothers in the workforce is intricately linked to the assistance provided by such aides (Namuggala, 2015). Muasya (2014) highlights the significance of house helps as they often reside with the family and assume parental duties in the absence of parents. These duties encompass crucial responsibilities such as collecting children from school, providing meals, overseeing homework, and safeguarding the employer's residence and assets. According to Muasya (2014), social support, which may include assistance from domestic workers, is a significant factor in promoting job satisfaction among employed women. This, in turn, can contribute to the retention of working mothers in the workforce. The practice of employing domestic assistants is not widely prevalent in Norway.

2.5 Coping Mechanisms

Despite the fact that women have assumed diverse roles in their workplaces, they are still expected to fulfill their familial roles alongside their work duties, which can potentially impose a significant burden on them (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Coping mechanisms refer to strategies employed to mitigate the adverse effects of stress (Kim, 2022). According to Mordi et al. (2023), working mothers may utilize family as means of coping. They discovered that single student working mothers struggle to combine their multiple roles and achieve work-life balance which often results in stress. However, mothers employed familial support and a “sister keeper”, an alliance initiative as coping mechanisms in fulfilling multiple role demands and in creating a satisfactory balance between their different spheres of life. A study by Gutek (1993) revealed that working mothers may

paradoxically utilize work and family as coping strategies. The researcher references a mother who discovered comfort and significance in her occupation, subsequent to the passing of her spouse. The widow in question employs her work as a coping mechanism, while simultaneously benefiting from the presence of a supportive and engaged family, who offer solace in the face of work-related stress (Crosby, 1982). Some mothers may resort to extreme measures such as opting out of the workforce entirely as a means of managing stress, while others taught their children to be autonomous (Tingvold et al., 2012).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter delved into the empirical and conceptual literature as background to the study. The following chapter discusses the methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Creswell (2016), methodology is an operational framework that data are placed within to help researchers organize and conduct their research more effectively. This chapter presents the methodological approaches that were used for this study. The chapter outlines the overall research design, the epistemological and ontological position of the study, the strategies used to conduct this research which include the sample size and characteristics, the sampling techniques used, the research setting, the data collection and analysis strategies, the ethical considerations, the trustworthiness of the study as well as the limitations of the study. The chapter ends with the theoretical framework that was used in discussing the study findings.

3.1 Research Paradigm- Ontology and Epistemology

The study's ontological stance is that although the social world exists regardless of people's subjective perceptions, it is only understandable through participants' interpretations, which the researcher may then interpret further. This is consistent with the concept of "subtle realism" as described by Hammersley (1992). As a result, recognizing the significance of research participants' individual interpretations of pertinent research questions suggests the possibility of multiple meanings. The different perspectives add richness to the various ways in which reality is experienced while also reflecting the multifaceted nature of the outside world. This study, which aimed to comprehend and interpret the meanings people attach to their lives, adopted an interpretivist epistemological perspective as opposed to a positivist one. In contrast to positivism, which holds that reality is determined objectively, interpretive research holds that reality is socially constructed rather than being predetermined. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how people construct their "social world" by sharing meanings and interacting with one another (Myers, 2019).

The underlying premise of interpretivism is that it is easier to comprehend people's perceptions or the meanings they attach to their lives when they are placed in their social context and constrained by time (Creswell, 2009). In addition, interpretivism holds that there are multiple realities that are sufficiently complex to allow for multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, the study adopts more flexible and personal research frameworks rather than the rigid frameworks typical of positivist research. This adaptability enables an openness to understand what is perceived to be reality. Taking an interpretivist stance meant that the researcher recognizes that people cannot be separated from their knowledge, and that the researcher and the

participants are mutually interdependent (Cohen et al., 2007). This promotes openness to learning new things throughout the study.

3.2 Research Design

The study's objectives called for an exploration of the experiences, interpretations, and meanings mothers ascribe to their own lives in regard to work-life balance, and the generation of findings based on the shared experiences of participants, making the qualitative research approach the most appropriate to use. As this was a qualitative investigation, phenomenology was employed. This approach was most suitable because it allowed me to inquire into the 'whys' and 'hows' of mothers' interactions with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This design is the best fit because it closely aligns with the research goals by describing and reporting the meanings of the phenomena shared by multiple mothers (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As Creswell and Poth (2017) pointed out, phenomenology is crucial because it not only provides a description of the process but, as an interpretative process, the researcher makes an analysis of the various meanings of the participants' reported lived experiences.

3.3 Study Area

The research was conducted in Stavanger, a municipality in Rogaland, Norway. Stavanger, the oil capital of Norway, is highly urbanized, and a higher proportion of its population is made up of immigrants than the national average. According to Statistics Norway (2023) immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents make up 16% and 3.9% of the population respectively. This figure includes immigrants with a Ghanaian background. This study area was ideal for the research due to its great diversity of women from different ethnic backgrounds, and the increased participation of women employed in the labor market. Geographically, Stavanger was selected because it was more convenient for the researcher, and the social network was very helpful in recruiting participants.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Strategy

The study involved six (6) participants who were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. In phenomenological qualitative studies, scholars argue that the in-depth information collected from participants are valued more than the numbers (Allan & Eatough, 2016; Dworkin, 2012). Thus, a small size was appropriate for this study. Furthermore, it was easier to recruit

immigrant mothers from Ghana because there was an active Ghanaian Association in Rogaland with over one hundred members of which the researcher was a student member. Hence the use of convenience and snowball sampling. Personal contact with some members of the Association made it possible to gain rich data. Bryman (2016) posits that convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility. He further noted that snowball sampling is a form of convenience sampling where the researcher makes the initial contact with some participants who are relevant to the research topic and then uses this initial contact to identify potential study participants. Thus, this explained how some participants were recruited for this study. Mothers were chosen instead of fathers because it has been argued that parenting is gendered (Gran, 2019; Zuurmond et al., 2022). Moreover, the researcher had a personal interest in women's gender identity and its relation to managing work-life and care responsibilities at home. Ghana was set as the informants' nationality due to accessibility so it would be easy in terms of participant recruitment. Additionally, the Ghanaian nationality was chosen because there were many related studies on work-life from the western, Asian or Middle East perspectives. Therefore, it was interesting to gain insight into the perspectives and lived experiences of Ghanaian immigrant mothers within the Norwegian context.

3.5 Participant Recruitment

The inclusion criteria for participants were: they should be Ghanaian immigrant mothers who arrived from Ghana to Norway, had at least one minor child, lived in Norway for at least two years, and were fluent in English or a local Ghanaian language, preferably "Twi", since it is a widely spoken language in Ghana. Two years was the minimum period participants should have lived in Norway because it was assumed that was a reasonable period for a person to get acquainted with a new environment, despite the variety of factors that affect their integration process (Berry, 2005). Participants were to be either married or single, living in Norway, and engaged in some form of employment to reflect on their experiences balancing work and family life in Norway and Ghana. Despite the meaning of parenting or childrearing roles evolving over time within the Ghanaian context, gender roles still tend to be stereotyped (Waterhouse, 2017). In a two-parent or dual-earner home, a working mother is left with greater childrearing responsibility than the man. However, there was uniformity in terms of their marital status, although it was not anticipated. For the purpose of this study, women were considered from the ages of 18 to 60. Another criterion was that participants should have attained at least a primary level of education.

3.6 In-depth Interviews

All research participants were involved in semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded and later transcribed. Additionally, field notes were also taken. The interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide (see Appendix A) with open-ended questions to allow participants to freely express their thoughts about the research topic. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), the use of a semi-structured interview guide allows for flexibility, probing into fresh insights that will surface from the interviews while also ensuring that interview questions are focused on the study objectives. They added that this enables the use of numerous and even contradictory sources of information, which will deepen and enrich the understanding of the research. In order for the participants to feel comfortable sharing their lived experiences, the interviews were held in their natural environments. Gagnon et al. (2015) proposed that the interview location was a crucial component of the interview process and that the space and place in the interview context were one way for the researcher to practice reflexivity.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Transcription

According to Punch and Oancea (2014), data analysis, an essential part of qualitative research, comprises of three coordinated phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing. The nature of qualitative data necessitates the identification of themes and reduction, transformation, or coding of the data into forms that are clear and understandable. The first step in the analysis process was to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews. Transcription is a time-consuming process that should be planned in advance (McMullin, 2023). A thorough transcription of what was said was completed without any omission. This was chosen because the recording was viewed as a dialogue in which all of the words were important in reproducing the participants' accounts. This approach was the best way to obtain rich data that can be analyzed in depth while avoiding being influenced by theoretical concepts, thinking of possible responses, and asking direct questions. To make the written text clearer, words like "yeah" were omitted. In cases where a participant omitted a word, parentheses were included in the transcription. Participants were contacted when further explanation was needed to fully comprehend a quotation. For accuracy and correctness, the transcribed data was double-checked.

3.7.2 Thematic Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79), thematic analysis entails “identifying, analyzing and reporting themes” that are relevant to the research topic. This analytical tool was chosen because of its flexibility; it can be used with various theoretical and epistemological approaches and is not primarily dependent on theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Additionally, this analytical strategy was well suited to the realist epistemology, which focuses on reporting the mothers' experiences, meanings, and realities, given that the study's goal was to investigate the experiences of immigrant mothers in maintaining a work-life balance in Norway. After transcribing the data, I immersed myself in the data by reading the information repeatedly and becoming familiar with it. I took some notes about recurring patterns I noticed as I read the data. After getting a handle on the data, I started manually coding it to identify and group common interlocking patterns into nodes. Thus, I had a general idea of what the data meant when I started the coding phase. The coding became flexible after reading the transcripts again and switching back and forth with the data. The data were not coded to fit into preconceived themes; rather, the themes emerged from the data in a bottom-up approach, making the data analysis more inductive than theoretical (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This does not imply, however, that the data analysis was conducted in a theoretical or epistemological vacuum (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Neuman’s (2014) criteria for qualitative research quality were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. The four criteria- credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability- taken collectively showed how well this study was done. According to Golafshani (2015), the idea of credibility entails taking steps to ensure scientific rigor by concentrating on the topic of the study, the research context, the choice of research participants, and data collection techniques. He contended that participants' accounts can be described in depth and in context to ensure credibility. In this study, credibility was ensured by accurately reporting what the mothers said and illustrating it with quotes. To reduce bias in the study, it was also crucial to maintain reflexivity. The research was also subject to constructive criticism by the study’s supervisor and peers (Kelly et al., 2014). According to Yilmaz (2013), transferability is possible if the results of qualitative research can be applied to similar contexts. The study used a thorough description of background knowledge, the study area, context, people, actions, and events as described by the

participants to ensure transferability. Thick descriptions were prioritized over a larger sample because the focus is not on generalizations but on a probe into how specific women give meaning to their life-worlds under specific circumstances and contexts (Yilmaz, 2013). Dependability was ensured in the study by thoroughly planning and outlining each stage of the research process as well as the choices made in accordance with qualitative research standards (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, it was essential to critically reflect on the entire research process and identify its shortcomings as well as its strengths and efficiency. Confirmability was attained in this study by making sure that all interpretations were based on the data and not the researcher's preconceived notions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9 The Role of the Researcher

The likelihood of my background influencing the study was high because I am a Ghanaian citizen who lives in Norway. To obtain accurate and credible results, I remained aware of my subject location. I have some knowledge of what makes a good work-life balance because of my prior social work training. However, as a researcher, I had to be reflective and open-minded because I knew that my own experiences and ideas might have an impact on the study. My willingness to be open-minded made it easier for me to comprehend the difficulties the mothers were facing and the resources that were at their disposal to help them cope and strike a balance between work and life. My personal anticipation of how I will balance my future work and motherly responsibilities also served as my motivation for doing this study. My interest in the experiences of women who are juggling multiple roles was piqued by this, and I anticipate that this research will serve as a source of inspiration and a reminder in the near future. With this background, it was crucial I did not assume the role of a Ghanaian immigrant woman during the data collection process, but rather a student on a mission to learn and unlearn.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2016) posits that ethics are an integral part of every research project and can be described as moral standards that guide researchers in doing and reporting research without dishonesty or the purpose of harming study participants in general. Permission was sought from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (see Appendix C). The study adhered to the following ethical principles as outlined by Creswell (2016): informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, management of information, and no harm to participants.

Informed consent was sought as a requirement for conducting the interviews. Participants were given information about the purpose of the study before the in-person meeting. An informed consent letter was given to participants (see Appendix B) at a first meeting where the researcher reiterated the purpose of the study and that the study was a requirement in partial fulfillment for a Nordic master's degree in social work and welfare. Participants' doubts about the purpose and scope of the research were addressed during the meeting. Participants were handed a copy of the informed consent to read, understand, and agree to by signing before the interview. Additionally, it was verbally explained to them that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

In referring to harm to participants, not only physical harm is meant but also emotional. Being reflexive in this study as a student researcher and taking into consideration the power imbalance while conducting the interviews with the target group of participants, immigrant mothers, it was anticipated that they may experience some emotional responses on some issues they deem to be sensitive. In order to minimize this, non-direct questions were asked on sensitive issues. In this way, interviewees felt they guided the interview choosing what to say about the topic. It was also imperative as a researcher with some social work training experience to observe feelings of discomfort amongst the participants and pause the interview to allow the participants to process their emotions. I emphasized the importance of participants' engagement in the research for the immigrant community and Norwegian society. By highlighting to participants their potential contributions to the study, a unidirectional relationship and power asymmetries were avoided.

The principle of confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms and not providing identifying details of the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded on a phone and later converted into a text-based format for management. To protect the participants' identities, the names of the participants were not included in the transcripts, which were kept on my password-protected computer.

It was crucial to hold regular debriefing meetings with the study's supervisor to talk about potential improvements to the research. It was also during these meetings that certain shortcomings, such as personal preferences and biases, that had gone unnoticed were brought to light.

Finally, when the researcher presents the findings in a different way than the participants intended, deception may take place in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). The researcher made it clear that

the participants' views were taken as they were intended to be taken. To make sure their opinions were accurately reflected, the final text was presented to them.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

The ideal sample size for this study would be greater than ten, but due to time constraints, this was not feasible. Therefore, the results of this study are not intended to be generalized to other mothers in a different context, but rather to further our understanding of the struggles that immigrant mothers face as they attempt to strike a healthy balance between their obligations to their families and their career.

Contextual limitations made it impossible to gather feedback from other African immigrants who are not from Ghana. Therefore, it was impossible to generalize the findings to all Africans in the Norwegian context.

Since the participants had high academic credentials, I figured their level of English was sufficient for the interviews. I only became aware that language was a problem to some extent with the second and fifth participants. The participants' extensive time spent in Norway may have affected their English proficiency. The English proficiency of the second and fifth participants was occasionally insufficient for self-expression. Due to their inability to communicate in Twi, the local dialect of Ghana, they were forced to resort to using some Norwegian words. But it was intended that people would understand it in the same manner they expressed it and that it would capture their own meanings. This allowed them to find concrete words to describe their life-worlds. The transcription of their accounts was more difficult. Despite my fluency in English, it took more effort to translate words or expressions in Norwegian to mean exactly the same as in English. However, the English translations found for the Norwegian words used were verified by an expert translator.

3.12 Theoretical Framework

The study is framed within the context of acculturation, particularly bi-cultural socialization, and resilience theory, exploring how mothers strike a balance between their work and caregiving roles.

3.12.1 Bi-Cultural Socialization, a bi-dimensional Model of Acculturation

Immigrating to a country where the majority of the population comes from a different cultural background brings different cultures together. Acculturation refers to the reciprocal processes of cultural and psychological change that occur when two or more groups of people from different cultures come into contact over time (Sam & Berry, 2010). Researchers in the field of acculturation have long relied on models such as Berry's (1980) bi-dimensional model of acculturation, which describes immigrant attitudes toward the host society along two dimensions: the desire to maintain one's own cultural practices and the desire to adopt those of the dominant group. To be bicultural means to feel at home in both one's native culture and the culture of the host society. It is applicable not only to immigrants who have come from other countries, but also to children of immigrants who – although they are born and raised in the receiving society – are likely deeply embedded in the heritage culture at home with their families (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006).

Furthermore, Benet-Martnez et al. (2002) argue that biculturalism requires a fusion of one's heritage and host cultures. From this angle, the bicultural person chooses elements from both their heritage and receiving cultures and combines them into a unique 'culture' that cannot be pinned down to a single cultural tradition. Ethnic minorities, according to the bi-cultural socialization theory, are socially disadvantaged because of norm conflicts. Bicultural tension and conflict led to a lack of socialization opportunities.

When a person's cultural background causes them to hold beliefs and practices that are at odds with those of their wider community, bicultural conflict can arise (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). It can cause bicultural tension, which is defined as difficulty satisfying two sets of expectations at once. The degree to which both systems support or reject the individual determines how well they will be able to deal with the conflict. To cope with host-country criticism and rejection, one must have a strong sense of who they are. Successfully learning a new language and culture can give a person a renewed sense of agency (Portes & Rumbant, 2001, 2006). As Cheah et al. (2013) and John and Montgomery (2012) point out, there is a growing body of research suggesting that ethnic

minority parents in multicultural societies like Norway believe in bicultural socialization. Parents in these communities often stress the importance of helping their children integrate positively into both their own cultural traditions and those of the host community. The bi-cultural socialization model has been used in numerous acculturation studies, but it has been criticized for assuming that people in multicultural societies share a single culture (Ferguson et al., 2012). In Norway, for example, many different ethnic groups coexist with the dominant European-American culture (Statistics Norway, 2014).

This research benefited from Berry's (1980) bi-cultural socialization model to better understand the difficulties immigrant mothers face as they try to strike a work-life balance in Norway. According to the model, mothers in this study may have to constantly negotiate "between here and there, past and present, home country and host nation, self and other" (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p.141-142) in order to make the transition to an efficient adaptation type, which is more likely to be influenced by social and structural contexts than a predetermined outcome of integration. As a result, this may lead to a re-evaluation of family roles, which has the potential to weaken the support mechanisms of individuals.

3.12.2 Resilience as a socio-ecological concept

Ungar (2011) posits that resilience can be characterized as an individual's capacity to overcome obstacles or adapt well when confronted with difficulties. The ability of an individual to successfully cope with adversity necessitates the utilization of psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources to facilitate positive adaptation. The process of developing resilience is subject to variation over time, contingent upon an individual's engagement with their environment (Kim-Cohen & Turkewitz, 2012). The notion of resilience is characterized by a spectrum that can manifest in diverse measures across distinct domains of an individual's existence, as posited by Pietrzak and Southwick (2011). For example, an individual who exhibits successful adaptation within a professional setting may encounter challenges in achieving optimal functioning within their familial context.

In the context of migration, moving to another country and setting up one's life in a new environment can be challenging despite welfare provisions that may have been put in place by a welfare state like Norway. Thus, this may lead to the conclusion that mothers in this study who

have faced challenges moving to Norway, have built resilience. One of the aims of this research was to find out whether the mothers' perception of welfare institutions in Norway influence their work-life balance, and whether they would access welfare resources to help with work-life balance should they need them.

According to Wright and Masten (2015) there exist three distinct categories of resilience models, namely person-focused, variable-focused, and hybrid models. The person-focused model places emphasis on the individual, whereas the variable-focused model directs attention towards potential risk factors, resources, and mediators of said risk factors. The hybrid model integrates the person-focused and variable-focused models. Ungar (2008) suggests a hybrid model of resilience. He views resilience as context-dependent and proposes a socio-ecological definition of resilience as an individual's ability to navigate the psychological, socio-cultural, and physical resources required to deal with difficulties and adapt well. These can be psychological resources in the form of personality traits and self-motivation for instance. They can also be collective or relational resources such as family support, a sense of belonging to a community. Resilience thus comprises the individual qualities and their interactions with their environment that promote a person's well-being (Ungar 2008, 2011). An individual's ability to make use of resources available to him or her becomes important and at the same time, the resources and opportunities play an important role in an individual's life.

According to Ungar (2012, p.17) an individual's agency is a crucial factor in their capacity to access resources. However, it is the responsibility of families, communities, and governments to ensure that these resources are available in culturally relevant ways that meet the needs of those who require them. Resilience is a characteristic that is commonly observed in individuals, and its manifestation is influenced by both personal attributes and the social environment. However, research suggests that the social context in which an individual is situated may play a more significant role in promoting recovery and enhancing the overall well-being of individuals experiencing stress.

Consistent with Ungar's (2008) hybrid model of resilience, it is my assertion that the social ecology or environment of mothers is critical to their integration into a new society. As a result, the present study employed the socio-ecological model of resilience to comprehend the work-life balance of immigrant mothers.

3.13 Conclusion

Having fully elucidated the the methodology in this chapter, the following chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter commences with an overview of the characteristics of the research participants. The study proceeds with a presentation of the findings and discussions based on the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews. The findings address the research objectives presented in the second chapter: to investigate the perceptions of work-life balance among immigrant mothers in Norway; to seek knowledge about how the cultural context of immigrant mothers influences this perception of work-life balance; to investigate how immigrant mothers perceive welfare institutions that work with immigrant families in Norway; to gain understanding of how these perceptions affect how they maintain a work-life balance in Norway and influence their decisions to access Norwegian welfare resources and services.

The findings are analyzed in light of immigrant mothers' views, which are categorized into themes and compared with existing literature through a repetitive, inductive process. In addition, the researcher's observations and critical reflections are incorporated into the study's discussions in this chapter. An inductive approach was used for the data analysis, drawing on the words of the participants, while what perspectives and patterns to focus on was primarily determined by the literature review and theoretical framework. What emerged from the data were four main themes and ten interconnecting sub-themes. Table 1 below gives a representation of the themes, subthemes, and categories.

Table 1: Presentation of analyzed data.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Categories
Perceptions and Experiences of Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Conflict • The time factor and everyday Routine • Intensive Mothering- Personal Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Demanding nature of balancing work and care responsibilities. ii. Individual experiences of WLB ii. Equal attention to both work and family life. v. Value for time- Norwegians value time v. Regular care work routine- cooking, cleaning, dropping, and picking children from school. vi. Privileging motherhood over work. Thus, influencing choice of career path

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of role conflict on self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Choice of career- flexibility with work schedules, nature of job ii. No time for personal space x. Impact on physical, emotional, and mental well-being
Socio-cultural Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Lack of informal social support in Norway- family, friends, work colleagues, neighbors ii. An informal social support system in Norway provided by the Ghanaian community. iii. The role of networking in navigating both work and personal spheres of life. iv. Immediate/Nuclear family members as a social support system in Norway v. Expensive care assistance in Norway
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothering Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Individualistic culture verses collectivistic culture ii. Differences in cultural values and norms ii. A high sense of cultural identity (Ghanaian context) v. Merging the positive sides from both cultures v. Changes in Parenting style
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shift in gender roles- Shared household tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gender norms- the Ghanaian context ii. Fathers’ active involvement in housework- coping strategy to reduce burden on mothers iii. Shared Household Responsibility- children’s active role in the home.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare provisions for a conducive work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Parental leave ii. Compensation for time used

Perceptions of the Norwegian Welfare System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views about NAV and CWS 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Norway is a good place to raise children. ii. Good healthcare system iii. Good educational system iv. Shared Parental Leave v. Employment benefits vi. Child Welfare Support vii. Equality in Welfare benefits viii. Despite the positive side of the Welfare system, mothers will not rely on welfare benefits. ix. Different views about CWS x. Fears about CWS xi. Lack of cultural competence/ cultural sensitivity/ cultural awareness
Building resilience and coping strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of conscientiousness and self-care 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Time Management and Planning Skills ii. Being consistent iii. Self-motivation and positive mindset iv. Goal-oriented behaviour v. Taking care of oneself- mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Religion as a coping mechanism

4.1 Socio-Demographic Composition of Participants

Six Ghanaian immigrant mothers living within the Stavanger Municipality participated in this study. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the participants' specific age and profession are not included in the demographic composition. Table 2 shows that all participants were married with at least one minor child, were currently employed, and were born and raised in Ghana. All participants moved to Norway on the basis of family reunification which is supported by Norwegian legislation. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, individuals can reside in Norway on the basis of family reunification, sometimes referred to as family immigration if a spouse, cohabitant, siblings, parents of children or a child of someone (sponsor) who has legal residence in Norway (The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, n.d.).

All participants had either a diploma or a bachelor's degree, which might be reflective of sampling bias. However, Palmer (2006) asserts that Ghana has comparatively stood out among many Sub-Saharan African countries in its educational advancements. Education is widely regarded as an investment and a pathway to societal development which might suggest why Ghanaian parents encourage their children to pursue higher education (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017; Palmer, 2006). A study by Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah (2013) showed that parents' educational backgrounds are thought to help women advance and close the gender gap in education.

Table 2 Demographic features of mothers

Participants	Age Range	Religious Stance	Marital Status	Number of Children	Level of Education	Reason for Relocation	Time in Norway	Previous Field of Work from Ghana	Current Field of Work
Rose	40-50	Religious	Married	1	Diploma	Family Reunification	6 years	Public Service	Hospitality
Joana	50-60	Religious	Married	5	Diploma	Family Reunification	33 years	Education	Hospitality
Dinah	40-50	Religious	Married	3	Bachelor	Family Reunification	13 years	Financial Sector	Health
Mary	40-50	Non-religious	Married	3	Masters	Family Reunification	17 years	Studying/ Education	Energy
Emelia	30-40	Religious	Married	2	Bachelor	Family Reunification	19 years	Unemployed	Health
Paula	40-50	Religious	Married	4	Bachelor	Family Reunification	17 years	Education	Education

4.2 Mothers' Perceptions of Work-life balance

The literature on how WLB is perceived helps one understand that WLB is subjective and depends on the person in question (Chistruga-Sinchevici & Bargan, 2020). The views of the participants in this study concur with this. According to the findings, mothers may take steps to balance their caregiving and work responsibilities depending on how they view the ideal work-life balance. In

line with the first research question which sought to map the mothers' perceptions and experiences with regard to work-life balance, three key themes emerged from the data: role conflict, everyday routine and the time factor, intensive mothering- a personal choice and the impact of role conflict on self-care.

4.2.1 Role Conflict

In light of the advocacy for changing power relations in favour of women's rights, social justice, gender equality, and the transformation of economic, social, and political structures, the pressure to achieve work-life "balance" has recently become a significant part of the work of gender activists (Lewis et al., 2007). This is because women were withdrawing from the labour market due to the stress they experience from the dual roles they play as mothers and career women (Kirkpatrick, 2010). The results indicated that all six mothers went through some degree of stress, both physically and mentally, as a result of their conflicting dual roles as working women and mothers. All mothers reported experienced conflict in effectively performing their roles due to the incompatibility of work and motherly responsibilities, which all perceived as demanding. The mothers' responses were all similar because in the majority of African societies, childcare and housework were seen as the mother's responsibility rather than the father's, illuminating a pattern of gender norms where some roles are assigned to men and others to women (Adinkrah, 2021). Participants normalized gender roles, as evidenced by their narratives, despite living in Norway, a country that emphasizes gender equality. As described by Joana and Rose:

Joana: ... It (balancing mothering and work) is not an easy job. It is not an ABCD job. It is a very tough job...

Rose: ... Maintaining a work life and the caring of your child is all about the cooking, the cleaning and that work that you are doing.... For Ghanaians, ...if you tell your husband to do something, sometimes he will not do it and he will just leave it like that. This is because this is how we are, how an African woman is brought up...

Despite the conflicting roles, a few of the participants believed that there was great joy in working in two different domains. Paula had this to say:

Paula:I know that is my responsibility and I am supposed to do it (mothering) with passion and joy...

The findings above are in line with studies by Boakye (2016) and Owusu-Poku (2014) who discovered that, within the Ghanaian context, career mothers viewed work-life balance as the ability to give equal concentration and time to both work and other aspects of life. They further reported that despite this perception, these mothers spent more time in their work than other aspects of their lives creating an imbalance and affecting their well-being (Boakye, 2016; Owusu-Poku, 2014). In relation to the current study, this may help to explain why working mothers found it challenging to give each aspect of their lives equal time and attention because of the demanding nature of their work and family roles.

4.2.2 Everyday Routine and the Time Factor

The women reported that their difficult experiences were due to their regular and tedious routines. They had to get up early to prepare breakfast, pack lunches, and pack appropriate clothing for school activities in order to avoid being late. They also reported that they dropped and picked up their children from school, accompanied them to after-school activities (SFO), did housework, helped with homework, and put their children to bed on time. One had this to say:

Emelia: You know it is not easy...you will send them to school, come back home, you have to be there, prepare supper, and make sure they eat, help them finish their homework, sit down with them, watch television and cleanup.

In relation to the mothers' regular routine, the findings highlighted the time factor. The findings showed that mothers identified the value of time in fulfilling both work and care responsibilities. All six mothers acknowledged how their family life and professional life demanded a lot of their time, which can be challenging. This was what Joana said:

Like I said, here, we use time for everything. Our time is very important... You go and come back from work at the right time. Like I said, I do not joke with my time... After work, you pick them up and come home. You see to it that you have to buy food on your way home, come and prepare, go to the kindergarten, bring them home and feed them...

Similarly, when asked how they manage their time, a mother had this to say:

Dinah: If I am at work, I know I am at work, so I have to put in my maximum effort, so I do not need to bring my family life into my work.

Dinah further commented:

Focusing more on planning because I feel that is the only way out. If you plan you can achieve that balance.

The mothers struggled with time management, probably as a result of the different cultural perspectives on the value of time between the Norwegian and Ghanaian society. Mothers believed that balancing their caregiving duties and work responsibilities necessitated giving both aspects of their life equal attention. Thus, when they are at work, they focus on their work and when they are at home, the focus is on the family. They also highlighted the importance of planning in time management. Considering the aforementioned, one might suggest that mothers have had to learn to respect time since moving to Norway. As described by Paula:

Especially the time because we do not respect time where I come from. That one is a fact but not all Ghanaians, most of us including me where I was coming from, we do not respect time...

Dugan et al. (2012) suggest that time is an important predictor of work-life conflict, and that individuals reported stress of not having sufficient time to fulfil their obligations in some aspects of their lives resulting in work-life conflict. The study further indicated work and caregiving roles are asymmetrical and that one role usually outweighs the other which has a negative impact on the overall well-being of individuals. The results of this study are also in line with a study by Annor (2014) who emphasizes time and daily routines as factors in achieving work-life balance. Participants in his study acknowledged how routine their family responsibilities were, like picking up and dropping off children at school just as Joana and Emelia narrated. Emelia, for instance, highlighted that it was stressful and time-consuming for her to fulfil her house and care work. Annor (2014) further argued that parents cited devoting more time to family responsibilities, which negatively hampered their work productivity. This coincides with what Dinah, for instance said,

...But here in Norway, if I am called that my child is sick, I have to go and pick up that child so, it will affect my job in a way.

Additionally, mothers were more widely affected by the time demands of their care responsibilities.

4.2.3 Intensive Mothering - a Personal Choice

This theme “intensive mothering” emerges as one of the key personal choices of the sampled participants. That is, the participants were of the view that privileged motherhood is one of the important determinants in the choice of career path. Intensive mothering requires the presence of the mothers constantly, and to be selfless. Four participants placed their “mother” status as an important place in their lives. The findings revealed that the role of motherhood is so influential to the mothers that it affects how they experience their realities, that is work-life balance and the decisions they made including the choice of their career path. For instance, the second participant privileged her motherly duties over the kind of work she does. She revealed that she wanted her children to have a good life so that is why she chose her current profession due to its flexibility so that she could spend quality time taking care of her children. This is what Joana had to say:

...I was here for a reason, a purpose. That is why we chose to do this one. And it is because of my kids that is why I am still doing this cleaning and I am still here...The children must always come first because you choose to have them. I chose myself to have five children...I do not see it as I was cleaning or washing or cooking so as far the kids, all five of them are in their individual ways or levels, I am okay. I am very satisfied.

Mary also narrated:

...It is all about my priorities and my goals that I have set. Like now I am at the crossroad of trying to decide whether I want to stay in this company any longer because I have been here in this company for almost five years and I feel okay, now I am done... I want to move on to do something else. But then, anytime I think of it, and then I remember..., look at the freedom that you have. The flexibility that you have, look at how this work helps you to be a mother...being a mother is so important to me that I am like, okay, let me just hold on, and then just stay with them and do activities with them. They do a lot of activities, and it makes me very proud of them.

The aforementioned findings suggest that the status of "mother" boosts self-fulfilment, suggestive of the women's aspirations towards intensive mothering. However, this does not imply that mothers value being mothers more than their personal freedom; rather, it suggests that they value the creation of a fulfilling new kind of bond with their children. They place a high value on pursuing their professional and personal goals, but they also see being a mother as a role that,

despite its difficulties, gives them fulfilment. According to a study by McIntosh et al. (2012), some women put motherhood before career advancement. They further contended that the number of age-dependent children could have a detrimental effect on a mother's ability to climb the professional ladder. This may suggest that mothers are more inclined to privilege their children's growth and create bonds, especially with younger the children. The push for intensive mothering without due consideration to intensive parenting - that focuses on the parenting roles of women and men - supports the claim that all women are assumed to be heterosexual middle-class mothers who spend their entire lives raising children (Seepamore & Sewpaul, 2021).

4.2.4 The impact of role conflict on self-care

Findings reveal that four of the mothers had insufficient time for themselves as a result of juggling their professional role and care responsibilities. Their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing was negatively impacted by not making time for their personal space. Rose had this to say regarding this issue:

Rose: ... it is very hard. It is all about time...you have to finish your work on time and when you come home, you become very tired because it is not an easy job. You cannot get time for yourself and when you come home, you will have to prepare something to eat and at the end of the day, you are tired.

This result is of indicative that role conflict plays an important role in selfcare. The supports the result of earlier research which stated that role conflicts are of strategic importance to individual happiness, and family contentment (Latip et al., 2022). This indicates that individuals who could not manage their roles and self-care might contribute to stress and physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion (López-Cabarcos et al., 2023). Further, this might be the reflection of the women's immigrant status, as they have a lot of work-related issues and both immediate and extended family to manage.

4.3 Socio-cultural Context

The study also investigated how the socio-cultural context of mothers influenced their perceptions of work-life balance. Findings from the study highlighted themes in relation to how the Ghanaian context influenced their perceptions of work-life balance: support system, mothering practices, a shift in gender roles and welfare provisions for a conducive work environment.

4.3.1 Support System

A recurring theme was the role of social support in easing the conflict between work role and caregiving responsibilities. Social support in the work-family interface consisted of family relatives, hired caretakers, friends, co-workers and others who were involved in providing assistance, advise, guidance with the aim of assisting individuals fulfil their care roles. Comparing the Ghanaian and the Norwegian contexts, five mothers reported that they lacked the social support system in Norway to efficiently balance work and care roles. As described by Emelia:

It is a little bit difficult here actually if you compare it to Ghana...In Ghana, you can easily send someone to buy you foodstuff, at least you can get someone to help you. Here, there is no help. Everything is on you. (Emelia)

One mother indicated that she had some relatives in Norway so she could easily contact them when they were available to assist her with childcare. She had this to say:

My mum, my father and my siblings are here so I hardly go to people actually. I have friends but if I need help, mostly with my boys, my mum will come and help out or my sister or I have a friend. (Emelia)

It was also revealed by five mothers that they had built a good relationship with some people from their workplace, neighbourhood or the Ghanaian community in Norway who had now become more like a family to them. One mother had this to say:

I met a woman here through another friend like a hairdresser and then that person comes from the same town as my mum, and she has taken me like a daughter. So, if I need help sometimes, I just call her, and she comes around. Yes, she is also a member of the Ghanaian Association. She has lived here for long. (Dinah)

The same participant stated how expensive it was to hire a caretaker to assist with her care responsibilities at home. She had this to say:

...childcare is quite different here. In Ghana, I am used to people coming in to help. I mean, you always have someone to help, and it is affordable to employ someone to help you with childcare. But in Norway, it is challenging, it is expensive to hire somebody to take care of your children when you go to work. (Dinah)

Two mothers also highlighted the role of networking through one's informal social support system in navigating the work-family interface. One of them made this comment:

Mary: In terms of networking, it will be able to get you a job. Here, they do it but it's a very professional way of doing it. What you need to do is belong to a group. You need to have the network, maybe your kids' activities. It could be your kids are playing football, basketball, or whatever. You need to get to know the parents because if there is something that comes up, they discuss it in those group settings and that is how come you get to know what is happening in the world.

The aforementioned findings support the importance of support systems for migrant workers (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Hulley et al., 2023). It appears that immigrant mothers are aware of the various functions that informal social support plays in their lives as they navigate work-family responsibilities. The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is a distinctive feature of the work-family interface in the African context. Aryee (2005) acknowledges that parenting is a shared responsibility with other members of society and is not solely the responsibility of biological parents. Mothers indicated that it was challenging for them to devote the same amount of time and attention to their work and caregiving duties at home due to the absence of assistance from others in Norway. This put a significant burden on mothers. However, by establishing social networks with other Ghanaians in Norway, parents at their children's schools, and their co-workers to bridge the gap they were missing from Ghana.

4.3.2 Mothering Practices

Mothering is rooted in cultural meanings portrayed in roles and expectations of children and parents recognized as adequate to a specific group (Yvosi, 2014). Thus, the meanings of behaviour are entrenched within specific contexts which differ. Findings revealed that although the six mothers experienced a desired motherhood, the relationship they established with children was influenced by how they understood their role as a mother and their conceptualization of childhood. The cultural norms and expectations that define "mothering" are in turn shaped by other variables like religion and dominant societal discourses (Seepamore et al., 2021). The participants underlined the idea that different contexts have particular norms, attitudes, and behaviours. This is consistent with Paat's (2013) view that people preserve certain behaviours by adhering to standards in their daily actions based on that intrinsic cultural logic. De Haan (2011) claims that immigrant

mothers face cultural challenges when they carry out their parental responsibilities. As a result, they adopted a hybrid form of mothering which implied merging their old and new practices (De Haan, 2011).

In line with the above studies, all mothers pointed out that both contexts of Norway and Ghana have positives aspects of raising children, which necessitates selectively and instrumentally drawing from what is necessary in the Norwegian context, but as well sticking to some core Ghanaian cultural values. Accordingly, they had developed distinctive mothering methods that they thought were appropriate. The bi-cultural socialization model, which connects the aforementioned findings, states that in order for mothers to successfully integrate into Norwegian society, they must constantly strike a balance "between here and there, past and present, ethnic culture and mainstream culture, self and the other" in terms of their caregiving responsibilities (Bhatia & Ria, 2009, p. 141–142). Paula had this to say:

I think as I said always there is a good balance because there is a clash of culture here. I grew up in a different culture and different beliefs and I have come to adapt to different cultures and different beliefs also. But I am not here to change what they have been growing up with here. But I think the good ones from my background I can add to my children. I can teach them (children) the beliefs I have, the values that I have from my home country.

Mothers highlighted how important it was to spend time with their children, build a relationship of mutual respect and trust through good communication, and to treat the children with affection. Paula highlighted this as a positive value she had incorporated in raising her children.

Paula: ...One difference I have noticed here. Yeah, they use their time to talk to the children, explain to them. They give them a reason for everything ... But over there, not that we do not know the reason why we are telling our children no and not to do this. But we do not have time to give them the reason why. So, that is why the children sometimes see us as strict and that we do not allow them. But every child, you have to spend time with the child, explain to the child and get the child's consent. I think they will get to understand you better. So, that is the difference, maybe the motherhood here and back in Ghana.

Mary also highlighted the Ghanaian cultural identity as influential in modifying her childrearing practices while trying to reconcile their ethnic heritage and the Norwegian norms and values. Berry (2005) asserts that acculturation processes are associated with diverse parenting challenges which may be real or perceived in relation to subjective and objective differences among individuals. As immigrant mothers adapt to a society contradictory to their world view, they might risk losing support for their heritage values, attitudes, and beliefs (Kabatanya, 2017). Mothers reported that despite their children being Norwegian by birth, their heritage will always be questioned attributed to their appearance. Participants highlighted that it is important that their children know about their heritage, which they thought would enhance their self-worth and appreciation of who they are. The remarks below depict that there were definite values that parents insisted on passing on to their children:

Mary: ...I think like my kids, if you ask them who they are, they will always tell you that they are Ghanaians, but they live in Norway, even though they are born here... I am kind of strict like that, that you are a Ghanaian. What makes you a Ghanaian? Like my kids, all of them have the Ghanaian names, they speak the local language, then you have to eat the food... I tried to combine both the Norwegian and the Ghanaian culture. What I believe in is that we are taking the best from both worlds... My son is 15. He has to learn to keep a home as well. These are not Norwegian culture; these are Ghanaian culture, but I live here, and I see the value for it. My daughter can cook. I raised her up just like a Ghanaian.

4.3.4 A Shift in Gender Roles- Shared Household Tasks

Although there had been a steady transition of women from the private to the public spheres, given the cultural context of Ghana, it was uncommon to see men take on routine, unpaid caregiving roles (Ebrahim, 2023; Teye et al., 2023). The results showed that all six participants' spouses gave them assistance when it came to carrying out the caregiving duties at home.

Paula: I work at a school, so if I do not come early, my husband helps a lot. Also, we are working together as parents to support the children. So, if I am supposed to go to work early, he takes the responsibility to make sure that the children are okay, and they go to school before he leaves the house and also goes to work.

The above excerpt implies that the expectations and responsibilities of parents are defined differently and that these distinctions affect how people behave in different contexts (Few-Demo

& Allen, 2020). Immigrant parents face challenges because moving requires leaving behind significant familial networks. As a result, parenting relationships are also impacted by migration, in addition to gender roles, which are shifting. According to Kabatanya (2017), migration alters gender roles by creating new opportunities as a result of the structural factors of new context. While the men helped, this research found that mothers consistently bore the bulk of the burden of childcare and housework. The mothers' narratives emphasize that their parenting ideologies and practices were supported by dominant discourses on traditional gender roles (Mushunje & Sewpaul, 2021). This suggests that they had internalized these traditional gender roles and were grateful for the spousal support they received, which helped them cope.

The emphasis on father involvement in parenting has gained traction as a result of the increase in dual-earner families, which are associated with advantages like father quotas and parental leaves that encourage father involvement in parenting (Menjívar & Abrego, 2016). This may help explain the involvement of fathers in the home.

The results also showed that some participants assign their children to do the housework as a way to lessen their workload at home while teaching them to take on chores when they are not around. Dinah had this to say:

Dinah: Sometimes, you get so frustrated, you are doing so many things at the same time, and I have tried to let my children be part of it. So, I have given them what they have to do. I tell them what they have to do. During weekends, you clean your room whiles I also wash and iron at the same time.

This is contrary to some contextual arguments within the West African setting, where most of the chores are highly centred around women, regardless of work-life balance (Boateng, 2021). However, this perception has been quite redefined within the Norwegian context, as children seem to be helping their mothers in household chores. That is, context can determine how roles are perceived, and this is evident in this study. My findings also support Annor's (2016) findings that the majority of social support comes from family members, particularly spouses and children, without whom the many working mothers would struggle to cope with work and family demands. Proponents of the hybrid model of resilience argue that relational resources allow individuals to adapt well when confronted with challenges (Ungar, 2008).

4.3.5 Welfare provisions for a conducive work environment

As working mothers, a healthy work-life balance was crucial to them. The results showed that the mothers' participation in the professional space is typically related to welfare provisions that are made available to them in the workplace. Thus, the work environment and various related policies are of great importance should a woman choose to remain or withdraw from the labour market. Responses from the mothers proved that the working environment, structural and state policies were generally conducive for pregnant or lactating mothers. Mary had this to say:

I could speak for my siblings that are still in Ghana. And I think personally, they spend all their time working and even travel time. That is kind of tedious. And there, if you even see how they are compensated at the end of the day, like giving their all and all the time. I think there is a difference there because here, even if I want to work an hour or two, I am compensated for that. So, it gives you value, right? ... but the average Ghanaian woman, I do not think, experiences the joy of working or giving your all like we do here in Norway, because there is value for every time that you put in the work that you do ... if I am working and is a Sunday, and I have to work, I know that we are supposed to work on Sunday, but I am required to work 100% overtime, that they have to pay me. So, taking me away from my family, I am being compensated in another way. In Ghana, we take all these things for granted.

According to Cerami and Wagué (2013) the welfare state in most of Sub-Saharan Africa is emerging, with limited or no support in childcare and other family responsibilities, in contrast to Nordic countries where states play vital roles in welfare provision, including parental leave.

4.4 Perceptions of the Norwegian Welfare System

4.4.1 Views about NAV and CWS

All participants described Norway as a good place to raise a family and work because of its welfare policies that emphasize equality, irrespective of national background and status. The findings further revealed that mothers were pleased with the welfare policies such as the free education, free healthcare, maternity and paternity leave, employment benefits. Mary was of the view that::

It is very good, if it is not abused, because when I came first, it took me a while before I started working. So, when I had my first child, I had this thing they call it, “engangsstønad”, a one-time allowance. The one time when you have the child, they give you this bulk money. If you have not been working in Norway for some time, but if I, if I got pregnant now in my role, I could take like twelve months leave, and then I get my salary as I should. When you have moved to a new country and their finances are no good, right? And the government is thinking about you that, hey, you are pregnant, I am giving you 50,000nok.

Rose and Joana also had this say regarding the welfare system:

Rose: Yes, yes, Norway is a good country to raise your child in terms of the health, the education. They have good education here...We all have equal rights about children welfare. If a Norwegian gets 1,600kr a month, my child, an immigrant also gets the 1,600 whether you are permanently living here or you are a student. So, it is equal.

Joana: ... That one I admire them for that. They do not discriminate between work because that work, me cleaning here and somebody at the office or somebody also is at the classroom that makes the work function very well... With the same salary, we have a standard life...

The findings also reveal that none of the mothers had any personal encounter with CWS. Three mothers had positive views about CWS. Paula had this to say:

In my opinion, it depends on your knowledge about them. Maybe I am working with children, so I am talking from my own perspective...They are not there to harm you, or they are not there to threaten you. The welfare system, even the name itself tells you that they are there for the good of the child and they are there, as a mother, if you have challenges, to support you. So, that is my perception of them.

Three of the participants believed that CWS complies with its mandate, which is to promote the welfare and protection of children residing in Norway. Some mothers had conflicting opinions about CWS. Three mothers based their opinions about CWS on cases reported either by the media or stories by friends from the Ghanaian community and other immigrants who had personal encounters with CWS.

Mary had this to say:

I have not experienced them at all. Like, I have been extremely, I do not know what else to say lucky or blessed, or whatever, depending on where you are standing. But I have lots of my friends that have had issues with this “Barnevernet” ... But immediately, your case goes to Barnevernet, you are in their archives, and they are watching you from a distance. So, the rule is that, just make sure that you do not get in at all...But I think there are a lot of cultural differences that you do not understand. Like me personally with my kids...I established what we call a circle of trust, whatever we discuss in the house, it stays in the house.

Emelia also had this to say:

For me, I do not have any experience with them so, I have heard, and I have read. If you check the statistics, the number of people they have taken control over, how many of them have been able to progress in society? Very little. Oh yes, they have taken a lot of children from their parents.

According to the data, it appears that mothers' opinions have been shaped by the experiences of others. As a result, there are some elements of mistrust and fear, which causes them to be cautious and avoid encounters with CWS. Findings also demonstrate that there is a widespread perception that children who are taken under the care of the CWS are at risk of compromised personal development growth, which supports the assertions of Hollekim et al. (2016). The term "Barnevernet" is commonly associated with negative experiences involving Child Welfare Services. Thrana and Fauske (2014) posit that this perception is reinforced by dominant discourse, creating ambiguity about what is true and false. They further contend that immigrants tend to be more skeptical and anxious as a result of media coverage of issues related to child protection. The media's significant role in shaping dominant discourses is evident as it influences mothers' perceptions, as seen in Emelia's narration. Mary for instance, shared that power played a key role in CWS interventions and emphasized that one is already doomed at the onset of an intervention, because immigrants' parenting efficacy is preconceived as lacking in contrast to the Norwegian way of parenting. Thus, the fears of having children removed are such that she felt blessed and lucky to remain outside of the CWS, and she made a pact with her children with a "circle of trust" to keep matters within the home.

4.5 Building Resilience and Coping Strategies

This theme maps out coping mechanisms in the women adopted to help maintain work-life balance. All the participants indicated that social benefits supplemented their efforts as mothers and career women as the Norwegian welfare state provides support to everyone regardless of national background or status. However, they said that if they encountered difficulties juggling work and family obligations, they would not rely on the welfare assistance. They were brought up to run their own lives even when they encountered difficulties. Markus and Kitayama (1991) note that having an interdependent view of oneself, which is typical of collective societies, denotes self-control and independence. Remarks below illustrate this:

Joana: Like I said, I am not into welfare... It is just extra help, just a little help not to stress you that much...the office is there, but it does not mean that I am not working, I am tired so, I will go there, no. It depends on your situation. You have to work. You have to be independent yourself. Make an effort. Some people are not working at all. Some are not even sick, but they do not want to work. But that is the kind of life especially we the Ghanaian community, most of us, that is not what we want to. We want to be independent.

Additionally, all six mothers identified coping mechanisms they adopted to enable them to navigate the work-life interface.

4.5.1 The role of conscientiousness and self-care

The findings show that mothers mobilize psychological resources to strike a balance between their work and caregiving roles, which accords with Ungar's(2008) hybrid model of resilience. All the mothers believed being conscientious was essential in achieving a good work-life balance. Bogg and Roberts (2013) assert that conscientious individuals have the ability to be responsible, organized, hardworking, set and prioritize goals, planning, manage time efficiently, value obligations, make right decisions and being consistent. All mothers reported these qualities as identified by Bogg and Roberts (2013). Joana had this to say:

My work-life balance, like I said, is hard work... To me, I think it is self-discipline and balance and hard work.

They further reported that having a positive mindset enabled them to face the challenges that came their way when fulfilling their career and family roles. As stated by Paula:

If you want to be a parent here and work at the same time, it can be stressful, but you must have a positive attitude and be optimistic. Yes, have a positive attitude and you have to motivate yourself.... I have to manage my time very well. Time management is really good because we have talked a lot about stress, demand, responsibilities, and other things. But if you manage your time very well, you can plan. Number two is planning, not just on time management but also planning and taking initiatives...Take initiative and be responsible...You have to be consistent...

From the data, religion was an important coping element for some participants when dealing with challenges with work-life balance in a new society. They acknowledged that relying on religion had assisted them with dealing with work and family demands. This coincides with a study by Wiafe and Gariba (2023) who posit that religion plays a key role in transforming people's lives within the Ghanaian society. Thus, it influences the way attitudes and behaviour are formed. This might explain why the mothers in this study resort to using religion as a coping mechanism in maintaining a work-life balance in Norway.

Paula stated:

...I am enjoying the times I go to church also and have fellowship with other people...By God's Grace, I would say I am doing well with managing my responsibilities....

The findings also showed that all six mothers identified making time for themselves and self-care as coping strategies. Mary had this to say:

I think taking care of myself as a mother is like my number one priority. Because I need to be full to be able to give out to my kids. So, I have my own mummy's time. I did not used to think like that at the very beginning when the children were born so like six, seven years, it was always like giving to everybody else, but me. And then you get so exhausted, and you get tired, and nobody is taking care of you. That is the first thing every mother needs to understand that you are taking care of everybody when nobody takes care of you. So, then you need to pause and take care of yourself and have enough to always be back.

The results support research by Miller (2016), who define self-care as doing intentional things to look after one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. He noted the cognitive and goal-oriented nature of such activities. Self-care can be viewed in the context of this study as a potential

coping strategy to lessen the negative effects of role conflict, workload, and work pressure, which translate into stress. Mothers needed to practice self-care because it empowered them to make decisions that would improve their general wellbeing. Exercise, mindfulness, interpersonal relationships, pleasure, and enjoyment are just a few of the self-care techniques (Miller, 2016).

4.6 Conclusion

The results of the thematic analysis of the data were presented in this chapter. The research's overarching question, "How do Ghanaian immigrant mothers maintain the balance between their work-life and caregiving responsibilities at home in the Norwegian context?" was addressed through discussion of the findings. Also, the findings reflected the theoretical choices—bi-cultural socialization and resilience—adopted in this study and relevant previous literature. A summary of the study's main conclusions is included in the last chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines a summary of the study's findings and reflections. It gives the implications for Ghanaian immigrant mothers living in Norway. It stimulates the reader's thoughts about the concept of work-life balance and concludes with recommendations for further research and practice.

5.1 Summary of Findings and Reflections

This qualitative study sought to understand the experiences of how immigrant mothers give meaning to their lifeworld with regards to maintaining a work-life balance in Norway. In this study, the following research questions were investigated: What are the perceptions of work-family balance among immigrant mothers in Norway? How does their cultural context influence their perceptions? How do immigrant mothers perceive welfare institutions that work with immigrant families in Norway? How do their perceptions of the welfare institutions affect how they maintain a work-life balance and influence their decisions to access welfare resources and services?

All participants acknowledged that juggling their roles as mothers and working women was challenging. Some privileged their motherhood roles over career as seen in their choice for work flexibility. The dominant discourses on gender norms within a patriarchal context could explain why the mothers tried to approximate intensive mothering as closely as they could with career choices and the ways in which they remained present for their children.

All participants confirmed that, despite the flexible nature of their jobs, the lack of social support made it difficult for them to balance work and motherhood responsibilities. Unlike Ghana, which is a collectivist society and where mothers could receive assistance from family relatives, hired help, and others in housework and childcare, this was not so in Norway, which places more emphasis on individualism and where hiring nannies was costly. Nevertheless, it was found that mothers had formed new networks through the Ghanaian community, neighbours, co-workers, and parents from their children's school who provided assistance when they needed it. It was found that spousal support and shared household responsibilities among children lessened their burden of fulfilling double roles. Mothers emphasized that both the Norwegian and Ghanaian cultures had good principles for bringing up children. Thus, they created unique mothering strategies by fusing the positive values and practices of both contexts.

All participants confirmed that the work environment, especially their work flexibility, made it less stressful to fulfil both roles. Organizational and state policies were conducive for working mothers and pregnant women. For instance, there were family-friendly policies in Norway like long periods of maternity and paternity leave and compensation for overtime that kept mothers in the labour market, something that was absent in Ghana. This implied that welfare provisions helped to minimize gender inequalities and ideologies.

Mothers had varying views on the work of CWS. For some mothers, CWS was there to promote child welfare, as its mandate dictates. The other mothers believed that CWS lacked cultural sensitivity as reported in the media and by other immigrants, which led to fear and mistrust of CWS. To avoid CWS interventions, one mother resorted to forming a "circle of trust" to keep issues within the family. Achieving a healthy work-life balance, according to all participants, required being conscientious and adopting a positive attitude, and maintaining self-care.

Reflecting on the participants' voices, the study concludes that the mothers found it demanding to strike a healthy balance between their career and caregiving roles as they assumed majority of the household and childcare responsibilities. The mothers seem to have normalized typical gender norms and they were grateful when the men "helped" them, and they did not seem to see household chores and child-rearing as the core responsibility of men.

5.2 Practical Implications

Discussions about gender tended to elicit discomfort, and it was generally agreed that for this generation, the dominant norms were best left alone. The concept of gender, which focuses on and is limited to the male-female dichotomy, is changing because it is socially constructed, and societies all over the world are changing. There are many progressive laws and policies that address gender equality. However, according to Dowuona-Hammond et al. (2020), these do not always result in attitudinal changes. This study revealed that, despite living in a society that has made efforts to challenge gendered norms, mothers are aware of and have internalized these stereotypes, which are more pronounced in patriarchal contexts.

Emancipatory social work, which enables practice researchers, policymakers, and service providers to be aware of how their worldviews and interventions could impact their interactions with service users, is what needs to be done in the move toward "undoing gender" and moving beyond the "helping" discourse. Therefore, when providing support to immigrant women who

have already been traumatized by societal and cultural hierarchies, service providers like the Child Welfare Services must be sensitive.

It is recommended that career and social studies courses be taught in schools with a focus on empowerment, and that boys should also receive this training as it can help to break barriers of gender stereotypes and address societal problems. The "forms of praxis" are what matter; education and information alone are insufficient to bring about change (Sewpaul, 2013). Researchers and practitioners cannot act on behalf of people because they do not have the authority to do so. It is imperative to engage people in ways that allow them to feel empowered and challenge gender norms. Social work educators, practitioners, and researchers must consider their own complicities in perpetuating biases and discriminations, especially those based on gender, in light of their own positions of power (Mushunje and Sewpaul, 2021).

The study found that immigrant mothers in Norway lacked the social support they need to manage the tension between their caregiving and work obligations. Therefore, in order to achieve a healthy work-life balance, immigrants must establish social networks in their host societies.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The study raised some issues that could be considered in further research. Future research should take into consideration other factors that influence or help immigrants' mothers from other developing countries to maintain work life balance and care responsibilities in Norway , as this study only looked at immigrant mothers from Ghana.

Further, the. results of this study suggests that Norway, as a welfare state, does help women with work-life balance. Research can be conducted on other developed countries that provide residual welfare services to understand how immigrant mothers maintain work-life balance in those contexts.

Given the smallness of this study, a larger, preferably mixed-method, study could be conducted on women's experiences with work-life balance.

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APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix A- Interview Guide

Thesis Project Title: Maintaining the Equilibrium: A Study of Ghanaian Immigrant Mothers' Experiences with Work-life and Care Responsibilities in Norway.

To create an informal or casual atmosphere, participants would be asked day-to-day questions before moving onto the key areas of discussion for the interview. How is your day ? is one example of a question that may be posed. These opening questions are intended to act as an icebreaker to get participants to open up to the researcher.

Demographic Questions

Age

Place of birth

Level of education

Marital status

Life experience: Brief exploration of early life experiences in Ghana

- Family of origin

- Parents: how would you describe them? What have you inherited from them? Religious beliefs

- Memories - Can you talk briefly about your childhood memories of going up with your parents?

Leaving home

- How was it leaving Ghana, your home country? What prompted you to leave Ghana?

- Work: What was your previous work experience before moving to Norway?

Immigration Experience

-Life in Norway: • How does it differ from the life in Ghana?

• Positive and negative experiences moving to Norway

• What do you miss the most from Ghana?

- Is there anything you adopted here in Norway and that you think it is good, that you would like the Ghanaian culture to embrace?
- Did you feel you have to change things to fit into the Norwegian society? The biggest change: was it difficult, easy...?

Social Network

- Who do you go to in case you need help?
- Norwegian friendships and networks
- Do you have family in Norway?
- Do you usually go to Ghana?

Participants' experiences of navigating care responsibilities

- Motherhood: role in your life. Values you try to impart to your children.

- How would you describe the care responsibilities you fulfil within your life?
- Being a mother: is it the same here in Norway than in Ghana? How are children and parents seen?
- How do you manage the care responsibilities of your personal life on a daily basis?
- Do you think Norway is a good country to raise your children?
- Do you feel you have to change how you raise your children in Norway?
- Norwegian values you have identified within family life. Ghanaian values: do you see them in the Norwegian culture?
- Do you feel that you have sufficient time for your personal life/personal roles?

Participants' experiences of work life (profession)

- Describe the responsibilities you fulfill within your job role?
- How do you manage the responsibilities of your work role?
- What are your perceptions and experiences of being an immigrant mother within your profession?

Negotiating and managing care and work roles

- What does a work-life balance mean to you? Comparing the Ghanaian and the Norwegian contexts

- Describe the challenges you face in managing your care work at home and your job roles?

Norwegian system:

- What do you think of the Norwegian Welfare Institutions that help immigrant families? - experiences, participation of your children with the institutions?
- Feelings and opinions towards them. Why do you feel this way? What do you base your opinions on?
- Do you think you have a say or right to complain if you feel these institutions are unfair?
- What do you think would enable you to achieve a balance between your care responsibilities and work responsibilities?

Future:

- Plans and expectations regarding maintaining work-life balance in Norway.

Closure:

Is there anything you left out that you believe should have been included in your story?

6.2 Appendix B- Participant Informed Consent Form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

“(Maintaining the Equilibrium: A Study of Ghanaian Immigrant Mothers’ Experiences with Work-life and Care Responsibilities in Norway)”

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose of the research project is to investigate how Ghanaian immigrant mothers maintain a work-life balance in Norway.

In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the Project

This study is to investigate how Ghanaian immigrant mothers maintain a work-life balance in Norway. Also, the study would also focus on how they perceive the Norwegian welfare system and how that affects their access to welfare resources in maintaining a work-life balance. By your participation in this study, you will share your experiences on the study to the researcher.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The project is conducted by Olive Arashia Randolph-Koranteng, a master student at the University of Stavanger reading the Nordic Master in Social Work and Welfare program (NOSWEL). The University of Stavanger's Nordic Master of Social Work and Welfare program culminates with the completion of this thesis. The project is performed under the close supervision of Professor Vishanthie Sewpaul, an associate professor of the same institution. The student and supervisor of the project are both responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

Your voluntary participation in this project will be relevant because the project will require information on the subject matter from Ghanaian immigrant mothers (research participants) in the Stavanger municipality. As part of the criteria for participation in the research study, the participants are expected to have lived in Norway for at least two years, be either single or married, have at least one minor child, and be engaged in either a skilled or unskilled form of employment.

They will then reflect on their experiences juggling work and family life in Norway and their home country.

What does participation involve for you?

Your participation in the research project involves you taking part in an interview after confirming consent. The interviews will take approximately 1 hour and with your consent, the interview will be audio recorded for further data processing. During this interview, you will be asked some questions about your experience balancing your work-life and caring obligations in Norway. The interview will be guided by a few questions, but the key idea is that you offer your own perspective of what you believe is crucial to understanding your experience.

Participation

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy-how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). Your personal data will be accessed only by the researcher and the supervisor of the project. Any traceable information will be strictly anonymized for the sake of confidentiality.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end June 12th, 2023. Personal data like sound recordings shall be deleted to preserve privacy and transcripts (written data) stored on a password locked computer until the end of the project shall contain no personal data information.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you.
- request that your personal data is deleted.

- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of Stavanger, NSD- The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS/ Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of Stavanger via Professor Vishanthie Sewpaul (Project Leader) at SewpaulV@ukzn.ac.za or +27844777042
- Olive Arashia Randolph-Koranteng (Student Researcher) at oa.randolph-koranteng@stud.uis.no / olivearashia24@yahoo.com or +4792044704
- Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader
(Researcher/supervisor)

Student

Consent Form

I have received and understood information about the project [**Maintaining the Equilibrium: A Study of Ghanaian Immigrant Mothers' Experiences with Work-life and Care Responsibilities in Norway**] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in an interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, June 12th, 2023.

(Signed by participant, date)

6.3 Appendix C- NSD Notification form for the processing of personal data

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number	Assessment type	Date
359985	Standard	09/01/2023

Project title

Maintaining the Equilibrium. A study of Unskilled Immigrant Mothers' Experiences with Work-life and Care Responsibilities in Norway.

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

University of Stavanger / Faculty of Social Sciences / Department of Social Sciences

Project leader

Professor Vishanthie Sewpaul

Student

Olive Arashia Randolph-Koranteng

Project period

01.02.2023 - 12.06.2023

Categories of personal data

General

Special

Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 no. 1 a)

Explicit consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 9 no. 2 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, as long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 12.06.2023.

Comment

OM VURDERINGEN

Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

TYPE PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige personopplysninger og særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om religion og rasemessig eller etnisk opprinnelse. FØLG DIN

INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

Vi har vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene, men husk at det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke og hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el.)

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: <https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema>

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!