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**WORKING FROM HOME DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC:
EXPERIENCES OF CAREER WOMEN AT UNILEVER GHANA LIMITED**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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DECLARATION

I, Veronica Ofosu, hereby declare that this thesis, “WORKING FROM HOME DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EXPERIENCES OF CAREER WOMEN AT UNILEVER GHANA LIMITED”, consists entirely of my own work produced from research undertaken under supervision and that no part of it has been published or presented for another degree elsewhere, except for the permissible citations/references from other sources, which have been duly acknowledged.

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Signature

January 12, 2022

Date

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as supervisors.

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(Main-Supervisor)



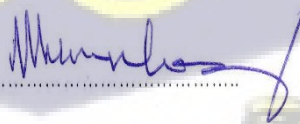
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Dr Charles Brenya Wiafe-Akenteng

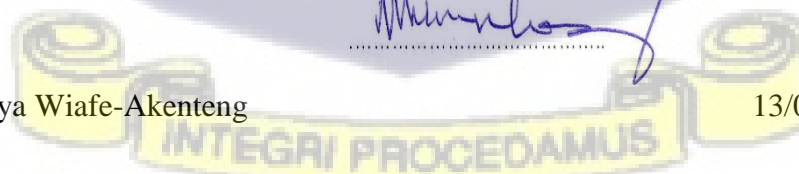
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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my lovely family; Stephen Boafo my husband and my two lovely children, Afua Oforiwaa Boafo and Nana Kofi Boafo for their encouragement, understanding and unflinching support throughout the two-year programme.



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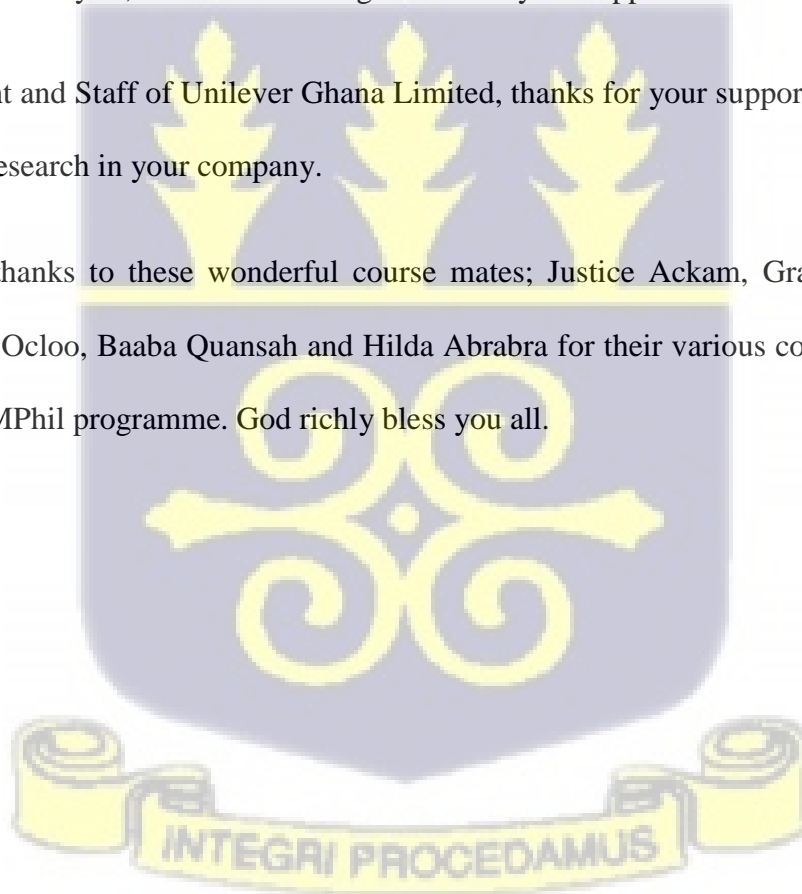
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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the novel corona virus has changed the scope of human activity in several ways. In the corporate environment, workers are forced to work from home as part of measures to control the spread of the virus. This poses challenges that presents gender dynamics requiring academic enquiry since men and women face peculiar challenges working from home. This study, therefore, sought to study the experiences of career women working from home to uncover the gendered challenges of work-family balance faced by career women. The study which adopted a strictly qualitative method was conducted at Unilever Ghana Limited using a sample of 17 career women. Using thematic analysis, the study found that stressors relating to working from home can be viewed from perspectives of psychological stress. The study captured varied opinions regarding the effect of working from home on employee performance. One section of the respondents admitted having their output increased while others stated otherwise. Furthermore, working from home comes with peculiar challenges ranging from erratic power and internet supply to an unconducive working environment at home due to either lack of supporting work structures or distractions from other domestic duties especially in the case of women. It is noted that the issues relating to working from home are not having the same bearing on both genders as women are faced with peculiar challenges of balancing work with other domestic duties. The study recommends that special incentives should be given to career women to enable them to focus on discharging their duties amid the demands of domestic duties to be done as the mother of the house. Again, award schemes should be organised for best performing employees working from home, with particular attention paid to women given their peculiar challenges.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

In December 2019, a new coronavirus case was identified in Wuhan China. The virus first emerged in China and is considered one of the major global health threats (Wang *et al.*, 2020). The outbreak had spread to 147 countries by the 30th of January 2020, killing over 7800 people and affecting hundreds of thousands of people in a brief period of time (Gostin *et al.*, 2020). On Wednesday 11th March 2020, the virus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation as it affected some 82 million people of which about 1.7 million had died as of December 2020 (Crawford *et al.*, 2020). The outbreak of the covid-19 virus adversely impacted the way of life of people as the nature of its spread required less human contact, making isolation, and quarantining a recurring new normal (Crawford *et al.*, 2020). The virus has a mortality rate of 1-2% with other genetic variants of the virus leading to 4-6% mortality in areas like New York, Spain, and Northern Italy (Szabo, 2020). The deadly virus has strongly influenced people by increasing fear, frustration, stress, and anxiety at the workplace setting causing some workplaces to shut down. Thus, the pandemic has created a crisis in all aspects of human lives, and in the manufacturing sector, in particular, the impact of the pandemic has been quite devastating (Gostin *et al.*, 2020). The pandemic has gradually spread to Africa and for that matter Ghana, where its impact on mortality has been minimal in comparison to its impact in the industrialised world.

In Ghana, the first two cases of COVID-19 were reported on March 12, 2020, by the Ministry of Health. As a first response, on March 15, 2020, all public assemblies were prohibited, all schools and universities were closed, and all borders were closed on March 23, 2020. In the interest of public safety, a partial lockdown was introduced on March 30 in areas identified as ‘hotspots’ (United Nations University, 2020). Hence, the government provided leadership introducing a number of policies such as lockdowns and Working from Home for people who are not considered frontline workers. In response to this, most institutions adapted by introducing new policies such as rotations and ‘working from home’ to keep workers productive even in these periods (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Schools were closed in most countries, including Ghana, to limit the chances of children becoming infected. This meant that parents, especially mothers who have the socially prescribed role of taking care of children, have to play the dual role of taking care of children at home whilst contributing to productivity of their institutions (WHO, 2020).

Stevenson and Wolfers (2020) revealed that globally, “work-from-home” or “home-office” has been a necessary practice for varied organisations and workers during the lockdown period of COVID-19 crisis. During such periods, societies went through a large scale “forced experiment” where companies and workers continued to operate while being physically separated, provided they had the necessary technological, legal and digital security conditions. This led potentially to large impacts on businesses of all kinds, whether they had embraced teleworking in the past or not (Golden, 2019). Dekel *et al.* (2019) accentuated that the organisational concept of one working from home has become crucial in sustaining production during the crisis, but its effects on productivity are indistinct. According to Bloom *et al.* (2015), it was discovered that people work from home alongside their kids, in unsuitable spaces, with no choice and no in-office days (Bloom

et al., 2015). This resulted in productivity disasters for organisations (Gorlick, 2020). A survey undertaken by a Japanese researcher confirmed a decreased self-reported worker productivity (Morikawa, 2020). Conversely, a poll among United States' hiring managers found that managers were more likely to have experienced short-term productivity gains rather than losses due to remote work, suggesting that productivity losses during the crisis are by no means a foregone conclusion (Ozimek, 2020).

Szabo (2020) reported that the deadly virus has strongly influenced people by increasing fear, frustration, stress, and anxiety levels. A number of studies such as Griffin and Clarke (2011), as well as Bakker and Demerouti (2018) revealed that crisis affects the work of employees, and their psychological wellbeing to a large extent. The crisis is explained to mean an emotionally stressful and disturbing event in a person's life (Wright & Hobfoll, 2014). The outbreak of COVID-19 in the current time has led to a crisis and made a major switch in the regular working conditions worldwide correlated with high public uncertainty (Kanupriya, 2020).

In addition to stress levels associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, media speculation has led to the disturbance of the psychological well-being of people. Thus, lockdowns and the institutional policy of one working away from the usual office setting have become stressful for many people that work with organisations. Sahni (2016) emphasised that high workload coupled with unrealistic deadlines, work-family imbalance and job insecurity are the main stressors for staff of the period. Stress has also been found to have a negative influence on employees' performance, productivity, and overall satisfaction.

Career women in the context of this study refer to women who are faced with the daily challenge of reconciling their ambitious career aspirations with their family life (Ezzedeen *et al.*, 2009). The

context of career women in this study follows the term as used in other studies that investigated the challenges to career women's advancement and the conflict of balancing that with family life (Hawlett, 2002; Beatty, 1996). Career women were also contextualised following Ruderman *et al.* (2002) who studied how career women can accrue benefits of enhanced well-being and greater access to social capital with the right combination of work and family.

Krentz (2020) noted that the impact of COVID-19 on career women had been enormous, as the pandemic has made a sizable number of children stay home from school as countries and cities attempt to reduce the spread of the virus. According to Igielnik (2021), therefore the situation has been particularly problematic in households in which women work. Igielnik (2021) further explained that career women are more likely than their spouses during the COVID crises to have primary responsibility when it comes to childcare. Career women are also more often responsible for the care of elderly family members as well as for their own children, placing significant burden on them when working from home. This thereby impacts negatively on the productivity of career women when working from home, generally referred to as telework in literature. Thus, while more companies are allowing more women to work from home, it is not easy for them to supervise and monitor the education of their children while continuing to be productive in their jobs. It is even more problematic for women that have jobs that cannot be performed remotely and who cannot afford alternative care arrangements. This study thus seeks to understand how career women are coping and the possible impact this phenomenon may be having on their lives, and their work output, using Unilever Ghana Limited as the study organisation.

1.2 Statement of the problem

As of November 26, 2020, the corona virus pandemic had spread globally, with over 60 million confirmed cases and over 1.4 million confirmed deaths, and the figure has been steadily rising (World Health Organisation 2020). As the coronavirus spreads over the world, several governments have enforced and reimposed tight lockdowns that include the closing of non-essential enterprises and the prohibition of non-essential meetings in order to protect hospitals from being swamped by COVID-19, Ghana was not an exception. Many other countries have pushed their citizens to spend as much time as possible at home and practice social distancing in order to limit face-to-face interactions with others. Authorities and organisers of mass gathering events are being asked to conduct a risk assessment for their events in the context of the pandemic in order to safeguard people from harm. This has forced many corporate organisations to embrace the idea of their employees working from home.

Studies have long been conducted relating to the interconnectivity of work and family domains (Greenhaus *et al.*, 1985; Voydanoff, 2002). More especially so, in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic now spreading across the globe and Ghana for that matter, a lot of new modes of operations have occurred within the workforce. This has necessitated the adoption of new ways of doing things by many people in the corporate world, especially career women and those they work closely with. Among many changes the corporate world is currently facing is the new request that many workers shift from coming into their workplace to working from home (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). For career women, this might pose peculiar problems as most of them have to combine concurrently working and taking care of their children at home. This is likely to impact the psychological well-being of career women in such situations and may likely impact their

productivity in the workplace setting. In the long term, this phenomenon is also likely to contribute to the growing inequality between men and women as women are more likely to suffer time poverty due to socially constructed roles such as childcare. Thus, while the idea of working successfully from home seems appealing, and even fun, working from home can present unique challenges, from how to focus on home distractions, to trying to be productive and communicate well with team members from afar.

For career women, it is also the first time where many of them have to combine working and taking care of children at home. Though it has become a necessity for mothers to work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not many empirical studies have been undertaken in this regard especially within the Ghanaian social and corporate settings given that studies have been done in other countries (Green *et al.*, 2020), to understand how career women are coping and the possible impacts this phenomenon may be having on their lives thereby creating a research gap. It has therefore become imperative that this study is undertaken to bring to the fore how career women are being impacted in this “new normal” to fill in the knowledge gap while proffering solutions on how occupational policies and family structures could be redesigned to be favourable to career women during situations when remote working is the best available option.

1.3 Research Objectives

The broad aim of this study is to investigate how working from home due to the outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted career women. The study thus empirically investigated the psychological impact this phenomenon has had on career women and also examined its impact on their output at work. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the psychological impact of working from home on career women.
2. To explore the impact of working from home on the output of career women at work.
3. To examine the challenges that career women face working from home
4. To examine gender dynamics of working from home

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the psychological impacts of working from home on career women?
2. What is the impact of working from home on the output of career women at work?
3. What are the challenges that career women face working from home?
4. What are the gender dynamics of working from home?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is pertinent, in that it will help to contribute to the growing knowledge being gathered across the globe on the COVID-19 pandemic and its psychosocial and economic impacts on workers, especially career women.

Secondly, the study will be of immense help to corporate managers in relation to how policies in the workplace settings can help in minimizing the psychosocial impact COVID-19 brings. Thus, the findings of the study will help provide valuable information to Human Resources managers in

relation to designing appropriate policies to help increase productivity in spite of the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the study will also explore strategies to help enhance the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at Unilever Ghana Limited and for that matter, other organisations. Finally, the study is expected to serve as an information hub for institutions, researchers, and academicians in their research endeavours. Thus, individuals, organisations and institutions that might want to undertake a study of this kind will find this research useful as it will serve as empirical material for such stakeholders.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The definition of the contextual and the geographic scopes to guide a study is an important element of research. Simon and Goes (2013) define the “scope of the study” to mean the parameters under which a study is operated. The scope refers to the domain of the research and what is not. The scope of the study covered career women in the formal sector in Ghana due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of the study is in two forms: Thus, the contextual scope and the geographical scope. The contextual scope of this study was limited to the effect of working from home on career women in the formal sector of Ghana due to the COVID-19 pandemic and how the ‘new normal’ impacted their output at Unilever Ghana Limited. The contextual scope also covered how the elements of the ‘new normal’ affect equality between men and women at the organisation.

In terms of the geographic scope, this study covered Unilever Ghana Limited in Tema, Ghana. The company is a multinational based in Ghana engaged in the manufacturing of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange. The Company produces the following

categories: Home Care, Personal Care and Foods. The Home Care Categories are Fab Cleaning and Household care. The Personal Care categories include Skin cleansing, Skin Care and Oral. Its food segment includes Tea, Mayonnaise, Health, and wellness.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The presentation of the thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides the background study with specific emphasis on the statement of the problem, research objectives, questions, significance of the study, scope, and limitations of the study. Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature and theoretical framework pertinent to issues pertaining to career women and COVID-19. The review also covered the psychological impact of working from home, how the ‘new normal’ has impacted output at the workplace, as well as elements of the phenomena in relation to gender. The review thus covered theoretical as well as empirical issues. Chapter three provides a detailed methodology with specific emphasis on the research design, study area, sample and sampling technique, data collection instrument, data collection procedure, as well as data management and analysis. Chapter four presents the key results of the study from the analysis of data gathered. Chapter five presents the summary of key findings, discussion of findings in relation to literature, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the general background and purpose of the study. The chapter also includes the statement of the problem that this study seeks to achieve, the significance of this study and finally, the organization of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers both theoretical and empirical reviews of studies relating to the topic. The review begins with the discussion on the theoretical grounding relevant to the study, empirical studies conducted in the field in relation to the definition of terms how career women are affected by working from home with regards to their productivity and challenges faced. The review also establishes the research gap that the study seeks to fill which has been partly outlined in the problem statement.

2.2 Theoretical Perspective

There are many theories propounded over the years to explain the work-family nexus. The study of the concepts has benefited from multiple theories that originate from fields such as sociology, and social psychology among others (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The Role theory and the Conservation of Resource theory were largely used for the study.

2.2.1 The Role Theory

The role theory as first used by Martin and Wilson in Ritzer (2004), defines a role as a set of duties, responsibilities and expectations relating to an individual's occupation, status or position. It is the

case that every individual plays multiple roles in any capacity they find themselves in on a daily basis. This is generally referred to as role accumulation in literature. A classic example is a young man who at the same time works as an employee of an organisation, a spouse and a father in his family life domain. These roles require different energy and time which at times are even incompatible leading to inter-role conflict (Sirgy *et al.*, 2016). This inter-role conflict according to Greenhaus *et al.* (1985), may take three forms which include time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behaviour-based conflict. These conflicts are most likely to cause two forms of reactions according to Gutek (1991), these reactions include what is referred to as family-to-work conflict, thus, in cases where an individual's family interferes with their activities at work and work-to-family conflict, thus, where an individuals' work demands interfere with their family engagements. This theory may well explain the concept of working from home as a result of COVID-19, given the demands of combining both work and family interference at the same time. This is especially the case for female workers who by the requirements of working from home will have to combine their working from home with other domestic duties that might not be easily compatible with work.

Generally, The Role theory assumes that societal norms are organised and placed in roles that individuals in the society take over. According to theory, particular roles and positions in society are structured and clearly defined. This helps the individual identify with the society and recognise his importance in the grand scheme and structure of the society (Opp, 2015). Thus, the mother knows that she occupies the role of the maternal leader of the home and is tasked with taking care of the basic duties in the home such as teaching the children how to cook, clean and keep a home. This role occupied in society has to be managed alongside any corporate work or related role that she may be performing. Thus, an individual can play the dual role of being a mother and the

manager of a corporate organisation. The theory posits that the individual has to find a way of meeting the demands of both roles without compromising on either. This can often result in family-work conflict, which when unresolved, can negatively affect the structure of the society and undermine the individual's status in society.

This theory has been widely accepted and used in various societies with particular differences in the requirements and expectations of each role based on the norms of the society. Contemporarily, some shortfalls have been identified in the Role theory and scholars have criticised how realistic it is, especially in light of recent advancements and modernisation. The theory has been criticised for placing more emphasis on social conformity than questioning such policies (Jackson, 2011). Through socialisation, individuals are exposed to the demands of roles in society and grow up with an almost intrinsic sense of what is required of each role in society. Thus, the dilemma becomes how one can combine the role placed on him by society and his personal goals and ambitions, and not why he or she is required to fill that role. There is no such room for the individual to question the importance of such roles, as group cohesion and social conformity are more preferred. This means the socialisation process lacks a sense of comprehensiveness and rationality. Older members of the society discourage younger ones from questioning these long-held norms and hardly accept new suggestions or give leeway for compromise.

2.2.2 The Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory

The Conservation of Resource (COR) theory is a stress theory that was first used by Hobfoll (1989) to explain what motivates people to both maintain their current resources and pursue new ones. The COR is a notable theory that explains stress and trauma phenomena. The theory explains that people feel stressed when their existing valuable resources are under threat and the new additional

resources seem to be unreachable. Under COR, all work-related conditions such as objects, conditions, and personal characteristics are termed resources.

The basic assumption underlying the conservation of resources (COR) theory is that human beings are motivated to protect their current resources and acquire new resources. Hobfoll and Wells (1998) in this theory classified 74 resources into varied categories comprising primary resources (such as food, shelter or clothing), secondary resources (social support, belongingness to a group, hope and optimism) and tertiary resources (Social status and luxurious lifestyle).

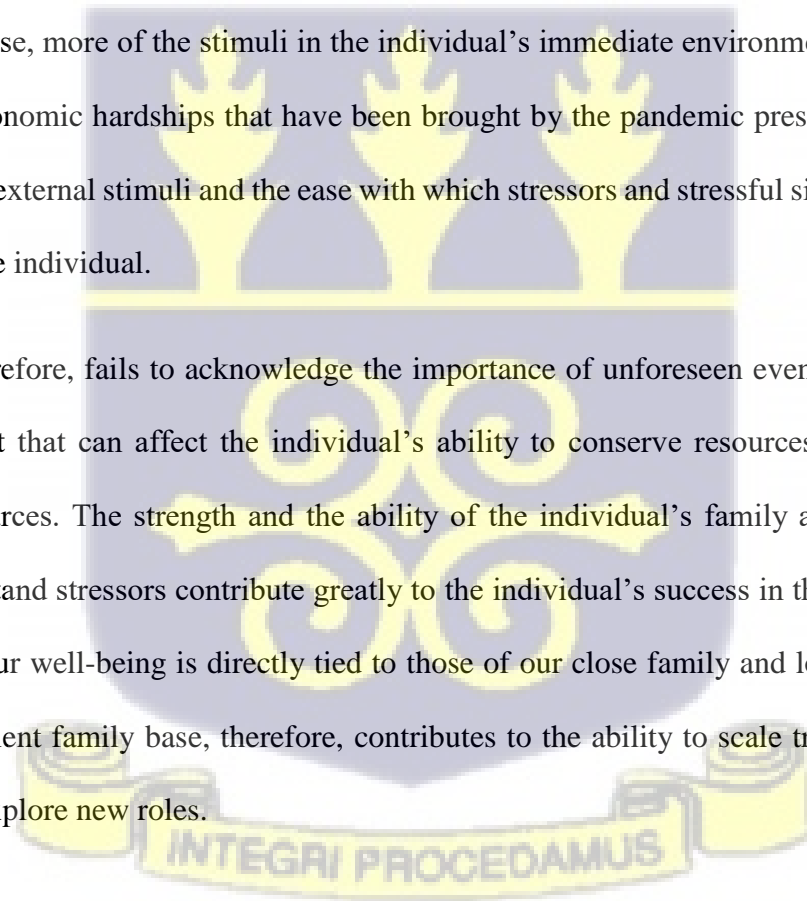
The adoption of COR theory is pertinent to this study in the sense that the theory can help explain how stressful events such as the COVID-19 pandemic influences career women, their work, as well as their family. For the present study, the resource list consisted of resources like social support, time, hope and optimism as these resources are threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic leading to stress.

The underlying assumption of the Conservation of Resource Theory is that based on the stress levels people face at work or any setting, their desire to maintain their resources or seek more challenging ones. According to the theory, given adequate current resources, individuals are empowered to break out and search for more challenging ones, to reach higher heights and improve on themselves. On the contrary, inadequate, or insufficient current resources pose significant threats to the individual and disables him or her from searching for new roles or resources. In the presence of stressors such as work constraints, family burdens, etc. such individuals are restricted and unable to develop their fullest potential through exploration of more challenging roles.

In the Conservation of Resource Theory, resilience is considered of the utmost essence in the understanding of the stress process (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2015). Resilience here is defined as the ability

of humans to withstand the impact of traumatic stress and be able to return to their pre-stressor state when the stressor ends (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2015). The theory assumes that the most important factor in determining an individual's likelihood to grow beyond his current resources and seek out newer, more challenging ones depends on his resilience and mental toughness. Thus, tougher and more resilient individuals will pursue new roles and vice versa. This notion appears flawed, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has been rife for almost two years. Within this period, even the toughest of individuals have been hit, one way or the other by the impact of the pandemic. The Conservation of Resource Theory assumes that the individual plays a big role in determining what happens around him and as such controls his response to those stimuli. However, in a realistic sense, more of the stimuli in the individual's immediate environment are beyond his control. The economic hardships that have been brought by the pandemic present an example of the volatility of external stimuli and the ease with which stressors and stressful situations can come up and affect the individual.

The theory, therefore, fails to acknowledge the importance of unforeseen events and changes in the environment that can affect the individual's ability to conserve resources or look for new additional resources. The strength and the ability of the individual's family and social support system to withstand stressors contribute greatly to the individual's success in that regard. We are social beings; our well-being is directly tied to those of our close family and loved ones. Such a strong and resilient family base, therefore, contributes to the ability to scale troubles, overcome stressors, and explore new roles.



2.3 Empirical Review of Theories

A search through existing literature reveals interesting empirical evidence of multiple theories used to explain the idea of working from home, especially in periods of a pandemic. For instance, Delanoeije and Verbruggen, (2019), used the role theory to test the association between volition and perceived pressure linked to work-home practice. In the same light, Bernhardt *et al.* (2022), adopted the same theory in assessing how changes in parenting styles during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic were related to working from home, especially in light of the pandemic-associated rise in work-to-family conflicts and the gender dynamics of such associations. In a study, Adisa *et al.* (2021), investigated how working from home reduces employee engagement using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory during the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, in a study to investigate how and when the sensation of control influences safety behaviours such as working from home, Li and Zhu. (2022), using the conservation of resources theory. These empirical studies support the use of the role theory and the Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory to understand the concept of career women working from home amid the covid-19 pandemic and how their productivity is affected in relation to their male counterparts.

2.4 Review of Related Studies

Quite a substantial number of studies carried out on “working from home” were done around the '90s and early 2000s (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Veinott *et al.*, 1999). Although these publications were years ago, they are crucial in serving as the basis for further explorations into the subject. It is upon this premise that the current study occasionally cited some significant insights highlighted by those studies. Working from home is often used interchangeably with synonyms such as remote

work, telecommuting, and home-work-all referring to work done at places or other spaces reserved for the performance of such works (International labour organisation, 2016). The focus of the present study is working from home specifically.

Olson (1983) pioneered work on the phenomenon of working from home. She used the term remote work to refer to “organisational work that is performed outside the normal organisational confines of space and time” (Osborne, 1983, p. 182). Her study on remote office work coupled with subsequent literature on the subject has had an enormous influence on the deliberations of other researchers on the topic.

According to the Labor Code of Poland, telework, which includes working from home as used in the present study, is characterised by three main things: work outside the workplace, regularity, and the use of electronic devices for communication. The phrase ‘working from home’ as used in this study should not be confused with the one used for self-employed individuals who perform their own businesses in their homes. For example, someone who operates a salon, barbering shop or tailoring business could do so in their home. However, that is not what is referred to as working from home in the current study. Instead working from home refers in this study to telecommuting carrying out organisational work in one’s home characterised mainly by means of the use of electronic devices and an organisationally set time schedule.

Since the onslaught of COVID-19 infections and deaths that caught the world off guard in 2020, there has been a sharp spike in the number of people who find themselves working from home. Public health officials, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, are asking that individuals stay away from each other. Various governments in an attempt to ensure that people stay away from each other as much as possible have placed bans on large gatherings. A considerable number of

businesses are embracing work-from-home or telecommuting options and work arrangements have gotten more flexible (Bick *et al.*, 2020). There is a great possibility that these changes will persist long after the pandemic is over. There has been a number of research into the implications of working from home.

Ipsen *et al.* (2021) in their study “Six Key Advantages and Disadvantages of Working from Home in Europe during COVID-19” highlight some ways working from home could be of benefit and ways by which the phenomenon could have a negative implication. Ipsen *et al.* (2021) explored the experiences of 5748 people from 29 European countries between the period March 11 and May 8 2020. They found out that most people generally felt positive about the idea of working from home. Three factors, according to Ipsen *et al.* (2021) that represented the cardinal advantages of working from home included enhanced efficiency, an appreciable work-life balance and greater work control. On the other hand, the main disadvantages of working from home were also represented by three factors including home office constraints, inadequate tools and work uncertainties. However, they indicated that these advantages and disadvantages were of mutual importance and could be key in interpreting the common denominator of how people experience working from home.

Likewise, Xiao *et al.* (2021) assessed the impact of working from home on the physical and mental well-being of office workstation workers. Using linear regressions, multinomial logistic regressions and chi-square tests to derive deductions from 988 valid responses associated with physical and mental health related issues, they found an overall decline in the overall physical and mental health status of the workers. They employed lifestyle and home environments, occupational environment, home-office environment, and physical and mental well-being as measures for the study. The study concluded that significant determinants of decreased physical and mental health

status included decreased physical activity, increased junk food intake, lack of communication with fellow workers, and having toddlers at home. Also, they emphasised the toll working from home had on female workers who had care duties to perform in addition to attending to higher workloads, increased work hours and adjusting work hours around others.

Delaporte and Pena (2020) examined the share of jobs that are affected as people work from home in the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Using unique data from the harmonised database corresponding to 23 countries, they highlight demographics, educational, labour, income, occupation and information on housing conditions at the individual levels. They identified that the feasibility to work from home is positively correlated with workers who operate in higher skilled occupations. They further identified these higher skilled occupations span economic activities related to finance, insurance, and the real estate sector. They also revealed that such individuals who work from home are mostly of higher levels of education, dwell in urban settlements, have formal jobs and are working in large firms and belong to top management of such firms.

Dockery and Bawa (2020) in their study on “Working from home in the COVID-19 lockdown” highlights the caveat that the experiences of people forced into working from home due to the COVID-19 will be potentially different from others. Having drawn attention to that caveat Dockery and Bawa (2020) indicated an increase in work performance as a result of working from home- a finding that corroborates that of Bloom *et al.* (2015). Some positives with regard to working from home also included the fostering of better family relationships. On the other hand, however, Dockery and Bawa (2020) pointed out that bringing office work into the home and working for longer hours can increase feelings of work-family conflict for the individual. There is also greater intrusion, as regards time, into non-work domains as a result of increased workloads.

A similar study was carried out by Purwanto *et al.* (2020) in Indonesia where they explored the impact of work from home on Indonesian teachers' performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. They employed the case study approach and conducted interviews with 6 elementary school teachers. The findings of the study revealed that some advantages of working from home included more flexibility in completing work, no need in following rigidly set office hours, no need for transportation or fuel costs, availability of more free time and a reduction in stress levels.

Alon *et al.* (2020) took a slightly different approach in looking at COVID-19 and working from home. Their study assessed the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and it was found that the division of labour in various households will be affected as men would have more time to participate in childcare due to the flexibility. The findings further revealed that relative to men, career women will benefit more from this development considering that currently, they disproportionately carry the burden of juggling work, childcare duties and work. Bertrand *et al.* (2010) point out that one reason for the existence of a gender pay gap is a lack of flexibility in work arrangements and hours, especially in financial institutions and business services. Thus the recent developments in workplaces arising from the adjustments being made due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could actually help bridge the gender pay gap.

Ipsen *et al.* (2021) explored the merits and disadvantages of working from home in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic using data taken from knowledge workers in 29 European countries on their experiences. They revealed that people have a more positive perspective on working from home and they attributed this to greater work control, work-life balance and improved work efficiency. On the downside, they outlined inadequacy of available tools, work uncertainties, and home office constraints as key influencers of the disadvantages of working from home. Ipsen *et*

al. (2021) compared to gender, number of children at home, age and job roles in this assessment to determine the advantages and disadvantages of working from home.

2.5 Career women working from home and COVID-19

With workers having to live with the new normal of working from home as a way to remain working while reducing the risk of spread of the COVID-19 virus, things took new turns with the closure of schools (Upoalkpajor & Upoalkpajor, 2020). This presents a major challenge to workers especially career women who wish to perform their duties at work while attending to their children who do not only need their care but also require some minimum level of homeschooling with the closure of schools and daycare centres. A study by Alon *et al.* (2020) has shown that on a weekday, mothers spent nearly three times as much time on childcare as their male counterparts (5.5 hours vs. two hours on average). Moreover, on a weekday, mothers spend nearly an hour more on housework than fathers, or nearly twice as long (Alon *et al.*, 2020). The literature on household duties points to one fact, which makes it valid to ask; is it conceivable that the household's task division will be affected by the pandemic? A plausible answer to this question will largely depend on a condition of the lockdown that has to do with fathers being more likely than mothers to reduce their working hours and spend more time at home. In fact, when the father works from home at least once a week but the mother only works on-site, the time spent on childcare is more evenly distributed and cleaning is evenly distributed between the two partners. A study by Messacar *et al.* (2020) revealed that women in dual earning families are more likely (62%) to engage in work that can be done from home as compared to men where only 36% of men could engage in jobs that can be done from home.

Furthermore, Feng and Savani (2020) highlighted the gender disparities in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction juxtaposing the implications for dual-career parents working from home. Sampling data from 286 US resident full-time workers, Feng and Savani explored the work productivity of the respondents before and after COVID-19 lockdowns. Although extant literature documented little to no disparities in job performance and job satisfaction, Feng and Savani found that gender gaps exist in dual-career parents working from home. They explained that women who reported similar work productivity and job satisfaction levels as men before the COVID-19 pandemic were less productive and less satisfied after the outbreak. Practically, they demonstrated that women suffered more than men in times when women and men worked from home while having at least a child to take care of. They suggested that unexpected events could create gender gaps in work outcomes where none existed previously.

From another perspective, Mongey and Weinberg (2020), compared the features of low work-from-home and high personal-proximity occupations while investigating the likelihood of practising social distancing policies, and established that women are more likely to be involved in high work-from-home jobs and are less likely to engage in high physical-proximity jobs. Since the outbreak, many businesses have tightened their budget and laid-off workers. Career women and career women are the categories of people most affected by the stress and strain on company budgets while social distancing policies are enforced (Mongey *et al.*, 2020). The Pandemic has battered industry areas in which women's work is more predominant—retail foundations, the hospitality industry, beauty salons, and medical care. Women, who double as caregivers and part-time educators of their wards during the lockdown and periods where they are lucky to work at home have proven to work under higher forms of duress while practising social distancing (Yeboah *et al.*, 2020, Blaskó *et al.*, 2020). Although women do the unequally larger share of care

work and other related chores in households, they are more likely to be overburdened with increased care duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. In cases where schools and childcare centres were closed down all over the globe and with the presence of the elderly and sick who need support to survive, the sum of care work in such households shoots up massively (Blaskó *et al.*, 2020).

Some researchers, Park *et al.* (2020), and Lewnard and Lo (2020), revealed that social distancing practices help limit about 90% of the spread of the coronavirus. In assessing the extreme effects of social distancing, especially, social isolation on humans, Steptoe *et al.* (2013) averred that deaths could even be a result as more people practice social distancing and work from home because they lack contact with family, friends and other civil forms of organisation. Alternatively, others fall into general depression and anxious feelings which often culminate in changes in routines and the development of eating habits (Xiao *et al.*, 2021). However, disturbing these findings might be, Steptoe *et al.* (2013) believe that the deterioration begins from the point of isolation. Additionally, Ipsen *et al.* (2021) highlighted poor physical working conditions at home, missing work colleagues, and missing getting out of home as key disadvantages of working from home. They explained that instead of workers benefitting from social interactions and exercise, their contacts have been limited and most of their time is spent behind computers. To some extent, some of the workers would assert “I feel tied to my computer to a greater extent”.

According to studies, working from home has both harmful and beneficial effects on the life domain. WLB, life satisfaction, and family satisfaction are examples of life domains. Work-family conflict, work-family balance, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction are all examples of work-life balance (Gregory & Milner, 2009). working from home was discovered to have harmful effects on the domain of life in some research. Grant *et al.* (2019), for example, discovered that e-workers

struggle to regulate the boundaries between working and non-working time, resulting in a proclivity to overwork. Others discovered that the lines between work and family life were blurred (Grant *et al.*, 2019), which could lead to overwork and, as a result, a reduction in WLB. Nonetheless, multiple research has discovered that working from home is linked to family and life pleasure (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). working from home has been found to improve the life satisfaction of childless male workers. Furthermore, WLB has been discovered to be favourably connected with life and family satisfaction (Chan *et al.*, 2016; Noda, 2020).

In Ghana, the ongoing crisis of COVID-19 has changed the lives of workers considerably; imposing the need for various modifications for organisations and individuals to cope with this challenging time. Though it has become a necessity for career women to work from home due to COVID 19 pandemic, not many empirical studies have been undertaken in this regard especially within the Ghanaian social and corporate settings, to understand how career women are coping and the possible impacts this phenomenon may be having on their lives thereby creating a research gap. The phenomenon has been studied in other countries though not extensively (Kaur *et al.*, 2020; Green *et al.*, 2020). It has therefore become imperative that this study is undertaken to bring to the fore how career women are being impacted in this “new normal” to fill in the knowledge gap, while proffering solutions on how occupational policies and family structures could be redesigned to be favourable to these mothers during situations when remote working is the best available option.



2.6 COVID-19 Related Studies in Ghana

In times when social distancing and the use of masks became requirements for personal safety and hygiene, some researchers (Yeboah *et al.*, 2020) assessed the practicality of the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines for the urban poor in Ghana. Due to the availability of limited empirical literature, the study employed the use of literature reviews and a synthesis of secondary academic materials from online databases such as JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCO and ERIC while making use of other sources including newspaper articles, news publications and data from institutional websites as well. Their study highlighted the fact that social distancing at the time of the study was seriously undermined in Ghana due to socio-economic limitations.

Other findings, Adom *et al.* (2020) and Yeboah *et al.* (2020), in rather different circumstances, showed that the plight of these affected few is exacerbated because of the impracticability of social distancing and other COVID-19 restrictions in Ghana. Yeboah, *et al.* (2020) further showed that the socio-economic conditions of the urban poor such as uncoordinated public transport systems, unorganised markets and poor access to water and sanitation undermine the applicability of the World Health Organisation's social distancing guidelines in Ghana. For instance, Adom *et al.* (2020), highlighted the woes of workers in the informal sector when there were COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. They employed a qualitative thematic analysis in examining the economic impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on businesses and livelihoods. Their study sampled 25 respondents who revealed that the COVID-19 restrictions had serious economic implications on their livelihoods. Citing the disruption of businesses, especially those heavily dependent on daily incomes and the informal sector, their study highlighted the unbearable economic surge the restrictions and the two-week lockdown have had on their livelihoods.

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the study presented a review of relevant literature to the study. A theoretical review, empirical review of theories as well as a review of empirical studies on the subject of working from home were presented.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section discusses issues pertaining to the research design, research setting, population, sample and sampling technique, measures, data collection procedure as well as data management and analysis.

3.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted among female workers at Unilever Ghana. Unilever Ghana Limited is a multinational company engaged in the manufacturing of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). The company began operations on the Gold Coast in 1787 when Swanzy and King, two European trading firms, arrived. They merged to form the nucleus of the United Africa Company of Gold Coast (UAC) in 1931. The UAC in 1963, established a consumer goods manufacturing company called, Lever Brothers. In 1992, the UAC Ghana Limited and Lever Brothers merged to form Unilever Ghana Limited. Unilever has since established itself as one of the largest consumer product goods (CPG) manufacturing companies in the world. The company seeks to meet everyday needs for nutrition, hygiene and personal care with brands that help people feel good, look good and get more out of life. The Company's categories include Foods, Home Care and Personal Care. The Foods category are Tea, Savory, Mayonnaise, Health and Wellness. Home Care

Categories are; Fab Cleaning and Household care. The Personal Care categories include Skin cleansing, Skin care and Oral. Unilever Ghana Limited has an extensive distribution network across Ghana, reaching over sixty-five thousand (65,000) stores through its Key Distributors, Sub-Distributors and Modern Trade partners.

Unilever was intentionally selected given its profile as one of the major multinational companies producing a wide range of essential commodities which are in high demand amid COVID-19. The company is classified as “Essential” by the Government of Ghana and therefore its workers are expected to work full time irrespective of their job roles in order to meet the growing demand for its high-quality products. The production team had to go to the factory and the others worked from home. Additionally, some of the products from Unilever were needed to maintain personal hygiene as outlined by the COVID-19 protocol. Furthermore, the choice of Unilever Ghana Limited was also due to how well structured the company is, its ability to provide and support its staff to deliver exceptional results over the years and is noted as one of the best employers in Ghana. Respondents ranging from senior level managers to non-managerial career women were sampled from the Customer Development, Human Resource, Marketing, Supply Chain and Finance departments.

3.3 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design. The qualitative approach lays emphasis on the comprehensive treatment of events and also enables the revelation of further information on unknown phenomena with limited information (Njie & Asimiran, 2014; Dodgson, 2017). The choice of a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach was due to the strengths of the qualitative approach given the topic. A qualitative approach will allow for more insight and in-depth

understanding of the topic for better validity. Also, given the sensitive nature of the topic, a qualitative approach was more suitable for respondents to be treated equally and allowed to speak for themselves. Although the qualitative approach has shortcomings such as high expenses and relatively time consuming as well as the harms of close contact with respondents, especially during this Covid-19 period, the benefits of using a qualitative approach for this study outweigh the other approaches. The researcher treats this case study with the understanding that there are many ways in which output by career women may be affected and hence tries to explore the subjective perspectives rather than the objective perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Employing the descriptive phenomenological method, the researcher assumes no relationship with the participants or respondents such that the researcher hopes to disengage her personal feelings, experiences, and knowledge when interacting with the study participant, a term referred to as “*bracketing*” (Moustakas, 1994). The reasoning is that the descriptive research design is able to describe categories of information such as gender or patterns of interaction in a group situation (Glass & Hopkins, 2014). Thus, the descriptive research design involves gathering data that describe events and then organises, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection. Glass and Hopkins further explained that whenever in-depth, narrative descriptions of small numbers of cases are involved, the research uses description as a tool to organise data into patterns that emerge during analysis. Those patterns aid the mind in comprehending a qualitative study and its implications.

3.3.1 Population

The population of a study consists of all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study (Cozby, 2000). To be included, the study employed “eligibility criteria”. This thus describes a list of characteristics that are required in order for participants to be selected for this study. The population

for this study thus consists of all career women at Unilever Ghana Limited that are working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other workers at Unilever Ghana Limited who did not meet this criterion were excluded from the study.

3.3.2 Sample

The sample of the study was 17 career women at different work levels, thus, Senior Managers, Middle level Managers and Non-Managers from Unilever Ghana Limited. They work in five departments namely, Marketing, Customer Development, Human resources, Supply Chain and Finance. These women are between the ages of 25 years to 45 years with work experience of up to 20 years. These women are all married with children of school going age, they also work from home.

3.3.3 Sampling technique

Being a qualitative study, this study sampled career women from Unilever Ghana Limited through the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is the deliberate choice of selecting participants due to the qualities a participant possesses (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). The technique is a non-probability sampling technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, with this study, the researcher simply decided what needs to be known and set out to find respondents who can and were willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. In this case, career women who are now forced to work from home were purposively sampled. The researcher, however, chose to end the interviews after the 17th career woman was interviewed because there was no new information being added. In the case of this study, career women were identified as respondents based on the fact that they are female workers of Unilever Ghana; they are responsible women who have family workloads; and

thirdly, they are able to work virtually unlike many workers in Ghana. This was possible only because the interviews conducted reached thematic and conceptual saturation, thus, additional interviewees did not add new knowledge to the study. In such cases, any additional career woman interviewed says or repeats what has been said by earlier participants of the study. The researcher is justified in such a case to discontinue the interviews though the proposed sample size has not been fully exhausted.

3.3.4 Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list with which a sample can be used Hair al et.(2012). Also, the sampling frame is a database of potential respondents that can be drawn from, in order to invite subjects to take part in a given research project. In this study, the sampling frame was taken from the Data shared by the Human Resource Department of Unilever Ghana Limited at the Tema Head Office. This highlighted the names of staff, location, appropriate contact details, etc. The profile helped the researcher to contact respondents to enable them to respond to a number of questions that are pertinent to the objectives of this study.

3.3.5 Data collection Instrument

The study made use of an interview guide as the data collection instrument. Bryman (2008) posited that interviews provide an excellent means of accessing individuals' perceptions and definitions of situations. Interviews are also helpful in that they gather the opinions, beliefs and thoughts of respondents or participants. The questionnaire was divided into sections based on the major themes of the study. Questions on respondents' demographic data as well as questions such as; "what is the psychological effect of working from home as a mother?", "what are some of the challenges faced in

working from home?”, “What is the effect of working from home on your output?” Further probing questions were asked to seek clarity on any response given by respondents. As a way of pretesting the instrument, three career women were interviewed using the instrument and their comments regarding the appropriateness of the instrument were considered for modification of the instrument. Interviews were scheduled at different dates and times; thus, most suitable for participants. Interviews were conducted in person with COVID-19 protocols observed and also through virtual communication modes such as zoom and/or phone calls when the need arises. During in-person interviews, if the respondent opted for a face-to-face interview, audio data were collected using a phone recorder which was later transcribed while ensuring accuracy and systematic analysis of the data.

3.3.6 Data collection procedure

Primarily, permission was sought from the Head of Human Resources of Unilever Ghana Limited to help identify potential participants. Participants were selected based on the eligibility criteria stated under the population segment. Interviews were conducted at different convenient times to suit participants due to their busy working schedules.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain important procedures to ensure protection or reduce COVID-19 risk were followed. First and foremost, the researcher performed the interviews over the phone and via Zoom when necessary. When participants agree to participate in interviews through Zoom, the researcher provided them with internet data to facilitate the interview session. If a phone call is required, the researcher made the call or provide airtime to the participant to facilitate the session. This was to reduce the possibility of mingling in a crowded environment in an attempt to

reach out to respondents. However, for the few respondents who opted for face-to-face interviews, the following procedure was followed. When conducting interviews as in a qualitative study, the researcher washed hands for at least 20 seconds, use an alcohol-based hand sensitiser, and wear a face mask before entering each office or organisation to conduct an interview with a respondent. Before starting an interview, the researcher asked the interviewee to sit at least 2 meters apart from the interviewer in order to conduct the interview. Overall, interviews were conducted in the participant's preferred mode (face-to-face, phone call and zoom interview) and location. Depending on the respondent's availability and the richness of the interviews, data gathering is expected to last between two to four weeks. A total of seventeen (17) respondents were interviewed. Each interview was conducted in English language and lasted an average of 30 minutes. In all, thirteen (13) respondents were interviewed virtual (Nine (9) via phone call and four (4) via zoom). The remaining four (4) respondents were conducted face-to-face at their residence.

3.3.7 Data management and analysis

Since the study is a qualitative one, the analysis was also done qualitatively. The qualitative data emerging from conducted interviews were first recorded and transcribed. Thereafter the data were analysed using thematic analysis. The data were analysed on a thematic basis using recurring and emerging themes raised by respondents during the interviews as outlined in the interview guide. The choice of a thematic analysis over other approaches to qualitative data analysis approaches was due to the flexibility of the method which allows the use of a wide range of theories and analytic options. It is also relatively easy and a quick method to learn big text analysis, while the interpretation of themes is supported by data when using thematic analysis.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

The results of the thematic analysis are presented for each objective of the qualitative analysis in order to give a deeper understanding of each finding to foster clarity in the presentation of findings. However, before the results are presented, there is the need to describe the extent to which the study ensured the validity and reliability of this analysis and its findings. Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research have gained ground over the past few decades (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In ensuring the validity and reliability of the qualitative analysis and responses, the study used validation from respondents, triangulation, as well as reviews from others. This is illustrated in detail in the next subsection.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed in this part following Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework for qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews were recorded, upon approval from the interviewees, and transcribed verbatim. Following the 6-steps by Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis was done as follows. The researcher familiarised herself with the data gathered by reading all transcribed interviews thoroughly. Codes were generated from the transcribed interviews that appear interesting and meaningful. Themes were searched as the interpretive analysis of the collated codes after which themes were reviewed, defined and named. Thus, for each question, the common themes that run through responses from the interviewees were noted and defined. Finally, supporting statements or quotes from the interviewees were used in buttressing the identified themes to address the research questions of the study.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness of Data

The results of the thematic analysis are presented for each finding of the qualitative analysis in order to give deeper understanding of each finding. However, before the results are presented, there is the need to describe the extent to which the study ensured the validity and reliability of this analysis and its findings. Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research have gained ground over the past few decades (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In ensuring the trustworthiness of data of the qualitative analysis and responses, the study used validation from respondents, triangulation, as well as reviews from others.

3.5.1.1 Validation of Data

In ensuring the validity of the responses, the transcribed interviews were re-examined several times. Places that were not clear were noted and the particular interviewees that gave those responses were contacted, mainly through telephone calls, in order to give clarity and confirm their responses. Some of the interviewees also requested copies of their recorded interviews, and this facilitated the validation as some of them used their recordings as reference points to confirm their responses. The validation largely confirmed the responses that were unclear initially. Thus, the validation did not negate any transcribed response from the interviewees, to a large extent. However, there was a part where one of the interviewees, Interviewee 1, did not finish a few sentences under how working from home influenced her work output and the constraints of working from home, and thus clarification was sought from her to complete those parts in the transcribed interviews.

3.5.1.2 Triangulation of Data

Triangulation, according to Patton (1999) refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. It has also been

viewed as a strategy in qualitative research to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Cater *et al.*, 2014). This, in qualitative research, is one of the approaches that allow for various data sources to be used to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this study, since the subject matter was to elicit responses on balancing work and family and working from home, employees (senior, middle and lower level) were interviewed. Therefore, it allowed for the comparison of information from the three categories of employees namely senior managers, middle level managers, and lower level (staff) on the same issues. The triangulation in this study indicated that responses from the three levels of employees were not far apart, thus they were similar to a large extent. Details of the responses are discussed below.

After the interviews were transcribed, and the codes and themes were generated, the transcribed interviews and the generated themes were cross-checked with some fellow and senior colleagues. Therefore, the generated themes from the responses were checked to see if they fit the responses under each category. Suggestions were given pertaining to some of the themes by these colleagues and this led to the fusion of some of the generated themes.

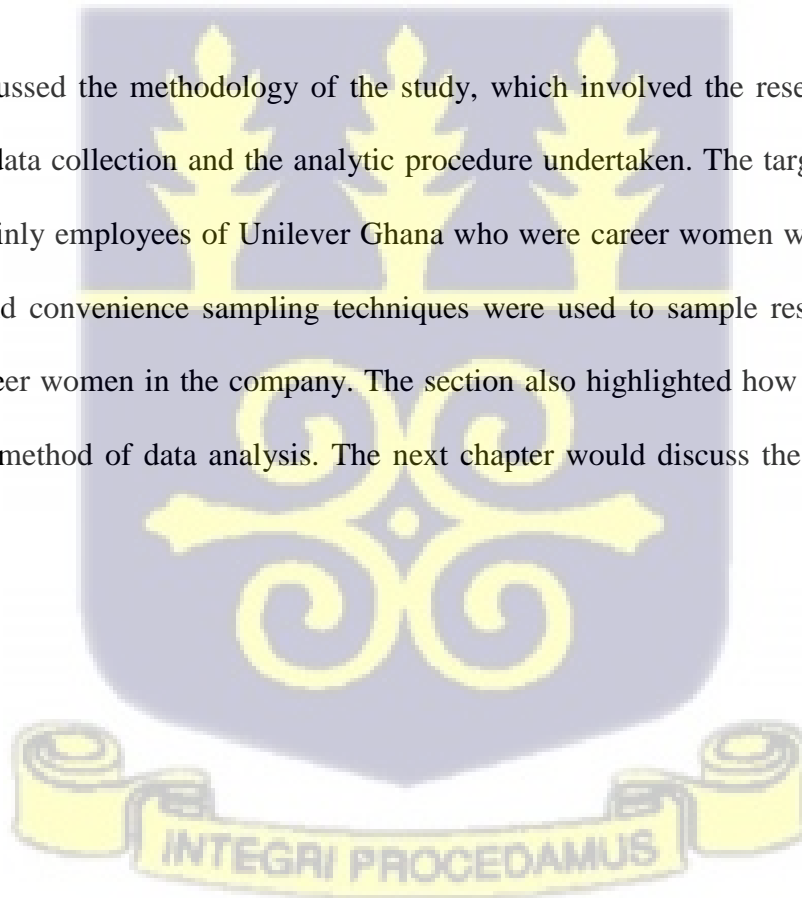
3.6 Ethical consideration

This study was undertaken with the full approval of the Departmental Research & Ethics Committee (DREC), Protocol number DREC/014/20-21. Sampled respondents were informed that the study has received ethical clearance from the organisation, as well as approval from each department and unit to which the participant belongs. Each sampled respondent was given details about the study prior to the interviews so that they could make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. This was achieved in accordance with the guidelines outlined below. The researcher

revealed to the respondents that the study was simply intended to fulfil a scholarly prerequisite and not for some other purposes that may negatively affect their relationship with their employer or their reputation in general. The names of the respondents were not captured on the questionnaire for the confidentiality of information provided by participants. Before an interview began, proof of consent was required in the form of a signature on a consent form signed physically or electronically. Beyond all, the author was fully mindful that information ought not to be adulterated nor controlled with a specific end goal to keep up the nature of the examination and the report.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of the study, which involved the research approach and design, mode of data collection and the analytic procedure undertaken. The targeted population of the study was mainly employees of Unilever Ghana who were career women working from home. The purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to sample respondents from the population of career women in the company. The section also highlighted how data was analysed, using a thematic method of data analysis. The next chapter would discuss the results of the data analysis in detail.



CHAPTER FOUR

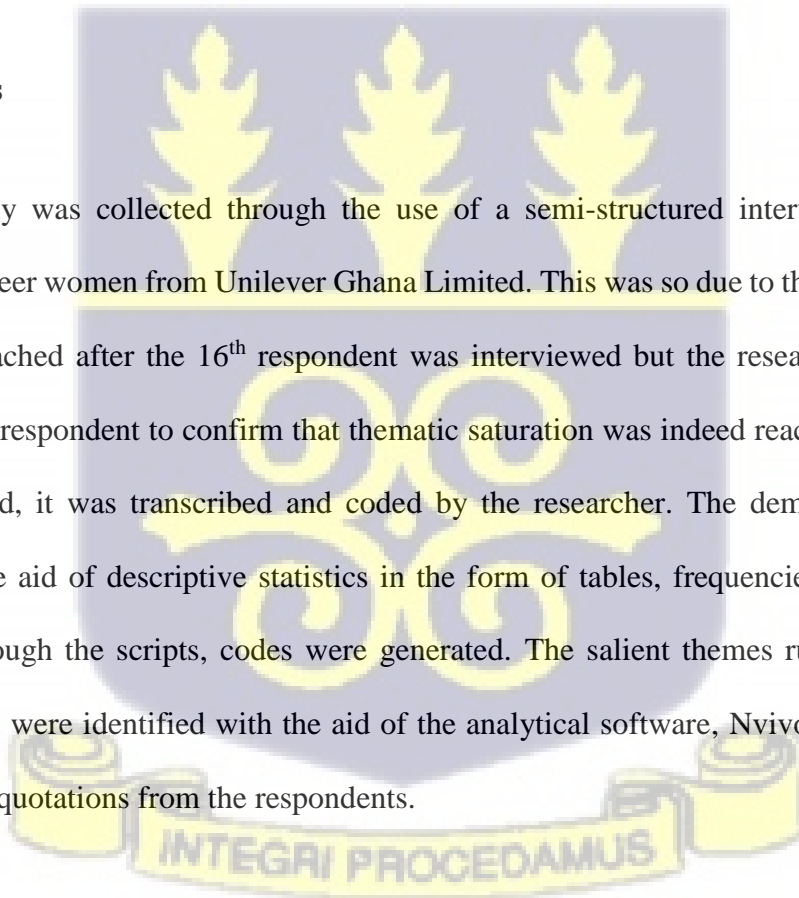
RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This section of the study presents the data collected from the field by analyzing it based on the objectives of the study. The analysis begins with data screening, frequencies and percentages of the profile of respondents and the results of the thematic analyses of the various objectives of the study.

4.2 Data Analysis

Data for the study was collected through the use of a semi-structured interview guide among seventeen (17) career women from Unilever Ghana Limited. This was so due to the fact that thematic saturation was reached after the 16th respondent was interviewed but the researcher proceeded to interview the 17th respondent to confirm that thematic saturation was indeed reached. After the data had been collected, it was transcribed and coded by the researcher. The demographic data was presented with the aid of descriptive statistics in the form of tables, frequencies and percentages. After reading through the scripts, codes were generated. The salient themes running through the transcribed scripts were identified with the aid of the analytical software, Nvivo 1.0 and discussed using appropriate quotations from the respondents.



4.3 Demographic Analysis

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in terms of their: department and position occupied.

4.3.1 Department of Respondents

The department of respondents was indicated in the study. As shown in Table 4.1 majority of the respondents were from the Marketing Department (29.41%) and Human Resource Department (29.41%), followed by Supply Chain Department (17.65%), Customer Development Department (11.76%) and Finance Department (11.76%) with the least number of respondents. It is noted that the respondents in this study were selected based on access to and availability of the respondents. By far, the Marketing and Human Resource Departments of Unilever had easy access and respondents were available in responding to the interviews more than the other departments covered in this study.

Table 4.1: Summary of Research Showing Department of Respondents

| Department | No. of Respondents | Percentage(%) |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Marketing | 5 | 29.41 |
| Customer Development | 2 | 11.76 |
| Human resource | 5 | 29.41 |
| Supply chain | 3 | 17.65 |
| Finance | 2 | 11.76 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork 2021

4.3.2 Position of Respondents

The position of respondents was one key factor in this study because the cooperate sector in most countries is characterised by varied job position and most of which are burdened with responsibilities. This makes some of the workforce, especially women find it a major challenge to manage all forms of workplace off duty demands, work demands and domestic duties at the same time. As shown in Table 4.2, in terms of the position of respondents, Senior managers constituted 23.53%, middle-level managers represented 47.06% dominated the respondents and non-managers (29.41%). This exemplified that respondents were engaged in viable work positions at the levels of their organisation to appreciate and express their experience about the subject matter of the study at different levels of responsibility.

Table 4.2: Summary of Research Results showing Respondents' Positions

| Work Position | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Senior Managers (SM) | 4 | 23.53 |
| Middle Managers (MM) | 8 | 47.06 |
| Non-Managers (NM) | 5 | 29.41 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork 2021

4.3.3 Work Experience of Respondents

The length of service of respondents was an important demographic variable to help achieve the objectives of the study. The study sought to examine the experiences of working women in Unilever Ghana Limited relating to their workplace and family demands in the era of COVID-19. Table 4.3 showed that majority (47.06%) of the respondents had worked for up to five years. Some of the

respondents (29.41%) worked between six and 10 years whereas others (23.53%) worked between 11 to 20 years. These findings had great potential to enhance the quality of responses from the respondents.

Table 4.3: Summary of Research Results showing Respondents' Length of Service

| Length of Service | No of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 0 – 5 years | 8 | 47.06 |
| 6 – 10 years | 5 | 29.41 |
| 11 – 20 years | 4 | 23.53 |
| Total | 17 | 100 |

Source: fieldwork, 2021

4.4 Analysis of Objectives of the Study

Once the interviews were transcribed, re-examined and validated by the interviewees, the statements that shed more light were highlighted. From these highlighted statements, common ideas or themes were searched, identified and reviewed. Therefore, if a theme is common in the responses of more than half of the respondents for each category of findings, those themes were marked and reviewed. Subsequently, the themes were defined and named. The interviews were reviewed several times until there were saturations of themes, such that no new theme could be generated under each category apart from the ones defined. The categories that were based on the findings from this qualitative analysis are thus presented under each of the categories to enhance understanding.

4.4.1 Understanding of Working from Home

One's knowledge and understanding of what constitutes working from home is one of the most relevant predictors of how an employee feels in an organisation in this era of a global pandemic, COVID-19. Various themes were developed from the transcribed data with regards to their understanding of working from home based on the objective of the study.

Meaning of working from home

The sampled respondents for the study exhibited understanding of the phenomenon of working from home amid COVID-19. For instance, one respondent said:

"For me, working from home is basically sort of just performing your official duty but it's just your location that has changed. So, you're at home but you have the ability to do all your official duties right from home, a space where you have your laptop and do your duties at home but in this case, it buys you some flexibility so whiles you're at home, you can see to the kids as well." (R9)

Another respondent by way of showing her understanding of the concept of working from home said:

"Employees don't have to commute to work because they can work from home. It's a type of flexible working that allows employees to complete their regular work activities and tasks from home using information and telecommunications technology that allows for instant communication anywhere and at any time" (R12)

This presents a more comprehensive detail about the concept of working from home. It covers the location the concept is undertaken as well as the tool needed to enhance the execution of the concept

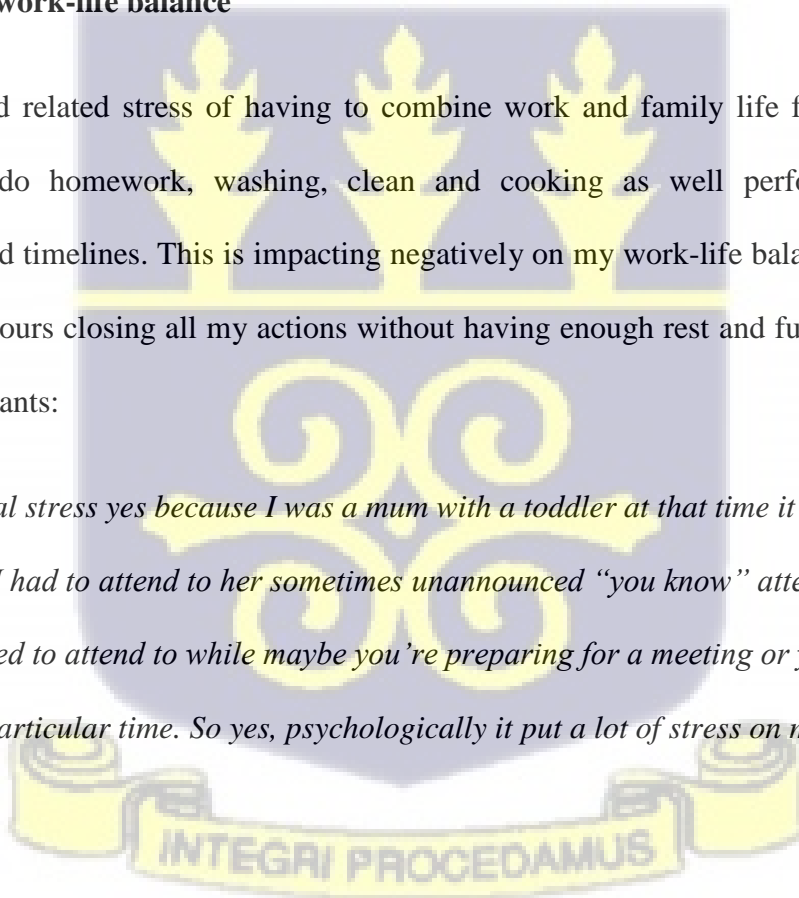
4.4.2 Psychological stress of working from home

Career women are faced with a number of obstacles one of which is psychological stress. Career women are forced to combine at the same time, producing deliverables on a task assigned them by their employer and fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers in the house. This takes a psychological toll on them in the discharge of duty. Many among the respondents of this study confirmed experiencing some form of psychological stress which they linked to result from working from home. This resulted in two main themes, stress of work-life balance and stress due to boredom of being at one place.

Stress of work-life balance

Respondents faced related stress of having to combine work and family life from home such as helping kids to do homework, washing, clean and cooking as well perform my corporate responsibilities and timelines. This is impacting negatively on my work-life balance because I have to spend several hours closing all my actions without having enough rest and fun. This is stated by one of the participants:

"Yes, psychological stress yes because I was a mum with a toddler at that time it was pretty stressful because I had to attend to her sometimes unannounced "you know" attention impromptu things that you need to attend to while maybe you're preparing for a meeting or you need to get a report done at a particular time. So yes, psychologically it put a lot of stress on me and I use to get frustrated" (R3)



Boredom being at one place

Respondents experienced psychological stress working from home due to boredom resulting from failure to accept the reality of the new normal where they have to work and stay in the same environment. One respondent confirmed that:

"It is really stressful psychologically. At a point boredom sets in, but I'm grateful depression didn't take over me because it was really really stressful psychologically. The only things I see are things in my room and walls, I couldn't even speak with them....." (R15)

On the continuous sight of the home as a new working environment causing psychological stress due to boredom of being in the same environment working and staying, one of the respondents said:

"That's actually one thing that makes working from home more challenging because it's like you don't break from work. You continue to work so even your home has now turned into your office where ideally home is where you come and fix up break from all the stress from work and all that but now the work sits in your home and whenever you turn around, you see work" (R14)

4.4.3 Effect of working from home on career women's productivity/output

Every organisation employs workers to render services towards the achievement of the organisation's goals. Irrespective of where they work from, their output is key to the quest of the organisation. COVID-19 forced workers to work from homes due to national lockdowns and as an institutional mechanism to adhere to COVID protocols such as social distancing. From the outcomes of the data gathered, two themes emerge from this objective. While a section of the respondents indicates that working from home increases their productivity, another section argued that their productivity was decreased as a result of working from home.

Increased work output

Another respondent in affirming increased output admitted to working extra hours more than she would have if she was working from the office. To affirm this assertion, one of the respondents said:

"Yhh, the impact of working from home I would say has been great and I have gotten positive feedback which has reflected on my productivity or output because in the house no disturbance. Nobody will just walk up to your desk and talk to you or you wouldn't even see anything passing by to talk about it with anybody. So, in the house, it's just you and your machine" (R13)

Some of the participants were of the view that working from home gave them that flexibility to work which eventually increased their output.. This, she affirmed by stating:

"On my output on my work, my output has increased, I mean I deliver every work I'm supposed to do. I don't relax or say I'm not able to complete my task but I find myself always going beyond the working hours" (R11)

Other respondents affirmed that working from home increases their output and this increased output they associated with the time saved by not commuting to and from work, thereby avoiding long hours wasted in traffic and as well as the flexible working hours offered by working from home. In affirming this notion, one of the respondents said:

"So at least I don't have to sit in 2 hours traffic to get to work and an hour coming back home, so I'm able to get more done. When you get used to flexible work schedules, you can literally manage to work from home and taking care of the house. So, for me, I'm still able to get a lot done, more flexibility in that there's no time bound. I can take my time to do whatever I'm supposed to do" (R6)

Decreased work output

Though some participants indicated that working from home increased their output, others are of the view that it rather led to a decrease in output. This is mainly due to the combine responsibilities of taking care of the children and at the same time having long virtual meetings with little time to close actions. The disturbances from their children had a negative impact on their output. One respondent in confirmed the decline of her output when working from home had this to say:

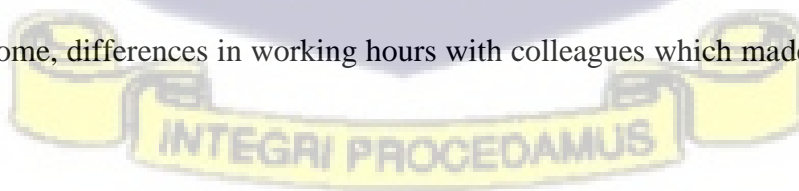
"I would say it reduced my work output. Working from home reduced my work output like I said before because I was a mother like if I wasn't a mother, it would have been a different story. It reduced my work output!" (R3)

Another participant simply said:

"It is really rather making it more difficult for me. I think the output has declined! It slowed down my work output!" (R14)

4.4.4 Challenges of Working from Home

The idea of working from home due to COVID-19 comes with its challenges given that the home does not traditionally provide that enabling working environment as would a normal office space provide. The emerging themes from the challenges faced in working from home included unstable power supply at home, differences in working hours with colleagues which made document sharing difficult.



Difficult Document Sharing due to Different Working Hours

With the challenge of different working hours, due to the flexibility of working from home, every employee decides what time is best to carry out their daily task. In such cases, it becomes very difficult to get some supporting document from a colleague who could have been as close as the next desk or office. Either due to the person not directly seated behind his or her computer at the time the document is requested or the person has a completely different work schedule. For instance, one of the respondents in raising this notion said:

"Yes, yes, yes it poses challenges achieving daily targets just that maybe with timing cos maybe if you needed a data from somebody you definitely at night the person is asleep and you are working. But in a way it helped, it made me achieve so maybe by the time you wake-up in the morning you have my request in your inbox and you respond to it" (R1)

Unstable Power Supply

Another challenge that was mainly highlighted by many respondents was the challenge of unreliable power supply at their homes. Relative to their main office space where they have access to stable and continuous power supply thanks to a standby plant, they do not have such luxuries from their homes. In times of erratic power supply, they are really affected given the importance of electricity supply to the work they do from home. One of the respondents summed this up by saying:

"It was rather the supply of electricity that posed a serious challenge because I think then we were having issues with electricity so every now and then, you have the lights taken off all of a sudden" (R1)

Another respondent on the same challenge said:

"The other major challenge too has to do with light out. So if you're using Turbo Net or using cable for example; if the light goes off and so those were the challenges" (R2)

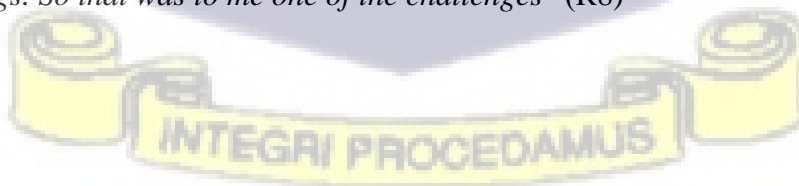
Unfamiliarity with latest ICT tools used

It is no secret that some workers are not too conversant with issues of technology, especially, among women. Covid-19 challenged the status quo of the ICT world leading to the introduction of new tools aimed at enhancing all human endeavor. With the idea of working from home, one does not just require basic computer knowledge but needs knowledge in other computer supported tools that were purposely built to facilitate document sharing, meetings among other things that become very important in today's working environment. In confirming this, one respondent stated:

"For some of us who are not so good with ICT, especially this their new application or whatever, it was not easy for us. I had to be calling people on the phone to assist me on how to use some of these new technologies" (R5)

Another respondent reaffirmed the challenge of ICT by stating that the use of advanced technologies in working from limits these who were born before the computer age and had not made efforts to learn the use of these technologies. This can be summed up in the following statement:

"You know we those who were born in the 70s, long before the computer, we have a problem when it comes to ICT things. So that was to me one of the challenges" (R8)



Unstable Internet Connectivity

One other issue of concern raised by respondents on challenges faced by working from home was the issue of unstable internet connection to enable them work effectively. In affirming this, one respondent stated:

"I think it had to do with the internet connection. We had a lot of delays; you know the internet connection in Ghana so it was stressful working from home with slow internet" (R2)

Unfavourable working Environment

Another challenge had to do with the house just not being a good enough environment to support work. Unlike their office space, the house does not guarantee the best of a conducive environment for work. To affirm this, one of the respondents said:

"The environment was not too conducive for working from home because where I live, I have a lot of households and most of them have kids so they do not understand when I'm having a meeting and so I noticed that wasn't conducive but as they started going to school, I was very very happy because that noise came down because whiles they are in the house they play throughout and you can't stop them" (R2)

On the same challenge, another respondent said:

"My environment did not help because, at the time, I didn't have a working desk, we hadn't prepared to buy a working desk or a chair so I would say even my sitting was affected. I wasn't able to sit well to work" (R4)

4.4.5 Gender Dynamics of Working from Home

The idea of working from home presents peculiar gender dynamics needing explanations. Working from home poses challenges that gender plays a big role in overcoming such challenges. This is because of the gendered distribution of household roles in a typical Ghanaian context owing to social and cultural constructs that shape and define the domestic roles and duties of both genders. This overloads women, particularly in their quest to combine their role as mothers and at the same time perform their tasks as demanded by their employer.

Women have additional responsibilities when working from home

The issue of adopting to working from home due to the impact of COVID-19, women are hard done by working from home. Women in the context of Ghanaian setting and to some extent, other cultural settings have more domestic responsibilities irrespective of their job roles. This presents peculiar challenges that present gender dimensions to the problem as reiterated by respondents. For instance, one of the respondents said:

"First of all, we're all human beings so working from home is stressful for everyone because sitting for a long time is not an easy thing. So women feel it even more, it's more demanding because you check to see if children have eaten and quickly you would have to run, to clear up breakfast area, clean-up and all that. So at least with me, I have a nanny who helps me to clean-up the place and it's more challenging to those who don't have" (R14)

Another respondent still stressing on this fact had this to say:

"I'm sure for single men or women it might be the same conditions in terms of gender but if the person is married and has a child, "you know" it's a young child and young child mostly relies on

the mother so I would say when it comes to that women who are married and have children and are working from home find it more challenging than men even if they're married or not because most of the time we know our traditional African home, it is the woman that will cook, do this, do that, take care of the child. So if you're home you're expected to do those things in addition to your work" (R4)

On the same matter, another respondent affirmed the gender dimension of working from home by saying:

"In my experience when my husband was working from home "erm" I would say that men are less, I think men are less distracted working from home than women. I'm saying that because I feel women tend to take more responsibility for things like trying to get things in order in the house because they're used to doing that so once they're working from that environment, they easily get distracted to maybe fix one thing or the other but men can shut their minds and just lock themselves up in a room and they are there working. Even sometimes when they have children they can run away and go and hide somewhere but of the woman, is more of like faced with the challenge of combining everything to the work so that's what I think, women are more distracted than men" (R3)

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the findings of the study were presented and discussed in accordance with existing literature on the concept of career women working from home. Key sections within this chapter include the background of analysis, demographic analysis of respondents' department, current position as well as their work experience. Results were presented and discussed for each objective of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This concluding section of the study brings all the various sections together for a holistic understanding. A summary of the findings is first presented. After that, discussion of key findings of the study, the conclusion of the study and the recommendations of the study based on the findings are discussed within the context of Unilever Ghana Limited on the issue of working from home in the era of COVID-19. Also, suggestions for future studies are included in this section of the study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

In summary, the findings from the study indicated that understanding among respondents regarding what entails working from home was expected. Secondly, it was also noted during the analysis that stressors relating to working from home can be viewed from perspectives of psychological stress. The findings in this study captured varied opinions regarding the effect of working from home on employee performance. One section of the respondents admitted having their output increased due to working from. This was associated with the avoidance of long hours spent in traffic commuting to and from the work place as well as avoiding unnecessary distractions from colleagues who could just walk to their desks to chitchat. Furthermore, respondents noted that working from home comes with peculiar challenges ranging from erratic power and internet supply to an uncondusive working environment at home due to either lack of supporting work structures or distractions from other domestic duties, especially in the case of women. It is noted that the issues relating to working from

home are not having the same bearing on both genders as women are faced with peculiar challenges of balancing work with other domestic duties.

5.3 Discussions of Findings

This section of the study concentrates on the discussion of the findings and relates to other previous literature that the current findings either support or otherwise. The discussion of the study is therefore presented based on the major themes of the study in relation to other studies and drawing on giving the social and cultural intuitions to the findings of this study. This helps situate the findings of the study within the context in which this study was conducted and links very well with the role theory which was the theory used in this to explain the different roles assumed by career women on any given day.

5.3.1 Psychological stress of working from home

The home is considered as providing a therapeutic effect after a long day's work. This has gradually faded as the house is now considered a working environment from which employees are supposed to deliver their daily tasks (Hayes *et al.*, 2020). For this reason, the house now fails to provide that environment where employees can have their peace of mind off work. But what effect does this have on employees psychologically and physically given that amid COVID, workers were compelled to work from home, although working from home comes with its benefits, as Alipour *et al.* (2021) account that working from home reduces the risk of infection, it comes with stressors, especially, for career women. Studies have shown that working from home comes along with psychological stressors (Oakman *et al.*, 2020; Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). The finding of this study confirms Oakman *et*

al. (2020) who found that working from home comes with psychological stressors. This is due to the fact that employees, especially, female employees are overloaded with so much work to do given their dominant role in the day to day running of their homes. The findings of this study suggest stresses that women go through working from home. The stress of work-life balance and boredom of being in one place for a long time due to working from home is within the social and cultural constructs of the country most likely the stressors of working from home. This is mainly due to the fact that the average Ghanaian worker had never, until this COVID-19 era, been exposed to the idea of working from home. They have long been used to the idea of going to work in the morning and coming back home later in the day to rest and prepare for the next day. This traditional notion of work will certainly pose challenges of stress when workers are asked to work from home, given that they are not used to such working conditions and environment. In line with the Role theory which is one of the basic theories underpinning this study, workers have long known their roles as defined by their employers and domestic duties. In these times where workers are now required to work from home, some workers, with women being the most affected, find it stressful combining their roles which now seem embedded into one another unlike they were previously used to, given that their duties both at home and at work are now being performed under the same roof or environment.

From the Conservation of Resource theory, employees are motivated to retain their social support, hope optimism and time while they acquire additional resources that will enable them to function in other roles, for example, family roles. This study finds that the existence of COVID-19 threatens the employees' ability to retain these resources and further requires that these limited resources are shared between roles thereby creating stress for the individual.

5.3.2 Working from home and career women's output

Employee output is very crucial to the operations of an organisation. From the findings of this study, respondents had different opinions on the subject of their performance working from home. As explained by the role theory which is the basic underpinning of this study, career women are expected to find the right balance between their domestic duties and their duties as required by their employers. While a section of the respondents said their work output was decreased, others were of the view that their output had increased. According to Bloom *et al.* (2015), working from home increases employee output. This confirms the findings of this study as some of the respondents affirmed the fact that their output had increased working from home. This can be associated with the fact that employees do not have to go through the stress of having to sit in traffic wasting productive hours in traffic. With this, employees are able to save time which is then used to work back home. The opinions of other respondents on the same matter were, however, contrary to the findings of Bloom *et al.* (2015). This group of respondents believed that working from home reduces their output. This could be due to the peculiar challenges already outlined in this study. Employees are just not able to concentrate on work alone at home as there are distractions that eventually slow output.

Workers prioritise their productivity at work as much as their family balance. In relation to the Conservation of Resource Theory, workers would have placed priority on the things they have already found the right balance in. For example, one would have considered having a happy family life as something she has worked so hard to achieve over the years. In line with the theory, this person in pursuit of higher productivity at work will only pursue that to add to her already acquired happy family life. The pursuit of higher productivity by this person will not come at the expense of the happy family life already enjoyed by the said employee. The pursuit of higher productivity will only be considered additional personal attainment as explained by the Conservation of Resource theory.

5.3.3 Challenges of Working from Home

The idea of working from home has come to stay. However, many challenges confront workers in the discharge of their duties from home (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). This study found that working from home presents challenges such as reduced output due to issues relating to the unstable power supply and internet connectivity. As a country, Ghana has over the years experienced erratic power supply which distracts working from home. workers are mostly at the mercy of power suppliers given that they are not in their official office space which offers the luxury of a standby power plant as a backup to the main grid of power supply. The network situation is also not helping with regards to internet connectivity, at least in some vicinities. This delays the progress of work given the importance of the internet in getting connected with colleagues for meetings and other activities from the house. Another challenge has to do with the unfavourable working conditions in the house. This has been affirmed by Hayes *et al.* (2020), who found that working from home comes with challenges that eventually contributed to reduced effectiveness. These come in the form of all manner of distractions faced in the house, especially in the case of mothers. It is worth noting that within the social and cultural context of the country, the home is no place for such activities as work, therefore, adapting to working from home by workers will pose challenges. The worker will have to prepare themselves psychologically to come to terms with the idea of working from home and then take the necessary steps to make available all things needed to work from home. This may include getting a personal computer and an office space among other things at home to enable their functioning from home. These may not settle well with some workers as they may be reluctant to incur this additional expenditure. The challenges encountered by career women may be peculiar to their age and generation as well as their job roles. Challenges such as lack of knowledge of ICT will differ from the challenges that career women face. This is basically because not all mothers took

interest or had an education that included ICT as part of their curriculum. Hence, these career women may face challenges related to the use of ICT in their new ways of work and how to effectively perform their job roles from home and be productive as possible without compromising task completion timelines.

5.3.4 Gender Dynamics of Working from Home

The idea of working from home due to COVID-19 is documented to have some gender dynamics (Hashim *et al.*, 2020). This is mainly because from the context of the African perspective, men and women have sharply different schedules with regard to domestic duties. Women in this context are mainly responsible for the majority of the household level duties. This presents a complex scenario for the career woman who is now forced to work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. In affirming the findings of earlier studies by Hashim *et al.* (2020) and Lopez-Leon *et al.* (2020), this study finds that women and men are not faced with the same challenges working from home or at least, not the same intensity of the challenges. Carli (2020) noted that the particular domestic duties that women undertake and now trying to combine that with working from home are a concern that demands a gendered perspective of the issue. Generally, it is expected within the Ghanaian context that women are more embedded with domestic duties than their male counterparts and the idea of working from home only makes things more difficult for women. This presents issues requiring gendered-based approaches given that both men and women have to meet the same level of expectations from their employers who may never treat this as a gender issue. Women face peculiar challenges working from home and it is high time employers took notice and treat it as a gendered matter of urgency. The Role theory clearly explains that every individual, regardless of their gender when assigned a task must ensure it is completed. This strictly applies to the work environment. but

in the context of the home setting, roles are clearly defined based on gender, this is especially the case in the African context as women are more likely to assume certain roles that will affect them in the performance of their roles. Women in this context are very much likely as revealed by some respondents not to be able to complete their assigned task within the stipulated time by their employers due to distraction from their families.

In the Ghanaian context, the traditional role expectation associated with motherhood includes cooking, cleaning, and nurturing. With the passage of time, change in family dynamics and advancement in knowledge and understanding, these traditional role expectations have expanded to include the need to provide financial support for the family. Women, and in this case, mothers, therefore, take up jobs to enable them to perform this additional role. In the era of COVID-19, many businesses in response to the global need to maintain social distancing as a measure to prevent cross contamination, business and organisations have included teleworking and working-from-home modes of operation. The career woman's home has therefore become her physical workspace, demanding that she meets the requirements of her job role and family role within the same context and the same amount of time. Working from home, mothers perform their family and work roles almost simultaneously, this has a likelihood of creating an inter-role conflict with the requirements and needs of one role interfering with the other. Role theory requires an amount of time and energy for career women to complete their dual roles. This interference tends to lead to work and family conflict. A work-to-family conflict will occur when the career woman's job role and requirements prevent her from fully or partially performing her motherly role. For example, having a work-related virtual meeting that goes beyond the normal work hours may prevent the employee from attending to family needs.

5.4 Conclusion

An understanding of the dynamics of working from home is crucial because it has been noted as the best option to keep organisations operational to promote organisational growth in the era of COVID-19. Understanding, identifying the forms and suggesting solutions to the various forms of challenges and their effect on employees are relevant to the subject matter of this study. The study adopted a qualitative method of study in seeking findings for the research questions. In conclusion, the findings of the study have demonstrated that the dynamics of working from home is really a dominant factor in the functioning of Unilever Ghana Limited. It is understood by most respondents that challenges pertaining to working from home include unfavourable working conditions at home due to distractions, erratic power supply, unstable internet connectivity and inability to access useful documents from a colleague due to differences in their personal work schedules from home. Also, on the effect of working from home on their output, respondents had varied takes on this. While some admitted to it reducing their output, others were of the view that they have been able to increase their work output by working from home. One thing that must not go unnoticed is the psychological stress that comes along with working from home as highlighted by respondents. It is noted that these findings are unique giving the contextual difference. It is concluded that Unilever Ghana Limited and other organisations adopt various interventions in curbing psychological stressors, that come along with working from home as well as to minimise constraining factors that befall employees in discharging their duties from home in order to maximise their output. This can be by way of formulating policies and initiatives to help workers deal better with stressors and constraining factors. Incentive packages can be given to workers, especially career women, incentives such as internet packages, computers and others such as special allowances for the provision of conducive working space at home.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the findings, this study recommends that companies should always upgrade their knowledge on the latest technologies used to enhance working from home as the subject matter (available technologies keep changing trends in modern times). Also, it is again recommended that award schemes be organised for best performing employees working from home, with particular attention paid to women given their peculiar challenges. Knowledge sharing should be encouraged among workers where top performing award-winning employees and others will share during workshops and seminars their secrets to being productive though working from home. Furthermore, to help curb some common challenges to working from home, it is recommended that incentive packages be introduced in the form of internet bundles, computers and allowances to help employees set up offices back home and provide a conducive working environment. Additionally, the Human Resource department should employ the services of Psychologists to assist employees, especially career women in stress management.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the contributions and recommendations of this study with regard to working from home, future studies must build on this study to deepen our theoretical and practical understanding. The following recommendations are made for researchers to consider in future studies as they form part of the limitations of this study: First, future studies should link working from home with the work-life balance of employees and job satisfaction. This will require drawing a cause-effect association between working from home, employee work-life balance and job satisfaction. This will help clarify the direct effect of working from home on employee work-life balance and job satisfaction which can

also affect organisational performance. Moreover, future studies could use a mixed method approach in examining the working from home and employee work-life balance as this study concentrated on only qualitative methods of study. Furthermore, future studies should consider increasing the number of organisations in a single study in different sectors of the economy. This will help establish generalisation in a larger population as this study did not seek to generalise. Also, a comparative study between different sectors could yield interesting results that could enrich the literature regarding working from home.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the administrative bureaucracy I went through in obtaining permission and clearance to interact and obtain information from the company and the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents of the study were very busy persons and had little time to attend interview sessions.

The study admits the omission of some other key demographic features of respondents such as the number of children, age of children, marital status of career women and employment status of spouse if married. These other demographic features of career mothers could have added an interesting twist to the findings of the study as they could greatly influence the kind of family support systems available to a career woman at home.

Further studies should ensure both the target organisation and key respondents are informed well ahead of time to allow the organisation enough time to consider the proposed study and also allow respondents time to factor interview sessions into their busy schedules. This will allow respondents to treat the study with a sense of urgency knowing they have the full support of their employers to participate in the study.

5.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the key findings of the study were summarized based on each objective and discussed. Policy relevant recommendations were given as well as recommendations for future research. The limitations of the study were as well provided in this chapter.



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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

My name is Veronica Oforu, a postgraduate student from the University of Ghana (Department of Psychology), conducting research on the topic: **“Working from Home During COVID-19 Pandemic; Experiences of Career Women at Unilever Ghana Limited”**.

This field study is in partial fulfilment of the University’s requirement for award of Master’s Degree. Data from this research will be confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Thank you.

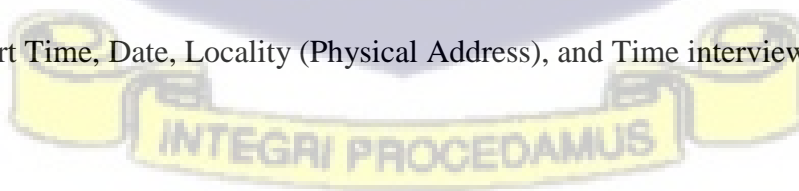
Participant’s Consent Note:

Having explained the rationale behind this study to me and guaranteeing me of total confidentiality, I hereby give my consent to partake in this interview. You can proceed now and interview me and record my voice.

..... Signature or Thumb print.

Instruction to the Interviewer:

Please take note of these details before commencement of the interview. Interview Details: Date of interview: Start Time, Date, Locality (Physical Address), and Time interview completed.



Interview Discussion Guide

Consent Process

Consent forms for interviewing participants are completed in advance by all those willing to participate. Below is a summary of the information in the consent form that the interviewer should use to make sure participants understand the information in the consent form.

Discussion begins, make sure to give the participant time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed, but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. I am very interested to hear your valuable opinion on the impact of working from home during COVID-19 on you as a career woman.

- *The purpose of this study is to explore your experiences of working from home as a career woman in the era of COVID-19 and how working from home affects your work output. I hope to acquire information that will provide insight to corporate bodies and national policy makers throughout the country.*
- *The information you give me is completely confidential, and I will not associate your name with anything you say in this interview.*
- *I would like to tape record the interview so that I can make sure I capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas you share. No names will be attached and the tapes will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*
- *You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.*
- *I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. I will ask participants to respect each other's confidentiality.*
- *Please check the boxes on page 2 and sign to show you agree to participate in this interview.*

Turn on Tape Recorder

Ask the participant if there are any questions before you get started, and address those questions.

Question One: Let us start the discussion by talking about what the term working from home means to you?

Examining the psychological impact of working from home on career women.

How does working from home affect the way you feel or relate with others?

What are some of the related stressors of working from home?

Does this affect your health?

What are some of the related psychological stressors to working from home?

Does this affect your psychological or mental health?

Exploring the experiences of working from home on the output of career women at work.

Are you able to achieve your daily targets?

Compare your speed in accomplishing daily or weekly tasks while working from home to working at the office.?

Do you think you are working better compared to when you were working at the office pre-COVID-19.?

How do you determine the effect of working from home on your work output?

Examining the challenges that career women face working from home

What are some of the challenges you face while working from home? (**Probe:** Unavailability of logistics, conducive working environment, bad internet connectivity, etc.)

How do you combine taking care of your children and working on daily basis?

How has working from home imparted power relations between you and your husband?

To what extent do these challenges constrain you?

How well have you adapted and how will you compare your current performance with pre-COVID?

Examining the elements of this phenomenon that affect equality between men and women at the workplace.

How different is working from home for women compared to that of men.

As a career woman, what does working from home entail?

That concludes our interview. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the interview, please feel free to write it on this form (separate form).

Materials and supplies for the interview

- Sign-in sheet
- Consent forms (one copy for participants, one copy for the researcher)
- Pencils for Participants
- Interview Discussion Guide for Facilitator
- 1 recording device
- Batteries for recording device
- Notebook for note-taking

