



Balancing Work and Motherhood: Child-Rearing Challenges among Working Mothers in Tanzania

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Abstract: This study examined the challenges faced by working mothers in balancing child-rearing responsibilities with job performance in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Guided by the Role Strain Theory, the study sought to examine how limited childcare infrastructure, socio-economic constraints, and workplace policies affect the dual roles of caregiving and employment among mothers. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, whereby, a cross-sectional survey and case study designs were involved. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 381 respondents was drawn from a target population of 8,021 working mothers through the use of multistage, purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that the majority of working mothers experienced significant strain in meeting both childcare and work demands, with inadequate affordable childcare services and unsupportive workplace policies emerging as major barriers. The study concludes that balancing these dual responsibilities often leads to reduced job performance and heightened stress levels. As well, the study recommends the implementation of family-friendly workplace policies, increased investment in affordable childcare facilities, and community-based support systems to ease the burden on working mothers. These findings contribute to localized knowledge on gender, work, and family life in Tanzania, while offering valuable insights for policymakers and employers.

Keywords: Working mothers, child-rearing responsibilities, work-life balance, job performance, Childcare, Challenges

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1. Introduction

The increasing participation of women in the workforce has noticed a significant shift in both gender roles and economic involvement globally. Women's contributions are now widely recognized as vital to productivity and national development, where, gender equality in employment is a growing focus (Rani, 2022). Yet, this progress does not eliminate the difficulties many women continue to face. Working mothers, in particular, often find themselves stretched between professional responsibilities

and the demands of childcare. This double load frequently gives rise to work–life conflicts, mental health pressures, and, at times, a reduction in overall productivity (De Ravindranath, Kartar Singh, Arumugam, & Kularajasingam, 2021). The situation is made worse by workplace environments that lack adequate support, by cultural expectations that still assign the main responsibility for childcare to women, and by the limited availability of affordable childcare services (Gao, 2022).

Across Africa, a growing number of women are participating in both, formal and informal employment

sectors. However, in many countries, support structures for working mothers remain inadequate. Affordable childcare services and flexible workplace arrangements are still rare (Horwood, Hinton, Haskins, Luthuli, & Rollins, 2021). South Africa offers a clear example: women in informal employment often struggle to find stable childcare while earning a livelihood, a situation that heightens stress and lowers productivity (Horwood et al., 2021). Similar patterns are evident in Nigeria and Ghana, where, market traders and small business owners frequently depend on older siblings or neighbors for childcare arrangements that may fail to meet children's developmental needs (Kadale, Pandey, & Raje, 2018). The problem is even more visible in urban centers, whereby the cost of childcare is prohibitively high. For many mothers, as revealed by Clark, De Almada, Kabiru, Muthuri, and Wanjohi (2018), this forces a turn to unreliable caregiving options, which in turn, affects both their own well-being and their children's growth. Altogether, these realities highlight the broader struggle faced by African women as they attempt to balance the competing pressures of work and motherhood.

In East Africa, working mothers face more than just the usual struggles of balancing jobs and families. Unconditional cultural expectations continue to be high, which results in frequently inadequate childcare systems. Even as more women join the labor force, society continues to expect them to take the lead in raising children. The result is an uneven load. Many mothers are left trying to manage work deadlines while also carrying heavy caregiving duties at home. Studies from Uganda shed light on this problem. Nankinga (2022) found that when mothers are employed, the quality of childcare can decline. This is especially true when families rely on informal or irregular arrangements, which are rarely monitored or regulated. Mothers may find it more difficult to maintain steady, fulfilling employment, and children's growth and development may suffer. Moreover, Kadale (2018) highlights a deeper issue: gender stereotypes that permeate daily existence. These customs put women on the periphery of both the home and the workplace and discourage fathers from sharing duties. Without serious policy changes and cultural shifts, the gap between women's work demands and the lack of childcare support is unlikely to close. If left unaddressed, the issue will continue shaping not only gender equality but also the broader path of social development in the region.

In Kenya, Clark, et al (2018) note that mothers in low-income areas often find varied ways to manage childcare, such as; leaving children with neighbors, asking older siblings to help, or paying for the cheapest daycare available. These stop-gap solutions may help keeping children safe for a while. However, in reality, children may probably lack proper supervision or emotional support, as situation that can miserably take a toll on a child's well-

being. The mentioned problem normally goes deeper than individual choices. It reflects a wider failure to provide affordable and reliable childcare through public systems. Additionally, cultural norms are a significant issue. In much of East Africa, a woman who puts her career first is often judged harshly, as if she has neglected her "real" role. The end consequence is stress, guilt, and continual self-doubt, a persistent pressure that hinder her growth at work and at home as well (Kadale et al., 2018). Until cultural realities are taken into consideration and genuine community-based support networks are established, women will continue to bear the majority of the burden of balancing work and childcare, which will perpetuate gender inequality.

In Tanzania, working mothers confront challenges that are growing more urgent by the day. Women are joining the workforce at an increasing rate, and urbanization has been speeding up, but the infrastructure for childcare is still dreadfully inadequate. In urban centers such as Dar es Salaam, this shift has intensified concerns over the care and development of children whose mothers are employed full-time (Mbatta, 2023). In Kigamboni Municipality, for instance, many women face significant barriers in accessing affordable and reliable childcare services. The named concern directly affects their job performance and psychological well-being. The situation is even more complex for parents of children with special needs. These parents experience heightened levels of stress due to a critical lack of institutional support, specialized care services, and flexible work policies (Ching'oma et al., 2022). Furthermore, the pressure extends beyond the workplace. Kisanga and Matiba (2021) reveal that student-mothers in higher education institutions frequently struggle to manage the dual responsibilities of academic performance and parenting, with limited support from both institutions and society at large. The picture that emerges is one of intersecting pressures, each amplifying the other. These realities demand actionable policies. These include subsidized childcare, inclusive workplaces, and education systems attuned to mothers' needs. Without these measures, Tanzanian women are likely to face persistent structural barriers, juggling work, study, and family with little support, leading constrains to their participation and slows broader social progress.

Although research on women, work, and childcare has expanded in recent years, important gaps still remain. Much of the scholarship highlights broad challenges and coping strategies among working mothers in African contexts (Kadale, Pandey, & Raje, 2018; Clark, *et al* 2018). Yet, very few studies look closely at the lived realities of particular communities. Kigamboni Municipality in Dar es Salaam is one such overlooked setting. The literature tells little about how women essentially balance employment with child-rearing in conditions where childcare facilities

are scarce, institutional support is weak, and financial resources are tight. These absences matter. Local dynamics often shape experiences in ways that broader surveys cannot capture. This study therefore seeks to address that gap by examining the specific struggles faced by working mothers in Kigamboni as they attempt to manage their dual roles at home and in the workplace.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Balancing professional duties with family life continues to be a formidable challenge for working mothers around the world, and Tanzania is no exception. Scholars have long noted the pressures working women face, such as time shortages, psychological strain, and persistent feelings of guilt when work limits their availability for children (De Ravindranath *et al*, 2021). In many contexts, the weight of traditional gender norms only makes matters worse, as caregiving and domestic responsibilities are still largely assigned to women (Kadale, 2018). Within Africa, structural barriers add another layer to this struggle. Affordable childcare remains scarce, workplace policies are often unsupportive, and cultural expectations around motherhood remain deeply entrenched (Horwood *et al.*, 2021; Davids, Roman, & Schenck, 2021). In East Africa, reliance on extended family networks is common. Older siblings and grandparents frequently step in to provide care. Yet the mentioned informal solutions are usually not without risk. They can unquestionably compromise the quality of care and, in some cases, contribute to outcomes such as poor nutrition or developmental delays among children (Nankinga, 2022).

In Tanzania, similar patterns are evident. Although employment may grant mothers better access to healthcare and economic resources, studies indicate that many, particularly those living in urban centers like Dar es Salaam, struggle to dedicate sufficient time to their children due to demanding work schedules (Mbatta, 2023; Kisanga & Matiba, 2021). These competing demands often affect both work performance and family life, underscoring the need for more targeted support systems.

Studies on women's employment and childcare has expanded, but most of them continues to circle around mothers in the informal or entrepreneurial sectors in Tanzania. Working mothers' stories, in fact, greatly matter, absolutely, however, they are not the whole picture. Formally employed women; those bound by rigid schedules, limited flexibility, and highly structured environments, face a different set of pressures that the literature has largely overlooked. This silence is even more striking in Kigamboni Municipality. The area is urbanizing rapidly, and this fast-paced growth brings unique socio-economic dynamics that influence daily life in ways often overlooked by broader studies. Here, mothers are

witnessed to negotiate two competing worlds; the demands of paid work and the responsibilities of childcare. How mothers navigate this balancing act, what resources are available to them, and what remains beyond reach are questions that remain largely unanswered. Additionally, the consequences are severe. They influence mothers' productivity at work and have an impact on children's wellbeing in homes. Disregarding these local realities means leaving out a vital part of the overall story.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this critical gap by exploring the specific challenges faced by working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam. Failure to address these challenges may result in undesirable effects. These include persistent stress, reduced work performance, and compromised child-rearing practices. Ultimately, the implications extend beyond individual families, potentially affecting broader community development and social well-being.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided this study:

- i) To explore the nature and extent of child-rearing responsibilities carried out by working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- ii) To determine the effects of child-rearing responsibilities on the job performance of working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Role Strain Theory, developed by Goode (1960). The theory provides a useful lens for understanding the tensions individuals experience when trying to meet the demands of multiple, often competing, social roles. According to Goode, individuals who simultaneously occupy multiple roles, such as employee, parent, and caregiver, may experience strain. And the consequences are tangible. Emotional exhaustion sets in. Physical fatigue becomes constant. Performance at work or home may slip, sometimes subtly, sometimes sharply. Role Strain Theory reminds that tension is not merely abstract; it is lived, felt, and often unavoidable, especially in contexts where societal pressures and structural limitations intensify the demands placed on individuals.

A concrete example of Role Strain Theory in practice can be seen in the study by Dankyi, Dankyi, and Minadzi (2019), which examined the experiences of student-mothers in Ghana. These women often missed lectures or

struggled to meet academic deadlines because parenting demands; childcare, clinic visits, fatigue; consumed much of their time and energy. The lack of institutional support, such as on-campus daycare or lactation facilities, only heightened the strain. Coping with these pressures required creativity and resilience. Some mothers relied on family members for help, others enrolled their children in daycare, and some hired domestic assistance when possible. The study illustrates how overlapping responsibilities create tangible tension, and how the absence of structural support can magnify the challenges of juggling multiple roles.

In this study, Role Strain Theory serves as a lens to make sense of the daily realities of working mothers in Tanzania, especially in Kigamboni Municipality. Like the student-mothers in Ghana, formally employed women here are caught in a constant juggling act—meeting job demands while caring for children. Affordable childcare is scarce. Workplace flexibility is minimal. And cultural expectations around gender roles remain deeply entrenched. The result? A persistent tension that seeps into every part of life, influencing work performance, emotional well-being, and family dynamics. It is a strain that is both structural and personal, felt in small decisions and major compromises alike, revealing how social roles collide in ways that cannot be captured by statistics alone.

By applying Role Strain Theory, this study seeks to examine how these intersecting demands affect the well-being and productivity of working mothers, while also exploring potential support mechanisms. The theory thus serves as a foundational framework for identifying both the structural barriers and possible interventions. These include improved workplace policies and community-based childcare services that can reduce role strain and promote work-family balance.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

The literature indicates that working mothers shoulder extensive child-rearing responsibilities while simultaneously fulfilling occupational obligations. Studies show that in many urban and low-income contexts, mothers remain primarily responsible for daily childcare, supervision, and emotional support despite contributing to household income, a situation that limits opportunities for rest, career advancement, and social participation. Kadale et al. (2018) emphasize that family, community, and institutional support systems are essential in reducing stress, exhaustion, and diminished work performance among working mothers, while He et al. (2025) demonstrate that workplace flexibility and social support can alleviate parenting stress and improve mental health outcomes. Similarly, Mbatia (2023) argues that the ability of working mothers to balance employment and childcare

is influenced by factors such as job demands, household structure, and the availability of support networks. Supporting these findings, Horwood et al. (2021) found that informal working mothers in South Africa experience persistent stress as they struggle to combine income generation with safe childcare arrangements. Collectively, these studies suggest that the nature and extent of child-rearing responsibilities among working mothers are shaped by interconnected social, economic, and institutional factors, highlighting the need for stronger support mechanisms to enhance maternal wellbeing and caregiving effectiveness.

As well, the studies demonstrate that child-rearing responsibilities significantly affect the job performance of working mothers by creating competing demands between family and professional roles. De Ravindranath et al. (2021) explain that persistent work–family conflict often leads to emotional fatigue, stress, and reduced workplace efficiency, ultimately affecting productivity and job outcomes. Similarly, domestic and caregiving obligations can unintentionally hinder women’s professional development by limiting their participation in training, networking, and leadership opportunities. This finding is supported by Rani (2022), who observed that motherhood often slows career progression compared to male colleagues and women without childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks (2015) argue that flexible work arrangements help mothers better manage work and family demands, particularly in urban settings where commuting consumes additional time and energy. Likewise, Kipchumba (2019) highlights the importance of accessible and affordable childcare services, noting that their availability enhances mothers’ productivity and improves their ability to balance occupational and family responsibilities. Collectively, these studies suggest that child-rearing responsibilities can negatively influence job performance and career advancement unless adequate workplace flexibility and childcare support mechanisms are in place.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Approach and Design

This study employed a mixed methods research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative strategies to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by working mothers in balancing child-rearing and job responsibilities in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The quantitative aspect was implemented through a cross-sectional survey design, which involved collecting data from a large sample of working mothers at a single point in time, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of findings

(Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Complementing this, the qualitative aspect, through a case study design, involved semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of participants to capture in-depth insights into their lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies in balancing child-rearing and job responsibilities. The integration of these two approaches allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and richness of the study by enabling both breadth through survey data and depth through qualitative narratives.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kigamboni Municipality. The area is rapidly developing urban locality within Dar es Salaam. Kigamboni was purposively selected due to its high population growth rate. This mirrors the escalating socio-economic challenges experienced by its residents. Among these challenges are the difficulties faced by working mothers in balancing child-rearing responsibilities with the demands of formal employment. The area's unique socio-economic dynamics, coupled with its limited childcare infrastructure and evolving labor market conditions, make it a pertinent setting for examining the interplay between occupational roles and parental responsibilities.

3.3 Population

The study's population comprised of 8021 people including formally employed mothers residing in Kigamboni Municipality, Dar es Salaam. This group was selected because it directly reflects the focus of the study on the relationship between child-rearing responsibilities and job performance. Eligible participants were women aged 18 years and above. As well, the named women involved those engaged in full-time or part-time formal employment in sectors such as public service, private companies, NGOs, and formal retail and having at least one dependent child. Mothers were required to have lived in Kigamboni for a minimum of six months to ensure familiarity with the local socio-economic context. The study excluded mothers working exclusively in informal or self-employment. In addition to working mothers, a small number of key informants, including employers, HR managers, and childcare providers, were engaged to provide supplementary perspectives and enable triangulation of findings.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Total sample of the study included 381 respondents as determined by Yamane's (1967) formula from the target population of 8021 people. The formula is;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where: n= Sample size, N= target population and e= margin error (0.05 or 5%)

$$n = \frac{8021}{1 + 8021(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{8021}{1 + 8021(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{8021}{1 + 20.0525}$$

$$n = \frac{8021}{21.0525}$$

$$n = 380.99 \approx 381$$

A total of 381 respondents participated in the study, including 300 formally employed mothers in the cross-sectional survey, 25 working mothers selected for in-depth interviews, 46 mothers who participated in focus group discussions and 10 key informants. A mixed sampling approach was employed to ensure adequate representativeness in the quantitative component while capturing rich and diverse perspectives in the qualitative component. The study employed a multistage sampling technique to obtain a sample of 300 formally employed mothers residing in Kigamboni Municipality. The sample size was considered sufficient to achieve statistical reliability, accommodate logistical constraints, and facilitate subgroup analyses based on characteristics such as employment sector and the number or age of children. Initially, a sampling frame was developed by identifying major formal employment institutions within the municipality, including public offices, schools, health facilities, private companies, and large non-governmental organizations. These institutions were subsequently stratified by sector, after which a proportionate number of workplaces were selected through simple random sampling. Within each selected workplace, eligible participants were identified using staff registers or with the assistance of management, and respondents were selected through systematic random sampling.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was utilized to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives related to the study phenomenon. This component comprised 25 in-depth interviews with working mothers, deliberately selected to include categories such as single mothers, mothers of children with disabilities, and student-mothers. In addition, six focus group discussions, each comprising six to eight participants, with total of 46 participants were conducted and organized according to employment sector or childcare arrangements.

Furthermore, 10 key informant interviews were conducted with employers, human resource managers, and childcare providers. These key informants were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling

techniques to ensure the inclusion of individuals possessing relevant expertise, experiences, and institutional insights. The distribution of study participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Study’s Participants

Participant Category	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Quantitative Survey		
Formally employed mothers	300	78.9
Qualitative Interviews		
In-depth interviews with mothers	25	6.5
Focus group participants (6 FGDs)	46	12
Key informant interviews	10	2.6
Total	381	100

3.5 Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using a combination of structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. The questionnaires were administered to a large sample of working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality to gather quantitative data on child-rearing responsibilities and job-related outcomes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller, purposively selected group of participants to obtain qualitative insights into the personal experiences and coping strategies of working mothers. On the other hand, focus group discussions were conducted and organized to participants according to their employment sector or childcare arrangements.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and then, analyzed by descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically by coding interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, themes, and sub-themes that explained and contextualized the quantitative findings. This combined analysis provided a holistic understanding of the challenges and coping mechanisms of working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical principles. Prior to data collection, the consent to conduct the research was

obtained from the relevant authority particularly Kigamboni Municipality administration. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and took part willingly after providing informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, with participants’ identities and responses kept private and used solely for academic purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Nature and Extent of Child-Rearing Responsibilities by Working Mothers

The study examined on the daily child-rearing activities among working mothers. Findings presented in Table 2 indicate that a significant majority of formally employed mothers in Kigamboni Municipality shoulder multiple child-rearing responsibilities on a daily basis. The most prevalent task was meal preparation with 92.9% of respondents reported active involvement in cooking for their children. Other frequently cited duties include bathing and dressing children (85.7%), taking children to school or healthcare facilities (78.6%), providing emotional support (80%), and supervising homework completion (71.4%). In contrast, activities such as storytelling and behavior management were less commonly reported, whereas, only 21.4% of mothers indicating engagement in these roles. These results underscore the extensive caregiving roles maintained by working mothers despite their formal employment commitments.

Table 2: Daily Child-Rearing Responsibilities

Activity	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Meal preparation	354	92.9%
Bathing and dressing children	327	85.7%
Supervising homework	272	71.4%
Taking children to school/healthcare facilities	299	78.6%
Providing emotional support	305	80.0%
Storytelling and behavior management	82	21.4%
Total Responses	1,639	—

Qualitative interviews supported these findings, offering richer insights into the mothers' lived experiences. One respondent explained: *"Even after working a full day, I still have to prepare meals for my children because no one else will do it the way they like. It is exhausting, but it is part of my duty as a mother"* Another mother highlighted the time pressures of balancing work and caregiving. She noted; *"Most mornings, I wake up at 5 a.m. to bathe and dress my children before rushing to catch the ferry to work. By the time I arrive at the office, I am already tired"* A participant who regularly escorts her child to the clinic shared: *"My youngest has asthma, so I often take time off work to bring him for check-ups. My boss is understanding, but it affects my work performance"* Similarly, mothers emphasized the emotional dimension of caregiving: *"No matter how busy I am, I try to spend time listening to my children and encouraging them. They need emotional support as much as food or clothing"* Finally, a few mothers explained why storytelling and behavior management were less common in their routines: *"I wish I had more time to sit and tell stories like my mother did for us, but most evenings I am too tired, and the children are already asleep when I finish the chores"* These narratives demonstrate how the quantitative trends are deeply embedded in the day-to-day realities of working mothers, where childcare responsibilities often compete with professional demands, leading to strain and fatigue.

These findings highlight the complex caregiving responsibilities of working mothers, in line with Role

Strain Theory (Goode, 1960), which suggests that managing multiple social roles can generate considerable stress. In many urban, low-income settings, women are expected to balance professional duties with family obligations. The demands are relentless. Institutional support is limited. Affordable childcare is scarce, domestic help is often unavailable, and social expectations rarely ease the burden. As a result, mothers continue to provide daily care, supervision, and emotional support while contributing to household income. The consequences extend beyond the home; where, opportunities for rest shrink, career advancement became constrained, while, participation in social or community life often suffers. Together, these pressures reinforce a persistent cycle of role strain, showing how structural and societal factors converge to shape maternal well-being.

The study examined on the sources of support for working mothers in child-rearing. The findings as shown in Table 3 revealed that a significant number of working mothers in the study area receive support in child-rearing from different sources. The largest group (40%) reported that their spouse or partner is the main source of support. This is followed by 25.7% who rely on extended family members such as grandparents or siblings. About 18.6% of respondents mentioned that they use paid help like housemaids or childcare centres, while 12.9% stated that they raise their children alone. A small portion (2.8%) indicated other sources of support, including neighbors or religious groups.

Table 3: Sources of Support for Working Mothers in Child-Rearing

Support Provider	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Spouse/Partner	152	40.0
Extended Family Members	98	25.7
Paid Help	71	18.6
I do it alone	49	12.9
Neighbors and Religious Groups	11	2.8
Total	381	100.0

These findings suggest that while many mothers benefit from some form of support, a considerable number still manage parenting responsibilities on their own. One mother receiving spousal support explained, *“My husband helps with preparing the kids and taking them to school when I leave early for work. It really reduces my stress.”* Conversely, a mother raising her children alone shared, *“I have no one to help. I wake up early, prepare the kids, go to work, and return to continue with housework. It’s exhausting.”* A childcare provider also observed, *“Some parents bring their children very early and pick them late. They are really struggling to manage both roles, especially those without family support.”*

These findings corroborate the conclusions of Kadale et al. (2018), who highlight the critical role of support systems in mitigating the complex burdens experienced by working mothers. Women are more stressed, more exhausted, and perform worse at work in situations where this assistance is either nonexistent or very limited. Therefore, family and community networks play a crucial role in maintaining the wellbeing of mothers. In a similar vein, He et al. (2025) illustrate the buffering effect of social capital. He clearly illustrated how workplace flexibility and comprehensive

support structures can alleviate parenting stress and reduce the incidence of depressive symptoms. Evidence further suggests that mothers who maintain an effective work–family equilibrium report higher levels of job satisfaction, lower stress, and improved mental health outcomes. Taken together, these findings highlight that institutional, social, and familial supports are not simply beneficial; they are essential for sustaining both professional effectiveness and psychosocial well-being among mothers managing overlapping caregiving and occupational responsibilities.

The study examined on the time spent on child-rearing per day by working mothers. Findings in Table 4 indicate that working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality spend varying amounts of time on child-rearing each day. About 40% of mothers reported spending 2–4 hours daily on childcare. While 30% spend 5–6 hours, less than 2 hours was reported by 10% of mothers, and 20% spend more than 6 hours each day. These results suggest that a substantial portion of working mothers dedicate significant time to caring for their children. This highlighting the demanding nature of balancing employment and parenting responsibilities.

Table 4: Time Spent on Child-Rearing per Day by Working Mothers

Time Spent per Day	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 2 hours	38	10.0
2–4 hours	152	40.0
5–6 hours	114	30.0
More than 6 hours	76	20.0
Total	381	100.0

Working mothers visited described the significant time they dedicate to child-rearing each day. One mother shared, *“Most days I spend about three hours preparing meals and helping my children with homework before leaving for work.”* Another explained, *“I only have time in the mornings to get my kids ready before rushing to work.”* A

third respondent noted, *“Some days I am with my children almost all day because of my work schedule and household chores.”* These narratives illustrate the heavy daily demands faced by working mothers as they strive to balance employment and childcare responsibilities.

These findings are consistent with Mbatta (2023), who notes that time constraints often restrict working mothers' ability to provide high-quality care, especially among those employed full-time. The capacity of working mothers to balance professional duties with childcare is rarely uniform. It is determined by multiple interrelated factors. These include the nature and demands of employment, the availability of family or paid support, and the configuration of the household. Collectively, these elements interact to shape the degree to which mothers can effectively manage the dual responsibilities of work and caregiving.

The study was interested to reveal the most challenging child-responsibility for working mothers. The findings

from Table 4 indicate that working mothers face multiple challenges in child-rearing. The most commonly reported difficulty, noted by 36% of respondents, was managing all aspects of childcare simultaneously, including nutrition, schoolwork, hygiene, and emotional support. Helping children with schoolwork was identified as the main challenge by 24% of mothers, followed by ensuring proper nutrition (16%), managing hygiene and health (14%), and providing emotional support (10%). These results suggest that balancing multiple caregiving responsibilities remains a significant challenge for working mothers, with many reporting that addressing all areas simultaneously is the most demanding aspect of childcare.

Table 5: Most Challenging Child-Rearing Responsibilities for Working Mothers

Challenging Responsibility	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Ensuring proper nutrition	61	16.0
Helping with schoolwork	91	24.0
Managing hygiene and health	53	14.0
Providing emotional support	38	10.0
All of the above	137	36.0
Total	381	100.0

Working mothers face overlapping responsibilities that pull them in multiple directions at once. One health officer shared her perspective, saying: *"I often see mothers who are completely exhausted. If there were flexible work hours, reliable childcare, or some kind of community support, it would make a huge difference. Right now, they're trying to do everything at once, and it just wears them down."* This insight aligns with De Ravindranath et al (2021), who argue that juggling multiple roles can generate stress, emotional exhaustion, and a reduced capacity to give adequate attention to each responsibility. The strain is not limited to individual mothers. It extends across households, shaping family relationships and reducing women's participation in social and community life. Balancing work and home is a constant and complex process. Often unseen, its effects are nonetheless real and far-reaching.

The study examined respondents' perceptions on balancing child-rearing responsibilities with work schedules. The

findings in Table 6 indicate that working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality experience varying levels of success in balancing work and childcare. About 40% of respondents reported being able to balance moderately, while 26% felt they were able to balance very effectively. Conversely, 22% of mothers indicated that they struggle to balance their responsibilities, and 12% reported being unable to balance work and childcare at all. These results suggest that while some mothers are able to manage their dual roles effectively, a substantial proportion face difficulty, highlighting the ongoing challenges of juggling professional and caregiving responsibilities.

Table 6: Mothers' Perceptions of Balancing Work and Childcare

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Able to balance very effectively	99	26.0
Able to balance moderately	152	40.0
Struggle to balance	84	22.0
Unable to balance	46	12.0
Total	381	100.0

The findings reveal that although many working mothers in Kigamboni manage to balance both employment and childcare, a considerable proportion continue to struggle. The effort is exhausting. As one local childcare provider observed, many mothers “*try their best, but end up exhausted because their jobs leave them no flexibility.*” Horwood et al. (2021) found something similar in South Africa. Informal working mothers face constant stress, balancing income generation with safe childcare. Kadale et al. (2018) add that without family, community, or institutional support, emotional fatigue and reduced job performance are common. The findings point to a clear need for interventions. Flexible work schedules. Affordable childcare. Stronger social support networks. Such measures could help mothers manage the pressures of work and home more effectively. And in turn, this would improve maternal well-being and child development outcomes.

4.2 Effects of Child-Rearing Responsibilities on the Job Performance among Working Mothers

The study examined on the frequency of child-rearing responsibilities and their effects on work deadlines among working mothers. Findings from Table 7 indicate that a considerable proportion of working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality experience child-rearing responsibilities affecting their ability to meet work deadlines. More than one-third (36.0%) reported that such responsibilities frequently impacted their deadlines, while 28.1% said they were affected occasionally. A smaller group (18.1%) experienced impacts very frequently, suggesting a high level of role interference. On the other hand, 12.1% reported rarely experiencing such challenges, and only 5.8% stated that childcare duties never interfered with their work deadlines. These results suggest that for the majority of working mothers, balancing childcare and work commitments remains a significant challenge.

Table 7: Frequency of Child-Rearing Responsibilities and Effects on Work Deadlines

Response Options	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very frequently impacts deadlines	69	18.1
Frequently impacts deadlines	137	36.0
Occasionally impacts deadlines	107	28.1
Rarely impacts deadlines	46	12.1
Never impacts deadlines	22	5.8
Total	381	100%

Childcare responsibilities continue to limit the productivity of working mothers. The challenge lies not only in the time required for care but also in the constant uncertainty, as mothers never know when a child will fall ill or an urgent household task will demand their attention. One respondent explained that she often has to leave work immediately, even when critical reports are due, whenever her child becomes sick. These experiences illustrate how the overlapping responsibilities of caregiving and professional work create persistent pressures that affect both individual performance and organizational outcomes. This reflects the

persistent work–family conflict highlighted by De Ravindranath et al, (2021), which often results in emotional fatigue and lowered efficiency. The pressure extends beyond mental strain. It can impede career advancement and restrict professional opportunities. Addressing this challenge requires deliberate interventions such as flexible work schedules, supportive parental leave policies, and access to affordable childcare. In the absence of these measures, working mothers are compelled to make difficult choices, often sacrificing either their professional responsibilities or their caregiving duties.

The study examined on the effect of child-rearing responsibilities on the career progression among working mothers. Findings from Table 8 indicate that child-rearing responsibilities significantly affect the career progression of many working mothers. About 31.7% of respondents reported that their career progression was significantly hindered, while 24.4% indicated it was slightly hindered, showing that more than half of the mothers experience some degree of negative impact. Meanwhile, 21.5%

reported no noticeable impact on their career. A smaller portion of respondents noted positive effects, with 13.6% reporting their career was slightly improved and 8.7% indicating it was significantly improved. These results suggest that for the majority of working mothers, managing child-rearing alongside professional responsibilities poses challenges that can slow career advancement, while only a few experience benefits such as enhanced skills or better time management.

Table 8: Effect of Child-Rearing on Career Progression

Response Options	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Career progression significantly hindered	121	31.7
Career progression slightly hindered	93	24.4
No noticeable impact on career	82	21.5
Career progression slightly improved	52	13.6
Career progression significantly improved	33	8.7
Total	381	100.0

The findings reveal that many working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality face delays in career advancement as a direct result of child-rearing responsibilities. Several respondents reported missing promotions, professional training, or educational opportunities due to the time demands of caring for their children. One key informant observed, *“Mothers with young children often hesitate to take on leadership roles. This is because balancing work and family leaves them with little flexibility.”* This illustrates how domestic obligations can unintentionally limit women’s professional growth. These results are consistent with Rani (2022), who noted that motherhood can restrict women’s participation in skill development and leadership activities, leading to slower career progression relative to male or childless female colleagues. The findings highlight the urgent need for family-friendly workplace policies, such as flexible

schedules, part-time options, mentorship programs, and parental leave, to support mothers in pursuing career advancement while managing childcare responsibilities effectively.

The study examined the effects of child-rearing responsibilities on working mothers’ stress levels. The findings from Table 9 show that balancing work and childcare responsibilities is a major source of stress for working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported frequently experiencing stress, while 30% experienced stress occasionally. About 12% stated they rarely experienced stress, and only 10% reported not experiencing stress at all. These results indicate that the majority of working mothers face considerable tension in managing both professional and parenting roles.

Table 9: Child-Rearing Responsibilities and Working Mothers’ Stress Levels

Response Options	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Frequently experience stress	183	48.0
Occasionally experience stress	114	30.0
Rarely experience stress	46	12.0
Do not experience stress	38	10.0
Total	381	100.0

Nearly half of working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality experience persistent stress. The intensity of this stress is not uniform across individuals. Some mothers manage their responsibilities effectively. Others struggle under the weight of competing demands. A local childcare

provider observed, *“Many times we meet mothers who are mentally and physically drained, especially those without reliable help at home. They carry all responsibilities alone.”* Daily life is unpredictable, with urgent work tasks, a sick child, or household emergencies frequently adding

to the tension. De Ravindranath et al (2021) describe such tension as emotional exhaustion stemming from simultaneous role demands, while Horwood et al. (2021) highlight that informal working mothers in South Africa face similar challenges when institutional and community support is insufficient. The issue goes beyond workload, encompassing structural, cultural, and psychological dimensions. Interventions such as flexible schedules, accessible childcare, and mental health resources are essential, yet their implementation remains limited. The consequences reach far beyond individual well-being. Families, workplaces, and wider social systems are all affected by unresolved tensions.

The study examined the recommended strategies for managing work and child-rearing responsibilities among working mothers. Respondents suggested several approaches, including the implementation of flexible working hours, improved access to affordable and reliable childcare services, provision of emotional and psychological support for working mothers, and greater involvement of partners or family members in child-rearing duties. The key findings from the study are presented underneath.

Flexible working hours emerged as the most commonly suggested strategy. Many mothers reported needing extra time in the morning or evening to attend to their children. One respondent explained, *“If my boss allowed me to start work a bit later or leave earlier, I would be able to take my child to school without rushing.”* Another mother added, *“Sometimes I have to skip important family time in the evening because I cannot leave work early; having flexible hours would make a huge difference.”* These responses highlight that time pressure is a major challenge for working mothers. Thereby, implementing flexible work schedules could significantly reduce stress and improve work-life balance. These findings align with Anderson, Carnagey and Eubanks (2015), who emphasized that flexible work arrangements enable women to better manage both family and job responsibilities, particularly in urban areas where commuting demands further constrain available time.

Another frequently recommended strategy was improving access to affordable and reliable childcare services. Many mothers emphasized the difficulty of finding trustworthy and conveniently located daycare centers or housemaids. One participant explained, *“Most daycare centers are too expensive or distant from my workplace.”* Another added, *“Sometimes I have to rely on neighbors or older siblings to watch my child since I cannot pay for quality daycare close to home.”* These insights highlight that limited access to affordable and dependable childcare not only creates logistical challenges but also increases stress and affects mothers’ ability to concentrate and perform effectively at work. The findings are in line with Kipchumba (2019). In

his study, Kipchumba reported that the availability and affordability of childcare services are critical factors influencing mothers’ productivity and their capacity to balance work and family responsibilities. Addressing this gap through government or employer-supported childcare programs could significantly ease the dual burden faced by working mothers and improve both family well-being and workforce efficiency.

Emotional and psychological support was also highlighted as a crucial strategy by several respondents. Mothers emphasized the value of counseling services, peer support groups, or short breaks during work to check on their children. One participant explained, *“Sometimes I feel completely drained. I really want someone to talk to or a few minutes to see my child. It helps me regain focus and calm.”* Another added, *“Knowing that my workplace cares about my emotional well-being makes me much dedicated and less stressed.”* A Human Resource Manager noted, *“Organizations need to recognize that supporting a mother emotionally helps to progress her productivity.”* These insights demonstrate that emotional well-being is a vital factor in helping working mothers manage stress and sustain performance. These findings support Fayaz and Gulzar (2025), who emphasized that emotional support strongly influences employee effectiveness. Women balancing work and parenting are particularly affected. Feeling supported can make a real difference—improving focus, reducing stress, and sustaining performance. Simple interventions, like counseling services or peer support groups, matter. Even short check-in breaks during the day can help. When organizations implement these measures, burnout decreases, maternal well-being improves, and overall productivity benefits as well.

Lastly, increased involvement from partners or family members was emphasized as a crucial strategy for supporting working mothers. Several respondents reported that they bear the majority of parenting responsibilities alone, which intensifies stress and affects their job performance. One participant noted, *“I would be less tired and do my job better if my husband helped more with the children.”* Another added, *“When my parents or siblings watch the kids, I can actually focus on work and not worry about them all the time.”* These statements illustrate that sharing parenting duties not only alleviates physical and emotional strain but also allows mothers to engage more fully in their professional roles. These findings echo Brue (2018), who noted that when family members, particularly spouses, take an active role, the entire family support system strengthens. Shared childcare responsibilities can make a real difference, reducing maternal stress, allowing mothers to focus at work, and improving outcomes at home. It’s not just about convenience. The effects extend beyond the household, shaping productivity and well-being in multiple spheres of life.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study revealed that working mothers in Kigamboni Municipality face significant challenges in balancing employment and child-rearing responsibilities, with daily childcare tasks often conflicting with work demands and affecting career progression, emotional well-being, and productivity. Many mothers reported limited support from spouses, family members, or external childcare services. The situation exacerbates stress and reduces efficiency. The findings align with the Role Strain Theory, highlighting how multiple, competing roles create physical and emotional strain. Respondents suggested strategies such as flexible working hours, access to affordable childcare, emotional support, and increased partner or family involvement which could alleviate stress and improve work-life balance. The study underscores the urgent need for family-friendly workplace policies, accessible childcare services, and supportive social networks. These will empower working mothers, enhance maternal well-being, and strengthen both households and the broader community.

5.2 Recommendations

To effectively support working mothers, it is recommended that:

1. Employers should implement flexible work arrangements. This included adjustable hours and remote work options, to ease the tension between professional duties and childcare responsibilities.
2. Expanding access to affordable and reliable childcare services is essential, alongside providing emotional and psychological support through counseling, peer networks, and short breaks for mothers to attend to their children.
3. Encouraging active participation from partners and extended family members can further lighten the childcare burden and promote healthier family dynamics.
4. Policymakers should also prioritize family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, childcare subsidies, and workplace flexibility standards, to enhance gender equity and foster career progression for mothers.
5. Finally, further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of these interventions on maternal well-being, career advancement, and child development across both urban and rural contexts.

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