

The work-life balance: How working mothers cope with family lives and working lives simultaneously.

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Various studies claim that it is very difficult for women to “have it all” in terms of financial stability, marriage, children and career while other studies convey that it is challenging for mothers in different fields of work to access top positions.

Through a mixed-method approach involving working mothers, what it takes to live up to one’s potential at work, to access top positions and the challenges faced in maintaining a feasible work-life balance, are explored. Mothers in managerial positions are interviewed (n=7) via snowball sampling in order to empirically explore how they respond to their professional responsibilities and expectations within the context of motherhood. This is triangulated with a survey (n=291) in order to obtain an overall indication of how working mothers approach their work-life balance and respond to the notion of further education.

Through thematic analysis, it transpired that all the interviewed mothers seem to have sculpted their careers around family responsibilities. The pride and fulfilment they derive from their role at work does not come without a lot of compromises and a lot of stress. Work-life balance seems very difficult to attain on a daily basis, particularly when the mother holds a high-flying career. Motherhood has also been seen to hinder surveyed mothers from pursuing further education, give their best at work or progress in their careers. Facilitating factors include mother’s own planning and organisation skills, empathy, trust and support at work, encouragement and tangible support from family members, and a mind shift in social perceptions and expectations.