

**CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF STUDENT NURSING MOTHERS
IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION OF GHANA**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this thesis is entirely my own work. All the references used have been duly acknowledged by means of complete references. This work has never been presented either in whole or in part to any institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear daughter, Maame Amponsah Amporful. Maame you are the source of my inspiration in life.



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ABSTRACT

The task of combining motherhood with the demands of academic life is a difficult one. Academic women continue to have primary responsibility for housework, childcare and for instilling cultural values in the next generation. These social responsibilities, coupled with demands of academic life create a role conflict. The study aimed at finding out the challenges faced by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region and the strategies they adopt to cope with the challenges. Specifically the study delved into challenges pertaining to academic work, economic and childcare activities. The study adopted the mixed method design. The purposive and accidental sampling procedures were used to select the sample. A semi structured questionnaire was developed and administered to fifty-five (55) student nursing mothers in University of Ghana, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Valley View University, Methodist and Central University Colleges. Ten of the respondents were however interviewed using the questionnaire. The activities of the student nursing mothers were as well observed directly.

The data which emanated from the closed ended questions was edited, coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The result was then presented descriptively in frequencies and percentages using tables. Descriptive narrative method was used to analyse the qualitative responses generated through the open ended questions. The data was transcribed, coded and analysed manually and presented narratively.

The study found that majority of respondents faced academic challenges such as inability to attend lectures and tutorials regularly because of tiredness, sickness of child, taking

baby to child welfare clinic and lack of lactation rooms for breastfeeding of babies. The cost of transport to and from school and payment of fees were the economic challenges. They were as well unable to perform their child care functions adequately. To cope with the challenges respondents relied on paid house helps, keeping children at day care centres, raising loans and relying on husbands and friends for lift to school. The study recommended for the provision of lactation rooms, day care centres and counselling services for student nursing mothers on university campuses.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is believed to provide knowledge and resources that hold potentials for economic empowerment, for better livelihood and social development. Jekayinfa (2009) postulated that the educational system of any society is an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. As a result of the necessity for education, there has been the view that one who ceases to learn ceases to exist although the one may be living. According to Freire (2005) to “exist” is more than to “live” because it means being in the world and at the same time with the world. Thus, one who exists has attributes of transcending, discerning, communicating and participating with others who exist whereas one who is merely living does not possess these critical attributes. The ideas above are indications that education is important for men and women alike.

However, in the traditional society, it is perceived that the man is the head of the family and breadwinner and so needs to be educated for better employment and higher income. The woman who is the heart and keeper of the home must be trained at the kitchen. According to Asiedu-Akrofi (1978), marriage and housekeeping limited the role of women. The place of the African woman he said was the home, hers was to cook and bring up children. Women were not as free as men. He also said women tended to become economically limited because men provided money for running the home. It is thus clear that apart from the socio-cultural factors that limit women’s access to further education, some economic factors could even serve as a major hindrance. This is because the woman’s reproductive roles at home as the mother and home keeper is not quantified thus

limiting her ability to raise enough money to pursue further education. Dolphyne (1991) points out that the recent trend in the world economy has made it necessary for women to act as co-breadwinners of the family and therefore must be educated to gain employment so as to earn a living. As a result of this trend it has become necessary for women of today to be educated so that they will be equipped with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to fit into the ever-growing global economy. This presupposes that the traditional role of a woman in Ghana as a housekeeper of the family cannot be applied in this era. Clark (1996) also asserts that domestic and childcare responsibilities are solely assigned to women in Ghana. Women who opt to participate in other activities outside their home therefore find themselves carrying triple workload. The workloads consist of domestic work, childcare and work outside the home. It is clear from this assertion that gender roles of domestic work and childcare are hindrances to women's participation in public life.

To buttress this point, Nehlin and Kelly (1982) observed that in most instances women find it difficult to combine their traditional roles in the home and official duties at their work places. They therefore assess the commitments involved in their respective works before accepting responsibilities. Goodman (1993) also affirms that life's work is assigned according to gender, and women's work is caring, nurturing, making things right and worrying about relations.

Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the families and across generations. Short (2000) noted that educated women were better able to contribute to national development and participate more effectively in the economic and

political life of societies yet societal norms, traditions and economic and social circumstances make it difficult for girls to attain desired higher levels of education.

However, in Ghana the overall level of literacy improved significantly between 1970 and 1995, the literacy rate more than doubled from 30 percent to 64 percent. Since then the female participation in education has continually grown. (UNESCO) 1995 cited in Adusah-Karikari (2008). Nevertheless, policies instituted by some universities do not favour women's access to education. In a Gender newsletter (2006) published by University of Education, Winneba, it revealed that to be eligible to be enrolled as a mature student, one has to be thirty years or older. Adusah Karikari (2008) disagrees with this assertion since the age is not favourable to females, as in Ghana; it is a known practice for women to marry at an early age. This implies that, if a woman married in her mid-twenties and wanted to enrol as a mature student at University of Education, Winneba, she would have to wait for some years. Males on the other hand, tend to marry later on in life and are more likely to follow the traditional pattern of pursuing education, from secondary to university. This implies that by the time these women get the chance to enroll as matured students, they would by then start having their babies.

Much effort is now being made in Ghana to bridge the gap between males and females to raise the status of females by the establishment of various women's groups. Some of the groups are the Federation of African Women Educationists (F.A.W.E), Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), 31st December Women's Movement, Mother and Child Foundation and Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) among others. In Ghana, the creation of gender awareness in education was initiated with priority given to basic education. The education act of 1961 emphasizes the education of all children. Successive

government had developed numerous policies to provide basic education for all children (Ministry of Education 2000). In 1986, the government of Ghana embarked upon educational reform, which targeted both male and female participation at all levels of education (Adusah-Karikari, 2008)

Ghana has however seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of tertiary institutions of the past decade. This has considerably contributed to the increase in the level of education access in the country. According to Professor Naana Opoku Agyemang (Daily Graphic, December, 2011), the University of Cape Coast admitted 12,407 students to various academic programs of the centre for continuing education for the 2011/2012 academic year which she said represent 41 percent women and urged females to take advantage of this appreciable improvement in flexible mode of education. In their effort not to be left behind in the knowledge driven economy, women are competing with their male counterparts for places in various higher education programs. It is worth noting that despite the numerous policies and programmes and the expansion of access to tertiary education no specific efforts are being made by way of policy or programme to make the tertiary institutions accommodating for female students who give birth in the course of their studies. This is quite worrisome. Due to their reproductive responsibilities women have had to combine their quest for higher education to child birth. This has resulted in a phenomenon of student nursing mothers in our various higher educational institutions. This phenomenon has brought in its wake several challenges to student nursing mothers considering the fact that the universities do not have facilities like lactation rooms, convenient places for the baby sitters who accompany them while the home setting may pose other challenges that prevent the nursing mother from leaving the child at home. The effect of the inadequate support systems in the universities and home on the academic

performance, child care and other domestic chores cannot be overemphasized. This study thus seeks to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers who combine the worlds of family and academic pursuits.

Paula Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and women's biological clocks coincide. Williams (2007) states that graduate school is a space and a place where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than problems to be managed by individual women. Hensel (1990) too argue that the verdict is clear—"having children is detrimental to a woman's career success" (p. 4). It is difficult for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have "uninterrupted" time (Hensel, 1990). Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (Williams, 2007).

According to Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) the stress or trauma which they have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their children. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their new born babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations.

Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and level of achievement (Egenti and Omoruyi, 2011). This study thus seeks to find out the challenges and coping strategies adopted by student nursing mothers who combine the worlds of family and academic pursuits.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The changing role of women in the society has made it necessary for nursing mothers to combine childcare, homecare, career and studies. This implies that even though the mothers are in school, they will have certain responsibilities to fulfil at home.. The issue at stake is do these women really neglect their family in their quest for knowledge or forget about higher education entirely and stick to the old tradition of keeping the family?

Through observation, it has been found that some female students in various tertiary institutions in Ghana are nursing mothers who have left their babies in the care of other people to pursue higher education. Some even deliver in the course of their study thus the need to combine academic work with nursing the baby. Unfortunately the universities in Ghana do not have support services for such categories of students. Hensel (1990) points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have “uninterrupted” time. Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder. The research therefore seeks to answer the question, what are the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the challenges and coping strategies adopted by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the challenges faced by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra region of Ghana in the areas of :
 - a. Academic work activities
 - b. Child care
 - c. Economic situation

2. To find out how student nursing mothers cope with the above challenges identified.

1.5 Related Research Questions

On the basis of the issues raised, this study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the challenges confronting student nursing mothers in the areas of:
 - a) Academic work activities
 - b) Child care
 - c) Economic situation
2. How do student nursing mothers cope with the identified challenges?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Some scholarly works have been done on the role of women in national development and the role conflict they experience as they combine their traditional domestic roles with productive roles. However limited information exists specifically on the challenges student

mothers go through as they seek to upgrade themselves academically in the tertiary institutions in Ghana. This study seeks to fill this gap and contribute to the pool of knowledge on the challenges nursing mothers' face and the strategies they adopt to cope with the role conflicts and challenges they face.

In addition, the findings could be of great importance to nursing mothers who wish to further their education. They will get well acquainted with the inherent challenges in continuing education in the tertiary institutions and the possible coping strategies they could adopt to face these challenges.

The findings of the study will not only be useful to the family as a unit but to the nation as a whole in its quest for empowering women through education. The study will serve as a guide to policy makers to formulate policies and programmes that will help ease the challenges nursing mothers face in the tertiary institutions.

It is the wish of all educational institutions to design and deliver programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of different categories of beneficiaries. The findings could therefore serve as a guide to tertiary institutions in their quest to improve on their programmes. This could occur as the study will serve as a source of information on the challenges confronting the student nursing mothers and the support services the university must provide to make academic work meaningful to them.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study is limited to some student nursing mothers in selected tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra region of Ghana pursuing degree courses. This region was chosen because there are lots of tertiary institutions and accessibility will be easier. The study is limited to

only student nursing mothers found in the selected universities. Therefore the results are applicable only to the group under study and therefore broad generalizations cannot be made. However, since an in depth understanding of the phenomenon will be reached, other researchers interested in the topic will gain an insight into what student nursing mothers go through in pursuit of higher education.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by giving the background information of the subject matter, statement of problem, objectives of the study, related research questions, scope of the study and the organisation of the study. Chapter two presents the theoretical framework of the research and a review of pertinent and related literature on the major aspects of the study. The methodology and approach to the study is presented in chapter three. Chapter four presents the results of the study. Detailed discussions of the major findings are presented in Chapter five in the light of the objectives of the study and the literature reviewed. Chapter six which is the last, gives the summary, conclusion and recommendations as unearthed by the findings of the study.

1.9 Profile of the Study Area

Greater Accra region is the smallest region of Ghana and it is the capital of Ghana. In 1960, Greater Accra, then referred to as Accra Capital District, was geographically and legally part of the Eastern Region. It was, however, administered separately by the Minister responsible for local government. With effect from 23 July 1982, Greater Accra was created by the Greater Accra Region Law (PNDCL 26) as a legally separate region to include the Ada local council area. The Greater Accra region also harbors the seat of government in the capital city of Accra. Accra was founded by the Ga people of Ghana in

the late 1600s. In 1877 Accra replaced Cape Coast as the capital of the British Gold Coast colony (UN-HABITAT, 2009).

The region has a total land surface of 3245 sq kilometers occupying 1.4% of the total land surface of Ghana. It lies in the south east of the country along the Gulf of Guinea and has coastal savannah, a little forest area towards the eastern region, and the beautiful coastline in the rural parts. The shores in the capital city Accra are unfortunately polluted. The Greater Accra metropolitan area is the most populous region. According to the 2000 census, the region has a population of over two million people. The region has the highest population density in Ghana.

The major ethnic groups are the Ga-Adamgbe, Akan and Ewe. However the Ga's form the largest sub-ethnic group in the region. The region is administered at two different but complementary levels, the traditional and political levels. The traditional level of administration is through an intricate network of local governance dealing with purely traditional affairs concerning customs and land administration, while there is along the line of law and order decentralized government machinery.

There are ten Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in this region. These are the Accra metropolitan, Adenta municipal, Ashaiman municipal, Dangme-East district, Dangme-West district, Ga-East municipal, Ga-West municipal, Ledzekulu-krowor municipal, Tema metropolitan and Ga-South municipal. The University of Ghana, Ghana's premier university is in Accra. There are over twenty other universities spread across the region (<http://www.the-ghana-guide.com/greater-accra-region-of-ghana>

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the underlying theory and related literature reviewed to guide the study. The theoretical framework that underlies the research is the Role Conflict Theory. The literature was reviewed under the following sub themes, gender/ traditional roles and education, motivation for women's education, challenges of student nursing mothers, diverse effects on them and the support systems available for student nursing mothers.

2.2 The Role Conflict Theory

The theoretical framework that underlies the study is Talcot Parsons' (1971) Role Conflict Theory. According to Parson (1971) for society to function very well, it has social institutions in which we have roles and statuses. Every status is attached with a role, which the status incumbent is expected to perform without waver. He used the idea of shared expectation based on the status one occupies in society. Parsons argues that the rules of the society, its norms of proper conduct, become the expectations of its individual members. People's interrelationships work because the parties know what to expect of one another. Furthermore, one person can and does fulfill many different roles at the same time. In one sense, an individual can be seen to be a "composition" of the roles he inhabits. Certainly, today, when asked to describe themselves, most people would answer with reference to their societal roles. For instance a student-nursing mother may describe herself as a nursing mother, a wife, a student and in some cases a career woman as well.

According to Burr (1972) cited in International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family (2003) Individuals accumulate different roles at any given stage within the life course. Throughout life, individuals transfer into and out of different roles, keeping some, leaving

others behind, and beginning new roles. For instance the student nursing mother assumes a student's role when she enrolls in any academic work and as soon as she completes the course she ceases to assume the student aspect of her roles. These *role transitions* accompany transitions through life stages and can be easy or difficult, depending on the timing and social context (Rodgers and White, 1993 cited in International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family, 2003). In addition, the transition into one role can affect the transition into another. For instance, women in Germany and other European countries are delaying their transition to the roles of wife and mother as they extend their time in the role of student. It is concluded that remaining a student delays the transition to adulthood and likewise to normatively associate adult roles. Biddle (1986) asserts that role theories are predominantly concerned with describing the mechanisms by which individuals are socialized to assume congruous societal roles in a manner that sustains a stable social order (Jackson, 1988).

Traditionally, the academic discussion and popular discourse surrounding how a female will engage the role of mother primarily focuses on the decision of whether to be "at-home" or "at-work". However, this ignores the many different parenting decisions, and role conflict experiences that exist in contemporary society. For instance, a growing number of mothers are also students within higher education (Pare, 2009).

According to Wolf (2011) the term *role conflict* refers to a clash between two or more of a person's roles or incompatible features within the same role. These incompatibilities can consist of differing expectations, requirements, beliefs, and/or attitudes. The term *role* relies on the theatrical metaphor of an actor performing his or her part in a staged play. Although stage actors generally play only one character per play, the same actor will go on

to play multiple characters throughout his or her career, and different actors often play the same role in different ways. Unlike theatrical actors, people in everyday life enact multiple roles simultaneously. For example, Jane might be a boss, an employee, a daughter, a mother, a student and so on. Often, these roles are activated concurrently and harmoniously. Jane's role as the primary wage earner for her family is not likely to be in conflict with her role as a supervisor at work or a student. Different roles are sometimes incompatible, however, and the requirements of one role can clash with those of another. In addition, contradictory requirements within the same role can produce role conflict.

Wolf (2011) identified two types of role conflict: *intra-role* conflict, referring to incompatible requirements within the same role, and *inter-role* conflict, referring to clashing expectations from separate roles within the same person. Intra-role conflict can arise in two ways. First, different people sometimes have inconsistent conceptions concerning the requirements and expectations that constitute a particular role. Jane's conception of being a good mother might consist of having a job outside of the home. She might also believe that providing socio-emotional support to her family is a necessary ingredient in her role as a mother. However, Jane's mother-in-law might think that to be a good mother Jane would need to relinquish her job to provide around-the-clock care for her children. Because of these differing conceptions concerning the role of a mother, Jane is likely to experience intra-role conflict.

Inter-role conflict arises when the requirements and expectations of one role interfere or conflict with those of another role. Jane's role as mother is likely to conflict occasionally with her role as a student and worker. When one of her children becomes ill, Jane may

find that the demands of her job (e.g., staying at work) are in conflict with the demands of motherhood (e.g., taking her child to the doctor) (Wolf, 2011).

According to Biddle (1986) cited in Jackson (1988) although role theories emphasize conformity and social integration, theorists do recognize that conflicting pressures which impede social integration may arise when individuals experience “the concurrent appearance of incompatible expectations of behaviour”. The concept of role conflict was coined to explicate the subjective tensions that may occur given the above situation. To further identify conditions that hamper social conformity, notions such as role ambiguity (i.e., unclear expectations to guide behaviour); role overload (i.e., overwhelming expectations); role malintegration (i.e., incompatible roles); or simply inadequate skills to perform roles were identified and named. From this line of research, models of role conflict resolution have emerged that focus on negotiations to change expectations of oneself or others as well as adjusting behaviours.

Leslie and Thompson (2003) assert that there are situations where the proscribed sets of behaviour that characterize roles may lead to cognitive dissonance in individuals. Role conflict is a special form of social conflict that takes place when one is forced to take on two different and incompatible roles at the same time. For example, a person may find conflict between her role as a mother and her role as a student when her child's demands for time and attention distract her from the needs of her studies. Similarly, role confusion occurs in a situation where an individual has trouble determining which role he or she should play, but where the roles are not necessarily incompatible. For example, if a college student attending a social function encounters his teacher as a fellow guest, he will have to determine whether to relate to the teacher as a student or a peer.

According to Katz and Khan (1978) cited in Ahmad (1995) the fact that multiple roles operate at the same time should lead to greater role conflict. The expectations surrounding any of these roles can generate inter-role conflict when they involve pressures to dominate the time of the focal person and interfere with fulfilling the expectations associated with the other roles. Kumekpor (1974) cited in Beneffo (2009) noted the same for women whose economic activities are not self controlled. Thus, women in situations dictated to them by conditions, which do not take into consideration the peculiarities of multiples roles encountered in motherhood, work and studies, may find it difficult to reconcile their role as workers, students and mothers.

Consequences of Role Conflict

Research finds role conflict to be associated with both positive and negative consequences. Much attention had been given to the problems associated with multiple roles. Role overload and role conflict are two of the most well-known role theory concepts. Role overload refers to the experience of lacking the resources, including time and energy, needed to meet the demands of all roles. Role conflict describes an incongruity between the expectations of one role and those of another. Role overload and conflict often lead to difficulties with meeting role expectations, known as role strain (Goode 1960). Various negative psychological and physical problems can follow from role strain. In many cultures, women experience stress, as a result of combining work and family roles (International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family, 2003). Levels of conflict, however, vary across cultures as a result of perceptions of gender roles and the subsequent amount of time given to work and domestic roles (Moore, 1995).

At the same time, some evidence suggests that multiple roles provide opportunities and advantages. In their theory of role balance, Stephen Marks and Shelley MacDermid (1996)

found that people who are able to fully participate in and perform a number of different roles experience not only less role strain but also lower rates of depression and higher self-esteem and innovation. Coser (1975) argues that it is among multiple roles that individuals are able to express individuality and act autonomously in accordance with or in opposition to normative expectations (cited in International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family (2003)). Thus, multiple roles are important for the development of personality and intellect. It is clear then that women who hold the multiple roles of mother, wife, and paid worker have better health than women holding none or only some of these roles.

Coping Behaviour for Dealing with Inter-role Conflict

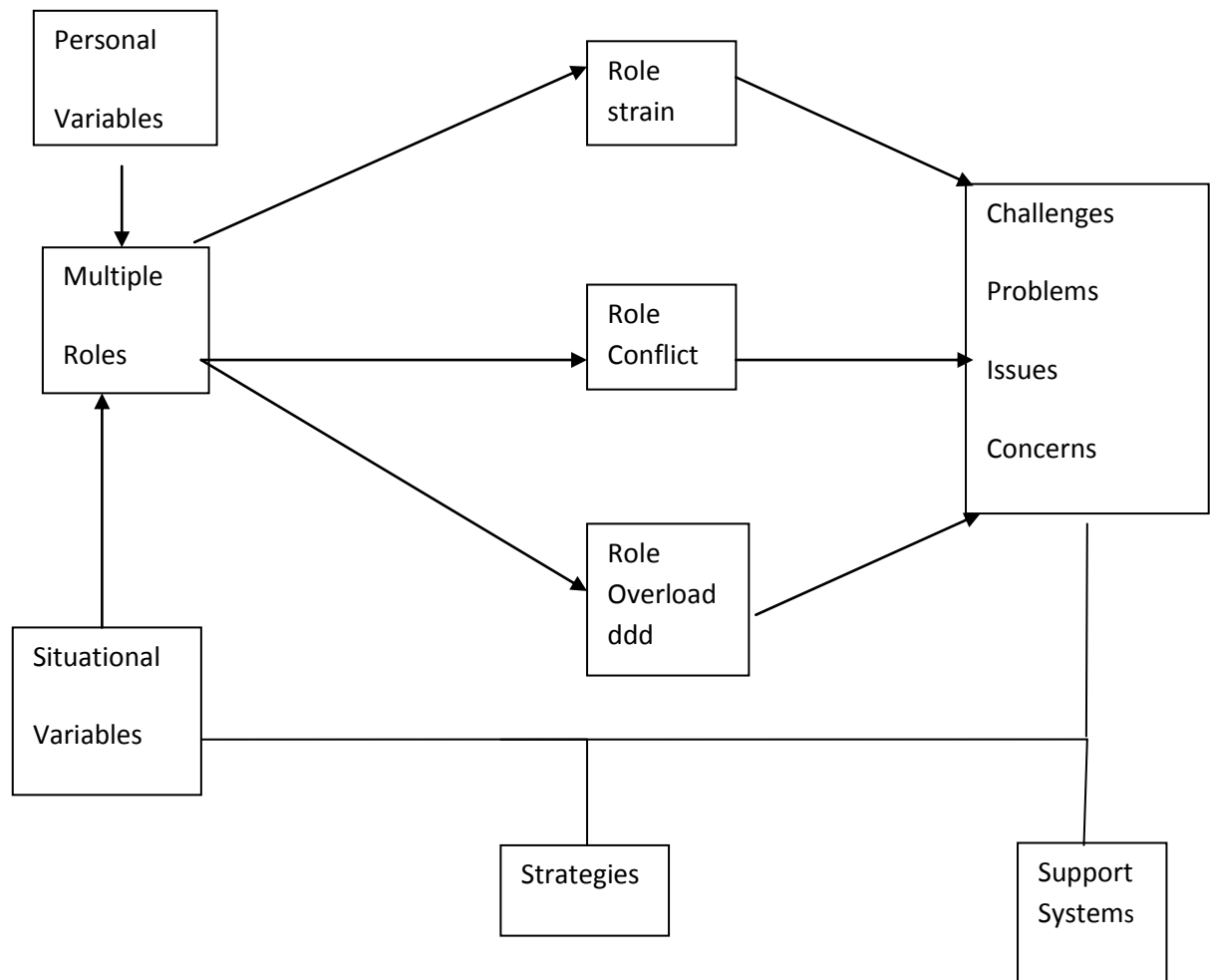
Hall (1972 cited in Ahmad, 1995) has identified three types of coping behaviour for dealing with inter-role conflict. The three types of coping behaviour were logically derived from three role components by Levinson (1959) cited in Ahmad (1995) as structurally imposed demands, personal role conception and role behaviour. Type I coping (structural role redefinition) involves an active attempt to deal directly with role senders and lessen the conflict by mutual agreement on a new set of expectations. One way of changing structural demands would be to relocate and share one's role tasks (cleaning, washing, and child care, for example)\

Type II coping (personal role redefinition) involves changing one's personal concept of role demands received from others. It entails changing the expectations themselves. An example is setting priorities among and within roles, being sure that certain demands are always met (for example, the needs of sick children), while others have lower priority (such as dusting furniture).

Type III coping (reactive role behaviour) entails attempting to improve the quality of role performance with no attempt to change the structural or personal definition of one's roles. Implicit in coping through role behaviour is the assumption that one's role demands are unchangeable and that the person's main task is to find ways to meet them; this coping strategy involves a passive or reactive orientation toward one's roles.

Moen (1992) has examined the potential positive and negative consequences for women combining paid work and family roles. She concludes that whether multiple roles are positive or negative for women depends on many factors in women's lives, such as conditions of the work, conditions of their family roles, including the number and age of children, and extent to which women view themselves as captives or committed to their work and family roles.

According to Malone (1998) the steady increase in the number of women in professional and managerial occupations, the pursuit of higher education by women, and a tendency for professional women to develop and maintain a marriage and family life have contributed to the performance of multiple roles. Trying to satisfy job demands, time schedules, family obligations, or social obligations associated with the performance of multiple roles can be stressful, time consuming, and sometimes impossible. Women use time management strategies and organizational strategies to cope with the conflict.

Figure 1. Model of women's inter-role conflicts

Source: Malone (1998)

Personal and situational variables influence the multiple roles women experience in life and work. In performing their multiple roles women may experience role strain, role conflict, or role overload. These role stressors present challenges, problems, issues, and concerns for women. Support systems and management strategies are used to address the challenges, problems, issues, and concerns. They tap into a support system of human resources for encouragement and assistance with their multiple roles (Malone, 1998).

In relation to the study, student nursing mothers face multiple roles as mothers, students, wives, family members, and in contemporary times as breadwinners. All these culminates

into role conflicts and role strains and role overloads thus presenting enormous challenges such as attending lectures, meeting deadlines for assignments, childcare, domestic chores, learning, and examination to the student nursing mother. The availability of support systems in the institutions, home, workplace and the society at large for nursing mothers to manage the stressors will determine the extent to which the student mother will be able to cope or burn-out. This model is quite relevant to the study as it presents a holistic picture of the experiences of nursing mothers who are pursuing further education are confronted with.

2.3 Gender/ Traditional Roles and Education

Gender refers to socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with females and males (World Bank 2001). Biklen and Pollard (1999) cited in Adusah- Karikari (2008) assert that “being male or female carries few meanings in and of itself; its most potent meanings come from social and cultural meanings attributed to it. The 2001 World Bank report explains that all cultures interpret and elaborates the biological differences between men and women into a set of social expectations about what behaviours and activities are appropriate and what rights, resources and power women and men possess. For example nearly all societies give the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children to women and girls; and assign military service and national defence to men (World Bank, 2001). Biklen and Pollard (1999) indicated that what we have come to identify as belonging to men’s or women’s behaviours, attitudes, presentation, of self and so on, is produced by social relationships and continually negotiated and maintained within cultures.

Maccobby and Jackling (1974) cited in Acheampong (1999) pointed out that women learn what it means to belong to any society through a socialising process which begins in their infancy. Through verbal and non verbal interaction with family members and other care-takers, they learn behaviour patterns appropriate to their cultural norms. Maccobby and Jackling (1974) cited in Unal (2004) view the socialising process of gender in terms of sex role differences. Lee and Cropper (1974) reported that males and females are socialised through different life styles through child rearing practices which entail differential expectations. The Association of American University Women (AAUW, 1992) agrees on the socialisation process by saying that despite learning a common language, they differ in their verbal and non verbal expressions. They are socialised to belong to sex-segregated social groups, wear gender appropriate clothing, and prefer activities and toys associated with one's sex. This kind of traditional socialisation contributes to women's development levels as competencies based on those activities.

Morley (2005) contends furthermore that gender has a significant impact on academic and professional identity formation. Gendered power relations symbolically and materially constructs and regulates women's everyday experiences of higher education. (Adusah-Karikari,(2008). Adu (1999) observed that African society's concept of women is negative. This is shown in customs, traditions and beliefs, which have over the years contributed in keeping women under subjection and making them feel generally inferior to men, he continued to say that women are not viewed as human resources vital for development but as amorphous labour reserve to use when there is a shortage. Niles (1989) asserts that some countries and parents hold negative views about the education of girls. In Chad, for example he said some parents believe that schools push girls to prostitution, make them unfaithful to their husbands and difficult to control by parents.

Some parents are also of the view that literate girls are more liberal with the use of their sex organs than the illiterate ones and this discouraged most parents from supporting the education of their daughters.

Dolphyne (1991) also observed that women's education has always lagged behind that of men in all African societies. She explained that the major role for a woman in a traditional society was to ensure the lineage, and she was expected to marry soon after puberty. The woman she said did not need formal education to perform this function. This effectively minimized the role of education in the African women's lives. In traditional societies, the traditional woman is expected to be provided for by her husband; and since education becomes a means for entering highly paid jobs in the formal sector, it was considered more important for boys to have formal education because they are seen as future breadwinners in the family. She observes that it is fairly easy for a girl with no formal education to make a living out of retail trade or the sale of snacks to workers. Dolphyne said on account of this, most girls who started school did not continue beyond the primary school level. She also observed that parents took their female children as their insurance against poverty in their old age. It did not seem profitable therefore to invest money in the education of the girl child.

Stromquist (1989) cited in Adusah Karikari (2008) found that various studies about girl's education are affected by the gender division of labour, which made them needed at home for domestic duties. Stromquist stated that in Botswana girls attended significantly fewer hours of class per day than boys. This was because girls, particularly those from low income families were often needed at home for home-keeping, child minding and even income earning activities. According to Stromquist, parents rely on girls for domestic help

and that this resulted in poor attendance and in turn led to low academic performance, which often resulted in grade repetition which either keeps girls in school for a longer period or makes them drop out. Mumuni (2000) cited a research conducted on female education in Ghana which identified certain socio –cultural factors that impede female participation and retention in the educational system (Girl’s Education Unit of G.E.S. 1997). Factors enumerated included early marriage, religion and the ambivalent parental attitude towards education. According to Mumuni (2000), procreation is implanted in the minds of the females, which cause them to fulfill the expectations of society by aspiring towards what society expects of them. They treasure and prefer early marriages and childbearing to higher education. He added that other cultural practices like betrothal, ‘dipo’ and the ‘trokosi’ systems , which promote promiscuity among young girls was highly encouraged . Society sees women as neither needing education nor if need be at all, not much since the woman will finally end up in the kitchen. This is because girls and thus women have often been relegated to the background and assigned roles as good cooks, baby sitters and probably taking care of their husbands.

According to a report of the Federation of African Women Educationist (F.A.W.E.1998), economic pressures affected the provision of education and the ability of parents to pay fees for their children. According to F.A.W.E., under severe economic circumstances parents choose to withdraw girls from school. Poverty stricken households, especially those headed by women in the rural areas cannot afford exorbitant requirements for school attendance such as books and uniforms, just to mention a few. Citing Ninyagi (1981), Stromquist (1989), reported that in Kenya, when parents could not pay the school fees, they kept the female children at home. Stromquist also cited Houeto (1982) who said women’s responsibilities at home were seen as more important than those outside the home. Parents

were therefore willing to invest in the education of their sons rather than the education of their daughters regardless of their intellectual abilities. Omolulu (1973), observed that in the past, due to ignorance and low education, some parents sometimes objected to the education of the girl child for fear that if the girls were educated, they will be less inclined to obey their men and they would become crudely aggressive, ambitious and competitive with men.

Sromquist (1989) further pointed out that practice such as brides' wealth and dowry in several African and Asian countries prompted low income parents to push their children into early marriages to collect money as dowry. He asserted that economic conditions, cultural norms and religious beliefs affected the participation of females in education. Campbell (1978) was also of the opinion that parents were more interested in giving their female children to marriages in order to receive dowry from would be sons-in-law. He further noted that parents' attitude towards their children's marriage was logically determined by the child's resorting to prostitution or becoming pregnant unceremoniously. Education in view of this was looked upon as 'something' which is good for only males because to them the longer a female stays in school, the longer she delays the payment of dowry. In Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, there exists a definite preference for sons. It is believed that sons can carry the family name and provide future economic support for the family. Hatem (1986) said a daughter do not contribute economically to her nuclear family. Above all, females required supervision to guard against any type of moral indiscretion, and since they could not jeopardize the entire family, they were often seen as a source of anxiety.

Citing Snyder and Tedesse (1995), Adusah Karikari (2008) also points out that colonial officials tended to visualize women in terms of a Victorian image of what a woman should be, instead of observing women's actual functions from this perspective they envisioned women's responsibilities is largely limited to nurturing and conserving society, while men engaged in political and economic activities. Colonials equated 'male' with "breadwinner" and as a result, introduced technologies to men and recruited men for paying jobs". Tamale and Olako-Onyango (1997) stated that women in Africa under colonial rule generally entered academia later than their male counterparts. Staudt (1981) cited in Adusah-Karikari (2008) indicates that not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women. Today's inequality in education is a direct effect of our colonial heritage. It has been argued by Dolphyne (1991) that if women should excel in any profession, then it should be teaching and nursing as these two professions are supposedly women's forte.

Government of Ghana (GOG) (1992) recorded that a survey conducted on women's education in 1984 revealed that the proportion of women of the total population aged 6 years and above constituted 56.5% of the total population as compared to 43.5% of men. Literacy rates are generally high for both sexes between ages 15 and 34 years but fall rapidly for women in succeeding age groups. Adoo-Adeku (1992) confirmed the above statement by saying that while the percentage of girls in school decreased as they move up the educational ladder that of boys increased. It was a norm that children particularly girls took care of their parents during their old age, so they had to get married, stay at home and take care of the family. The United Nations Organization (1997) observed that even though the labour force in all parts of the world is being provided by women it is greater in

the less developed countries. However there is still a gap and that is due to the fact that the type of manpower they provide is of poor quality. This observation implies that there is something women lack that has contributed to the quality of labour they provide and which does not attract better income. The principal institution that can best address this problem is education as women are generally those on whom the responsibility of educating falls, whether in the home or in the school. Dr. Aggrey's statement, though widely used in Ghana since independence, does not reflect women's actual involvement in higher education. The status of the Ghanaian women in formal education is shaped by socio-cultural beliefs deepened by colonial legacies. The colonial system of education was sharply skewed toward boys. Bartels (1965) reveals that when the first school for girls was opened in Ghana, the aim of the missionaries who ran the school was to groom young women to become wives fit for the men they were training cited in Adusah-Karikari, (2008). There are many instances of gender stereotyping which widens as education progresses. Teacher's negative opinion and attitude towards a girl's potential in the educational system has enhanced gender inequality in schools. Sadker and Sadker (2009) found out that boys were more likely to get teacher attention than girls. Boys were praised more and were likely to have extended conversations with teachers. They cited studies which show that teachers were more likely to give male students detailed instructions on how to do things for them. They concluded that the outcome of such biased attention for girls include reduced commitment to career. The reason for gender stereotyping in Africa, according to Lumumba (1982) is that gender was an important bias for education and although many positions existed which could be filled by men as well as women. From top to bottom of the social structure there are certain duties

that were considered purely as female duties and vice versa (cited in Adusah-Karikari, 2008).

Women's level of literacy in Ghana on the whole is low, so the few educated women tend to be concentrated in certain areas, namely teaching and nursing. Dirassa (1991) also argued that schools tend to channel girls into traditional female fields. This seems to legitimize stereotype roles for women. The impression created is that women are fit for certain occupations and not for others. A survey of parents of dropouts in India indicated that they withdrew the daughters from school when they saw education as conflicting with marriage (Nayana, 1985). Also in some rural and urban areas parents place a lower value on the education of their daughters than on that of their sons. Their attitude is partly due to the fact that their daughters will become pregnant before completing of school and certification. This kind of parental attitude towards the education of their daughters may also be influenced by finance which often impede the efforts of school girls and apparently result in girls seeking support through promiscuity. The bottom line is, women in contemporary Ghanaian society were seen primarily as home-makers; a broad term which comprises of child-bearing, nurturing, home-keeping. All these and many more have contributed in the low number of women in education which we are experiencing in Ghana today. The United Nations Human Development report (1996) has stated that fairer opportunities for women and better access to education, childcare, credit and employment contribute to their development, that of family members and to economic growth.

The task of adult education is to address the limitations and contradictions of formal education and to foster a critical examination of the social, political and economic system, as it affects the situation of women. This is being done through an array of innovative

strategies in adult learning, which go beyond the conventional definitions of empowerment.

2.4 Motivation for Women's Education

The immediate concern of women was their ability to earn enough money so that they could feed, clothe and generally take better care of their children. This was because the income of the man alone could not support the family. The twentieth century role of a woman often requires her to be a wife, mother, nurse, teacher and co-breadwinner all at the same time. Today more women than ever have to work outside the home to help support their families and this could be achieved with a sound level of education. Education of women increases their chances of getting paid job to supplement the man's income and meet the high standard of living. Education has also enabled many women to have higher aspirations because they are exposed to their rights now than ever before. Example, many women now prefer to earn their own money to buy personal items rather than ask their husbands for money.

Dolphyne (1991) further stated that higher education gives a woman economic security and so makes her economically independent. This raises expectations, respect and companionship from her husband. Education also gives a woman a say in matters affecting the family because she makes substantial contribution to the family income. During the 1960's in America, many women rejected the idea that their identity depended solely on house work and child care due in part to a massive social movement referred to as "feminist" or "women's liberation movement". Rigid roles for females were found to be stifling. Some of the questions asked were, why should women not assume important roles outside the homes as men do, earn money and social status and then count on their

husbands to help with house work and childcare as a result women begun entering college in large numbers to pursue higher education that would lead to a well-paid career.

Caldwell (1981) cited in Wardatul (2001) in his research on some of the benefits of women's education explained that, the educated mother was more likely to hear of and adopt new ideas about childcare nutrition and also take advantage of modern healthcare practices such as immunization among others. This means the education of females will go a long way to even improve the health care of the family. He refers to the results of two surveys that were carried out to arrive at the conclusion that maternal education is the single most significant determinant of child mortality. Janowitz (1976)) says formal education of females widens their horizon, make them susceptible to new ideas and perception and liberate them from ignorance and traditions that are not helpful. In order to help promote development of any country, it is necessary for women to have equal access to education just as men to help in the development of a nation. Women generally cannot be sufficiently developed without education and training. There are numerous reasons why some women want to further their education.

- To improve their status
- For better condition of employment
- To increase income
- For autonomy
- To prevent boredom
- To give a sense of well being
- To fulfil a specific childhood ambition

Although it is true that women in African societies were relegated to rather subordinate positions, there were some categories of women who commanded respect and wielded a certain amount of power in their society by virtue of their education and training.

Recent studies conducted in the Middle East and North Africa has shown that:

- Education contributes directly to the growth of national income by improving the productive capacities of the labour force.
- As female education rises, fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality fall and family health improves.
- Increases in girls' secondary school enrollment are associated with increases in women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income. Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on child nutrition.
- Children - especially daughters - of educated mothers are more likely to be enrolled in school and to have higher levels of educational attainment.
- Educated women are more politically active and better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them. Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam (2004).

Women as described by F.A.W.E. International (1995) are foundation of life. This is so since they work for additional income for the family, take care of the home, and provide a warm atmosphere for the family among others. In view of this, the education of females will not only be beneficial to herself but to her family and the society in general. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, also recognized that women's literacy is key to empowering women's participation in decision-making in

society and to improving families' well-being. Additionally, the United Nations has articulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which emphasizes education as an essential role in building democratic societies and creating a foundation for sustained economic growth (cited in Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam, 2004).

Some women seek to escape the stresses they go through such as pattern of abuse, irresponsible male partners, divorce and separation to further their education in order to take their minds off some of their problems.

2.5 Challenges of Student Nursing Mothers

When mothers leave home to further their education, they do not neglect their family roles all together. In an attempt to continue performing her role as a student and mother she encounters numerous challenges. The task of combining motherhood with the demands of an academic life is difficult for most women. Even though these women are still in school, they still have primary responsibilities for homework, childcare and for instilling cultural values on her children. In the absence of the mother as it can be in a situation of a student nursing mother, the child may feel lonely and neglected in terms of maternal control, supervision and training. This may affect the emotions of the mother while at school. Jarvis (1995) also found out that adults who were over-stimulated or anxious do not learn as well as those who are stimulated to respond to their learning situation in a normal way. Anxiety according could impede even the mastery of new motor skills, it tended to interfere with and inhibit original thought.

One major challenge that affects student mothers is the time table for lectures, tutorials and other academic programmes on campus. According to Dallas's (1998) undergraduate studies, especially, are time structured and inflexible, such that a woman would have to

attend classes when they are offered not when they fit into her day. She has to study before exams, read and prepare for her assignments, and shift her focus to these tasks she does. University studies, unlike a 9 am to 5 pm job, do not allow one to punch out at a certain hour and leave work behind, but often occupy one's thought and emotions throughout the day.

Another area of importance is the effect of women's education on their relationships with husband and family. Several problems are created in family management when mothers combine schooling with their responsibilities in the home. These student mothers are often tired because of the double workload and this may affect her relationship with her husband and children. She may not be able to give them enough attention and motherly love. Apart from not being able to meet their family need adequately, their studies outside the home too may suffer. They may not be able to put up their best and mostly unable to keep up with colleagues who either had no children or husband. Motherhood and academia do not blend well for most student mothers. Many mothers say, that juggling the stresses of schooling with the responsibilities of home leave them overworked, overstrained and always wake up from bed already tired.

When women spend long hours away from their babies, the babies do not get what they need most; the time and attention of their mother. No one can fulfill a mother's role as well as mother can. A substitute figure can alleviate a child's need for its mother but cannot take her place. Student nursing mothers therefore faces the challenge of combining their roles as mothers and or wives with their academic work effectively if the above problems persist.

Breastfeeding of babies is also one of the challenges that are encountered by most students who are nursing mothers especially those with newly born babies. There are a lot of benefits of breastfeeding to mothers as well as the baby involved. Breastfeeding, like birth empowers women not only in accomplishment in themselves and their abilities. Breastfeeding protects infants against numerous infectious diseases including otitis media, respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Breastfeeding also lowers children's risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular risk factors (Chen & Kaplan, 2003). The production of milk in the mother burns down calories, helping with weight loss after pregnancy. A by-product of breastfeeding production has a relaxing effect on mother and stimulates maternal instincts. Recent research findings suggest that women who breastfeed have a reduced risks of pre-menopausal breast cancer, cervical cancer and osteoporosis. Breastfeeding according to Robotti (1998) is the most natural and nutritious way to encourage a baby's development, it has also been found out that breastfed babies have fewer ears, respiratory and intestinal infection, they are less likely to have childhood diabetes and amphora as well as learning disabilities. Babies who do not have the chance of being breastfed by their mothers as it is in the case of some student mothers are likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or "crib death". They are also likely to become obese, lack emotional security as well as suffer poor mouth and tooth development of oral muscles and facial bones. There is extensive evidence on the short-term and long-term health benefits of breastfeeding for infants and mothers. In 2003, the World Health Organization recommended that, wherever possible, infants should be fed exclusively on breast milk until six months of age. In a study in helping women to breastfeed concluded that most educated mothers do not breastfeed for long and cannot practice exclusive breastfeeding (King, 2007) as it can be seen in the case of student

nursing mothers even though breastfeeding is known to develop healthier children, thus reduce health care in the society.

Aside the fact that it is not easy to go to school after a long break in education which may be due to marriage or bearing children and caring for the family, Baun and Tomori (1979) also points out the fact that adult learners also have poor memory and as a result find it difficult to memorize. These authors continue to say that the adult goes through physiological changes, which may result in his sight and learning becoming less acute and in some, loss of physical dexterity.

Banda (2000) researched on Challenges in Distance Education: Experiences of Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher-learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the program as the cause of the child's death.

In addition, teacher learners who bring babies reported that they do not have thorough preparations for examinations. They lack concentration on their studies or actual writing of examination papers. Sometimes it happens that one is sitting for an examination, and hears a cry of her baby just outside the examination hall. Such a person loses concentration.

Banda's research further found that other challenges associated with teacher-learners who bring babies to college are inadequate space in the hostels and inappropriate food for the

babies. The college hostel rooms were designed to accommodate two students. However, although distance education teacher-learners are allowed to bring babies, they use the same rooms that were meant for residential students. Therefore, they are forced to squeeze into the same rooms. Thus, a room, which was meant for two people, takes in six: two teacher-learners, two babies and two nannies. Such an environment is not good for the babies who have their own demands. Female teacher learners with babies are accommodated in one hostel and the author was impressed to see how they were managing the whole situation. Nevertheless, there is a need to explore mechanisms that would solve the problems these teacher-learners are encountering. For instance, establishing a baby care centre. The problems found by Banda (2000) is not peculiar to student nursing mothers offering distance education programmes alone but could also happen to residential students of other tertiary institutions. It is clear therefore that there is the need for some policy framework by the tertiary institutions that could help address the predicaments of this category of students who also have the right to education.

Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and women's biological clocks coincide. Williams (2007) states that graduate school is a space and places where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than challenges to be managed by individual women. Hensel (1990) too argue that the verdict is clear—"having children is detrimental to a woman's career success". Hensel points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life

assumes that people have “uninterrupted” time (Hensel, 1990). Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (Williams, 2007). Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their new born babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and level of achievement (Egenti and Omoruyi, 2011).

The challenges faced by student nursing mothers cannot be overestimated. According to Hordzi (2008) for distance education programme the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those of them who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. He goes on to state that the situation at times becomes so desperate for the mothers such that it is uncommon to see a mother carrying her baby on the shoulders of one hand while using the other hand in answering the examination questions. In such a situation one wonders how effectively the student nursing mother will be able to write the exam.

2. 6 Diverse Effects on Them

The challenges encountered by student nursing mothers could have diverse affects on them. This could result from the role conflicts they do suffer which limit the time available for them to study, the cost of child care for their babies and health problems. A research conducted by Andres and Finlay (2004) revealed that in an effort to reduce the cost of babysitting, some participants traded babysitting time with friends. Although they saved money they compensated with less study time by studying all night prior to an examination. Lack of sleep interfered with their performance). Sleep deficits were common with the resultant blunting of decision making processes. Most of the re/entering women received less than five hours sleep per night as they struggle to maintain academic and family responsibilities known to impair mental processes such as concentration, memory, reasoning ability, and decisiveness (Coreen, 1996; cited in Andres and Finlay 2004: 55).

Contrasting her previous experience in her workforce with her current life as a student, Helene a respondent who was a student nursing mother stated:

When you are working you can just come from work right, when you are a student, you never can tell until the semester's done. There's this assignment and you look at the calendar and oh, there's this exams, and when you go home in the evenings, you're not 100 percent there (Andres and Finlay, 2004: 56)

Kwagala (1992) found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres . This state of affairs may not let those mothers

concentrate on their books and at the same time children are at a risk of uncertainties (Najjuma and Kyarugah, 2006).

Perkin (1986) observed that of course few mothers are immune from guilt feelings about what might happen when you have very young children in the care of others. So they get worried about whether and when they can go out to work or become a student (Cited in Najjuma and Kyarugah, 2006).

Some mothers are forced to change their programmes/ courses in order to cater for their babies. Thus there are significant challenges that mothers encounter in trying to attain University education, most of which are largely unknown, some of which are likely to contribute to their poor performance and sometimes failure to complete their studies. However, what is obvious is that even though student mothers find it challenging to continue studying, they are doing so in greater numbers (Najjuma and Kyarugah, 2006).

According to (Meindl, 2009) returning to study as an adult be it after a hiatus of a few years or several decades is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and development. Sometimes, however, it poses particular personal and interpersonal challenges which lead to stress and may interfere with the achievement of academic or skill acquisition goals. This is corroborated by Milner-Home, Power and Dennis (1996) who state that the traditional image of a mother is that of a self-sacrificing being. If taken as such, the adult student is likely to exhaust herself as she attends to both her studies and the parenting role. Besides, the demands of parenthood and studentship are not only conflicting but stressful thereby posing great challenges to the adult learner (cited in Mamhute, 2011)

Returning to study is exciting and also emotionally and psychologically arousing. Inward turmoil and self-examination may be marked by external manifestations such as increased physical and mental fatigue which sometimes manifests as mild depression and social withdrawal, but it is worth noting that research assures us that, even while it feels "destabilizing," returning to study and career changes are rational responses to dissatisfaction and unmet needs by well adjusted people! Family pressure to stay in old roles, family interference...family heel-dragging and acting out in response to attempted change and development. Family feelings of being abandoned create guilt (Meindl, 2009). Welch (1990) explains that being a mother means being constantly interruptible and continually responsive to needs of someone else, which makes it difficult to develop the concentration necessary to write and study (Cited in Dallan, 1998). Psychological strain of new experience and new challenges according to (Meindl, 2009) include,

- Feelings of inferiority in relation to skills of younger classmates in uneasy mixture with feelings of superiority around own life accomplishments.
- Strain in group projects which may result.
- Social isolation from student peers... not fish nor fowl nor good red herring... feeling both above and below
- Strain of steep learning curve in the face of technology and study skills which have lain fallow for many years... can't do your kid's grade seven math anymore... so how to face statistics.

In addition, the drudgery of combining numerous activities could cause most student mothers to absent themselves from lectures and tutorials. A research conducted by Harrison (2008) on tutorial attendance and student performance showed that students who

attended all or most tutorials received a mean final mark in the course just over a full letter grade higher than students who attended none or very few tutorials.

Writing on reasons for students' non-attendance at lectures and tutorials Kottasz (2005) states that absence from lectures can be viewed as a very personal decision based on both the *ability* to attend and the *motivation* to attend. The individual decision to come to lectures will be influenced by many factors. At one extreme, there will be those conditions which make attendance virtually impossible, while at the other extreme there are circumstances where managers or lecturers would say that there is no justification whatsoever for non-attendance Kotasz (2005) found that students were more worried and stressed about attending tutorials than lectures mainly because participation was an integral part of those sessions.

Furthering education by women could also have profound effect on their relationships and marriage. According to Suiter (1987) the decline in marital happiness among full-time students and their husbands appear to have been related to changes in the women's performance of family roles over the years, and to husbands' responses to those changes. In a study conducted by Suiters (1987), Forty-four married mothers and thirty-three of their husbands were interviewed in depth at the beginning and the end of the women's first year of enrolment in a university to study, the study showed that there were changes in marital happiness when women return to school. Marital happiness declined over the year among couples in which wives were enrolled as full-time students, and changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled as part-time students. Marital happiness changed substantially more among husbands than wives.

The economic situation of the student mother could also be a determining factor in her ability to complete the course successfully. A study conducted by Manhute (2011) found that both pregnant and nursing students had their studies negatively affected by financial problems. When financial resources were not sufficient to sustain them, students temporarily absconded from some educational activities such as lectures to source funds and or other essential materials. Even when the student mothers did not abscond from studies and continued as if all was well, worry intended academic benefits

2.7 Support System Available for Student Nursing Mothers

Writing on the need to provide enough support for student nursing mothers to breastfeed their babies, Fricke (2010) mentioned that women and men should be treated equally. However, when treating men and women equally results in inequity, they should be treated differently. A prime example is pregnancy; women get pregnant and men don't. In order for women to have equal opportunities, their reproductive capacities need to be taken into consideration. If the law and society as a whole do not take these issues into consideration, the circumstances will force women to be relegated to the private sphere if they choose to exercise their reproductive right to have children. Many women give birth and then return to the public sphere, whether it is work or school. Women may desire to continue to breastfeed due to the great benefits; breastfeeding provides health benefits for both mother and baby, as well reduces costs, and promotes an emotional bond between mother and baby. If the public sphere does not accommodate a woman's decision to breastfeed, by allowing her to express her milk throughout her work/school day, she will be forced to either leave the workforce or school, or more likely stop breastfeeding, depriving her infant of its many benefits.

Writing on Educational opportunities and academic performance: A case study of university student mothers in Venezuela Pinilla and Muñoz (2005) posited that evidence shows that the academic performance of student mothers is lower than that of other groups of university students. In practice, student mothers participate as part-time students, although this category is not officially recognized by most Venezuelan public universities. Almost all the life circumstances of student mothers negatively affect their academic performance. The only circumstance that contributes positively to the performance of a student mother is the help provided by her extended family in taking care of her children. The fact that student mothers are able to participate in higher education is mainly due to the help they receive from their extended family (Pinilla and Muñoz, 2005).

Responding to questions on how student teachers who bring babies to college could be assisted some had the following suggestions:

- Provide spacious accommodation
- Provide them with regular transport to hospital whenever their babies or nannies are ill
- Abolish fee for nannies
- Accommodate sick teacher-learners in a separate room, that is, a sick bay
- Encourage teacher-learners to use contraception (Banda, 2000).

The provision of breast feeding rooms in the various universities will go a long way to ease the challenges faced by student nursing mothers as provided by some universities in the United States. For example Columbia University provides lactation rooms to support nursing mothers returning to work, school, or campus. Each room offers a clean, secure, and private space for women who need to express breast milk during their time on campus. All of the rooms are equipped with a table, chair, and lock from the inside; some

contain refrigerators and sinks. Where rooms do not have a refrigerator, student mothers are recommended to bring a cooler to store their breast milk.

(<http://www.worklife.columbia.edu/breastfeeding-support>). Though the usage of such facilities is for a fee the benefits derived by the users cannot be overemphasized. Such breast feeding rooms are usually used under strict guidelines. For instance the use of the breastfeeding room by staff and students of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick reads as follows:

The Mother and Baby Room is locked at all times and may be accessed by requesting the key and swipe card which will be issued by the Main Reception staff. The Mother and Baby Logbook at reception will have to be signed to log use of the room. The facility is provided as a private and sanitary room for breastfeeding staff and students to express their milk during work hours. Persons using the Mother and Baby Room are required to respect the privacy and security of the room and to agree to schedule their use with other mothers using the room. It is important that all staff and students using the room ensure that it is clean and locked as they leave (Fricke, 2010).

Equally important is the realization that guidance and counseling is as crucial as extra tuition for the female learners Opong-Mensa, Ahiatrogah and Deku (2008). Hodgson, (1993) underscored the importance of counseling. To him, counseling may be helpful for the students to develop their skills and be able to cope with the combination of part time study, work and family life.

The research by Najjuma and Kyarugah, (2006) established that student mothers are challenged by the triple role, i.e. productive, reproductive and community service, which

is likely to bring stress, anxiety, and some time, may lead to disease. It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made by university administrators to provide counseling services specifically to student mothers in order to manage better the hassles brought about by the challenges they face. Availing of space by the Universities, for mothers to share their experiences can also be helpful in helping them to identify steps that can improve their learning.

The problem of lack of facilities featured as another issue that prevent mothers from concentrating on their studies as they have to think about their babies that they have left somewhere. The university authorities should consider accommodation of student nursing mothers at the university or by introducing daycare centres at the university premises so as to cater for those with young babies (Najjuma and Kyarugah, 2006).

The most significant way to combat these inherent disadvantages for student nursing mothers is the provision of on-campus child care. Research has shown that graduation rates are significantly higher for student parents when campus child care is provided, and further, students are more likely to remain in school, graduate in fewer years, and earn higher grades (Kappner, 2002 cited in Gasser & Ray F. Gasse, 2010). On top of these relatively simple gestures of support for student parents, another important initiative is to simply help student nursing mothers develop a campus support system or network among student nursing mothers on campus. This can take the form of a student organization, a support group, or even a play group (Gasser & Gasser, 2010).

Schools and other care centres have recently emerged to address partially problems confronted by working mothers. Some of these crèches accept infants as young as six months and have vehicles, which convey them to and from homes to the school every day.

Kwagala (1992) cited in Najjuma and Kyarugah (2006) on the other hand found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres.

Another suggestion worth considering was the provision of hostel facilities that could accommodate nursing mothers so that those who are capable and willing to stay on campus could do so. This result confirms the findings of Onsongo's (2004) research on Promoting Gender Equity in Selected Public Universities of Kenya which revealed that when students were asked what can be done to improve the situation of student mothers on campus the students interviewed mentioned the following:

- The university should provide accommodation for student mothers on campus. This they said will ensure access to clean water and electricity.
- A day care centre for student mothers should be set up in the campus for student mothers to access at a cost.
- Lower the fees for student mothers, especially the health fees charged for their sick children.

One coping strategy that cannot be ignored is the support from the family, especially, husbands, grandparents and other relatives in Africa. Writing on coping strategies used by student mothers to succeed in Occupational Therapy School which revealed that physical support from husbands was used by all the participants. Grohman and Lamm (2009) Emotional support from husband and peers and time management strategies was used by 93.3% of the participants. Findings concluded that 100% of the participants who had their

first child in school reported that they used emotional and physical support from their husband and parents and time management strategies.

Finally, despite all the challenges Dallan (1998) postulates that student mothers may attempt to redefine their own roles as mothers, or their expectations of themselves as students or they may try to re-negotiate the support they receive from family and friends. They may even redefine how they see the university system, and their role within it. A student mother may try any or all of these strategies at one time or another.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information on the methods used to conduct the research. These include the population, the research design, sample, sampling procedure, sources of data, research instrument, pre-test, field work, and data analysis.

3.2 Population

All student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, it was very difficult to get the actual figures.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted the mixed method research design. According to Creswell (2006) the mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. It focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2006).

3.4 Sample

The sample for the study was sixty five (65) student nursing mothers from the University of Ghana, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Valley View University, Central University College and Methodist University College. Out of this number, fifty five (55) were given the questionnaires to answer and ten (10) were interviewed.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

To select the tertiary institutions for the study the three public universities namely University of Ghana, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and Institute of Professional Studies were assigned with numbers and two selected through the simple random sampling procedure. In the same way the private universities in the Greater Accra region were assigned with numbers and put into a bowl. The simple random sampling procedure was used to select three of them for the study namely, the Valley View University, Central and Methodist University Colleges. Due to the inability of the researcher to obtain a list of student nursing mothers in the various universities in Greater Accra to create a sampling frame the non-probability sampling procedure was adopted to select the sample. Specifically purposive and accidental sampling procedures were used. The purposive sampling procedure enabled the researcher to use her personal judgment to select the student nursing mothers who could provide her the information on the challenges they encounter as nursing mothers and at the same time pursuing tertiary education. With regards to the homogeneous type of purposive sampling you decide to include people or sites in your study because they have a common trait or characteristics (Cresswell, 2008). The strategy requires that you, first, establish the traits that you are interested in and look for people who exhibit such traits for the study (Kusi, 2012). The

homogeneous purposive sampling strategy was very appropriate since the main characteristic trait that the researcher required was nursing mothers who were furthering their education in the universities in Accra.

Fifty five (55) respondents were selected through a purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) asserts that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in depth study. "Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry (Patton, 2002, p.230). In this study the main focus was to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions. The fifty five (55) student nursing mothers were selected from two public and three private universities in the Greater Accra region. Specifically twenty respondents were selected from the University of Ghana and eight from GIMPA to represent those from the public universities. For the private universities, the Central University College had five respondents, Methodist and Valley View Universities had seven and fifteen respondents respectively.

The accidental sampling procedure was used to select the individual respondents who were interviewed. Here the researcher and her research assistants visited the university campuses selected for the study and positioned themselves around the lecture halls. It was observed that most nursing mothers who attended lectures left their babies with their baby sitters around the lecture halls so as soon as the student nursing mother(s) emerged to pick her baby the researcher approached her and requested politely for an interview. In some cases the interviews were rescheduled for later time. This continued until the required number of students was obtained, to be precise two student nursing mothers were interviewed from each of the universities. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the sample.

Table 3.1: The distribution of respondents according to university

University	Frequency
Central University College	7
GIMPA	10
Methodist University College	9
University of Ghana	22
Valley View University College	17
Total	65

3.6 Sources of Data

The researcher used both the primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources emanated from the information provided by the student nursing mothers pursuing further studies at universities in Greater Accra. The researcher further made use of data from journals, books and articles of renowned authority on the area being researched. The World-Wide-Web (www) was also extensively used for relevant information to enrich the study.

3.7 Research Instrument

The instrument used to gather data was a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was considered appropriate for the study because respondents were a category of students who were difficult to get. They moved from one lecture to the other and as soon as they are done with lectures they rushed back home. Having observed them for some time and failed to get most of them to interview it became obvious that giving them the questionnaire to fill at their spare time was the most appropriate approach. The

questionnaire consisted of two sections namely sections A and B. The section A consisted of questions based on challenges of student nursing mothers in the areas of academic work activities, challenges with childcare and their economic situations. The section B was made up of questions that could elicit responses on the coping strategies adopted by student nursing mothers to handle the challenges identified. The semi-structured questionnaire had both open and closed ended questions. The close ended questions enabled the researcher to collect standardized information from the respondents while the open ended questions enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions and the respondents to offer further explanations to questions.

3.8 Pre-test

The questionnaires were pretested on three student nursing mothers of the Regent University College. This activity enabled the researcher to identify the ambiguities, unrealistic and wrong questions and corrected them before the actual fieldwork

3.9 Validity and Reliability

3.9.1 Validity

According to Polit and Hungler (1993:448) the validity of an instrument is the degree to which an instrument measures what it intend to measure. An instrument is valid if it measures what it is intended to measure and accurately achieves the purpose for which it was designed (Patten, 2004; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Validity is concerned with the extent to which the instrument would measure what it intends to measure. The questionnaire sought information on the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. To ensure validity, the questions were strictly based on the objectives of the study. In addition, two supervisors who are experts in research reviewed the questions to ensure that the

questionnaire contained relevant questions that could elicit information on the stated topic and objectives.

3.9.2 Reliability

Polit and Hungler (1993:445) refer to reliability as the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure. Reliability relates to the consistency of the data collected (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). The reliability of the instrument is concerned with the extent to which results of the study are consistent over time. To ensure this, the test-retest strategy was adopted. Here, samples of the questionnaires administered to three student nursing mothers from Regent University College which was not one of the selected universities for the study. The result was then analysed and a repeat test using the same questionnaire was carried out later to see whether consistent result was obtained.

3.10 Field Work and Administration of Instrument

Data was gathered through the self-administered questionnaire, interview and observation. The questionnaire was given to the respondents to take home, fill them and return them in two week's time. This became more relevant as most of the student mothers hardly had time for the interview and requested to fill the questionnaire on their own. The return rate of the questionnaire was about (84%) out of the total sample size of fifty five (55). The researcher received most of the questionnaires easily because of the readiness of the assistance received from some of the student nursing mothers, while the few that were left were obtained with much difficulty. It was detected after receiving the questionnaires that two of the respondents did not provide answers to some of the items and the researcher

had to make another visit to those respondents concerned. However, at the end of the two weeks as scheduled all the questionnaires were retrieved.

Interview

The face-to face interview is presented as enabling a “special insight” into subjectivity, voice and lived experience (Rapley, 2004). In this study the main focus was to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions. To ensure that ethical issues were not violated, before each interview, I briefly talked about the purpose of the interview and gave an overview of the research being conducted. I also sought permission from interviewees to record the interview and to take notes and assured them of anonymity and the fact that the tapes and the notes will be destroyed as soon as the research is over. At the beginning and throughout the interview, I stressed the importance of confidentiality to the participants and that made them feel at ease to talk to me in confidence. I recorded the interview using a digital recorder. Patton (2002) advises that” no matter what style of interviewing you use and no matter how carefully you word questions, it all comes to naught if you fail to capture actual words of the person being interviewed”(p.380).

Observation

Participant observation refers to situations in which an observer gains firsthand knowledge by being in or around the social setting that is being investigated. Long and involved personal interaction with the subjects of the research is the prime advantage of participant observation (Zikmund, 1991). The researcher carried out a direct observation of student nursing mothers. This provided the opportunity to document some challenges of student

nursing mothers without having to depend upon peoples' willingness and ability to respond to questions. To achieve this, the researcher visited the various universities especially near the lecture halls where they kept their babies with baby sitters as they attend lectures since the universities have no facilities for such students.

3.11 Data Analysis

Firstly, the data which emanated from the closed ended questions was edited, coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The result was then presented descriptively in frequencies and percentages using tables. Secondly, descriptive-narrative method was used to analyse the qualitative responses generated through the open ended questions. The data was transcribed, coded and analysed manually, and presented narratively.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study obtained from respondents from the fieldwork. This is based on interview data from respondents' observation and questionnaire administered. The results focused on the following areas:

1. The challenges faced by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region in the areas of
 - i. Academic work activities
 - ii. Child care
 - iii. Economic situation
2. How student nursing mothers cope with the challenges identified.

4.2 Challenges of Student Nursing Mothers

Student nursing mothers go through a lot of challenges that affect them in their academic work and care of their babies. It is for this reason that the research was interested in ascertaining the challenges they go through in their academic work activities, child care and economic situation.

4.3 Academic Work Challenges

Major academic activities that preoccupy any university student are lectures, tutorials, assignments, learning and examination. The research was thus interested in ascertaining the challenges student mothers encountered in these areas.

Lectures

The first area the research was interested in was lectures. Respondents were therefore asked whether they were able to attend lectures regularly. The result shows that forty (40) student nursing mothers representing 72.7 percent of the respondents could not attend lectures regularly while fifteen (15) representing 27.3 percent attended lectures regularly. This seems quite discouraging considering the possible effect of such situation on their academic performance.

The forty (40) respondents who could not attend lectures regularly were then asked to select among a list of reasons why they could not attend lectures regularly. Respondents were permitted to select more than one option. The multiple responses obtained are presented in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Reasons for not Attending Lectures Regularly

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Taking babies to child welfare clinic	10	25.0
Attending to the baby	11	27.5
Tiredness	20	50.0
Baby indisposed	15	37.5
No one to take care of the baby	6	15.0
Solving some personal issues	12	30.0

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple responses

Reasons given by respondents for not attending lectures regularly were tiredness (50%), sickness of the baby (37.5%), solving some personal problems (30%), attending to the

baby (27.5%), and taking the baby to child welfare clinic (25%), with the least reason being no one available to take care of the baby (Table 4.1). It is clear from the result that without much support, student nursing mothers facing such situations have no alternative but to absent themselves from lectures irrespective of the effect it has on their academic performance. A young student mother said:

“I am human. At times I get so fed up that I wish I had not started the course in the first place especially when I think of the stress I have to endure during the day on campus after the ordeals at home”.

Another respondent indicated:

“Sometimes the whole week is so packed that I hardly get the opportunity to take the baby to the hospital for weighing, so I cut some lectures in order to see to that. It even becomes worst when the child is sick and is unwilling to go to any other person”

The challenges expressed above manifested clearly when some respondents had to postpone their appointments for interview with the researcher on several occasions either due to ill health of their babies, tiredness of the mothers for which they could not attend lectures or could not get anyone to care for their babies in their absence.

Challenges with Tutorial Attendance

Respondents were further asked whether they were able to attend tutorials regularly. The result shows that most of the respondents do not attend tutorials regularly. In all forty (40) representing 72.7 percent of the respondents again said they did not attend tutorials

regularly while 27.3 percent said they did attend tutorials regularly. This is very discouraging, considering the importance of tutorials to their academic performance.

The respondents who said they could not attend tutorials regularly were thus asked to give reasons why they were unable to attend tutorials. They were given the option to select more than one option if need be. The multiple responses generated are presented in table 4.2

Table 4.2: Attendance of Tutorials and its associated challenges

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not understanding topics taught in my absence	8	20.0
Tutorials are not too relevant	12	30.0
Time for tutorials are not convenient	19	47.5
Attending tutorials aside lectures is too stressful	10	25.0

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple Response

Table 4.2 shows that 47.5 percent of the respondents found the time for tutorials inconvenient, 25 percent felt that attending tutorials aside lectures was too stressful, 30 percent were of the view that tutorials were not relevant while the least 20 percent did not understand topics treated when they absent themselves from lectures.

When a respondent was asked during the interview whether she was able to attend tutorials she had this to say:

“Imagine struggling through a hectic day from one lecture to the other and later attending a tutorial where the same topic or issues will be discussed or repeated”.

Another respondent who was frustrated about the time for tutorials said:

“Teaching assistants fix tutorials at their own convenience, usually early or late in the day. This is usually not convenient for me, especially when I have to join my husband

home or else struggle with the baby in the evening for transport. I don't seem to have any choice but absent myself”

Challenges with Learning

Respondents were asked whether they faced some difficulties in learning. The result shows that majority of the respondents, 45 representing 81.8 percent said they faced some difficulties while the ten remaining (10) representing 18.2 percent said they faced no difficulty. The result shows the predicament student nursing mothers find themselves in as they combine academic work and care for their babies.

The forty five (45) respondents who said they faced difficulties in learning were asked to mention some of the challenges they faced. Respondents were allowed to state more than one challenge. The result is presented in table 4.3

Table 4.3: Difficulties Faced by Respondents in Learning

Difficulty in learning	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of concentration	8	17.8
Combining child care and learning at night	25	55.6
Difficulty in understanding topics taught in my absence	7	15.6
Inability to learn in the libraries	4	8.9
Combining domestic chores with learning	12	26.7
Lack of cooperation from husbands	5	11.1
Reading of lots of books and materials	12	26.7

Source: Field Data (2012)**Multiple responses**

The study revealed that the main difficulty confronting the respondents in their learning was combining learning with childcare (55.6%). Other difficulties identified included combining domestic chores with learning and reading lots of materials (26.7%) each respectively, lack of concentration (17.8%) with the least difficulty being inability to learn in the libraries (Table 4.3). The result shows that most of the difficulties that respondents faced were related to learning at home and either caring for the child or performing house chores. This is exemplified in the following comments made by two respondents during the interview.

“Hmm! Learning is the most difficult aspect of the course. By the time I am done with caring for the baby and other kids I get so tired that I end up dozing off when I sit behind the books. My only luck is the occasional support I get from my husband”

“Eh! When you have an uncooperative husband as I have and who is of the opinion that I am too ambitious, you have no alternative but to find a way of facing all the odds and as well as find time to learn”

Another area that the research was interested in was whether respondents were able to take part in group discussions. This was deemed relevant as discussions usually give students some peer support. The result shows that majority of the respondents, forty six (46) representing 83.6 percent said they did regularly partake in group discussions while the rest representing 16.4 percent could not participate regularly in group discussions.

Meeting Deadlines for Assignments

Respondents were as well asked whether they were able to meet deadlines for assignments and other course related projects. The result shows that twenty eight (28) respondents representing 50.9 percent of the respondents were able to meet deadlines set for submission of assignments while twenty seven (27) representing 49.1 were unable to meet deadlines. It is clear that though more than half of the respondents could finish their assignments on time the number which is unable to meet the deadlines is very significant thus needing some level of attention.

Challenges with Examination

Respondents further mentioned the challenges they faced during examinations as presented in the table below.

Table 4.4: Challenges Faced during Examinations

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Inability to prepare adequately	40	72.7
Difficulty in getting a place to keep my baby	35	63.6
Divided attention during examination.	6	10.9
Inability to breastfeed the baby during the exams	10	18.2
Inability to concentrate when the baby is sick	5	9.1
Fatigue and stress during examination	7	12.7

Source: Field Data (2012)**Multiple response**

Table 4.4 shows that majority of the respondents (72.7%) of the respondents found it difficult to prepare adequately for examination, 63.6 percent found it difficult to get a place to keep their babies during exams, in addition, the inability to breastfeed the babies during exams was the difficulty faced by 18.2 percent while the least difficulty faced by respondents was fatigue and stress during examinations. During the interview a respondent recounted her experience as:

“I recount the experience when my baby sitter sat under a tree some few meters away from the exam room when in the course of the exam I heard my baby cry out very loudly. In fact, it was the worst experience I ever had. In a confused state I sought permission from the invigilator who reluctantly allowed me under the watch of an assistant invigilator to go and check what was happening to the child. It really took me some time to resettle when I returned to write the exams”

Similar to the experience above was the comment made by another respondent as follows:

“I always become fearful when it is nearing exams. This is because I am unable to learn effectively and my domestic responsibilities will as well not allow me to

concentrate and learn. My daily prayer during exam is that my daughter will not fall sick, in fact that will be disaster for me”.

4.4 Childcare and Academic Work

Respondents were asked to mention some of the challenges they faced as they combined childcare and academic work. The result is presented in table 4.5

Table 4.5: Challenges Faced with Combining Child care and Academic work.

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Sickness of the baby	52	94.5
Breastfeeding of baby during lectures	46	83.6
Lack of place for baby sitters to keep babies safe	49	89.1
Breastfeeding the baby when learning	48	87.3
Getting the right person to baby sit	21	38.2
Fatigue	20	36.4
Not getting assistance from husband	19	34.5

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple responses

Results from the table above shows that the major challenges faced by respondents as they combine academic work with child care are sickness of the child (94.5%), lack of place for baby sitters to keep the babies safe (89.1%), and breast feeding the child during lectures (83.6%). the least challenge however was not getting assistance from husband (34.5%).

The research was also interested in knowing the extent to which respondents' academic activities influenced the upkeep of their babies. The result shows that majority of the

respondents' academic activities influenced their child upkeep in one way or the other, forty five respondents (45) representing 81.2% faced this challenge. Only ten (10) respondents representing 18.2 percent academic activities did not influence their child care.

Aspects of Child Care Affected by Academic Work

Respondents were asked to mention specific aspects of childcare that was affected by academic work. The result is presented in table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Aspects of Child Care Affected by Academic Work

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Breastfeeding exclusively	25	45.5
Cooking at home	9	16.4
Limited attention for the baby	12	21.8
Health care of the baby	8	14.5
Weaning babies too early	10	18.2
Leaving baby in the care of others	6	10.9

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple response

Table 4.6 revealed that out of the influences that were mentioned by respondents 45.5 percent related to inability to breastfeed babies exclusively, 21.8 percent for limited attention for the baby, 18.2 percent mentioned weaning babies too early, while the least mentioned influence of their academic activities on childcare was leaving the babies in the care of others.

Lamenting on the effect of academic work on child care a respondent said:

“My main problem is leaving my child in the care of another person whose background is sometimes very difficult to ascertain. I sometimes feel that I am shirking my responsibility. Really, it is a difficult situation”.

Combining child care, domestic chores and child upkeep results in role conflicts that can have effects on the mothers personally, especially on other expected roles

Effects of Combining Childcare, Academic Activities and Domestic Activities on other Expected Roles.

Efforts by student nursing mothers to juggle between child care, domestic activities and academic work could have profound effect on their ability to perform other socially expected roles. Respondents were thus asked to mention some roles they are unable to perform as a result of combining child care and study. The result is presented in table 4.7

Table 4.7: Effects of Childcare, Academic Activities and Domestic Chores on other Expected Roles

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Forgoing Sunday services	30	54.5
Inability to attend funerals and other social gatherings	20	36.4
Inability to supervise other children fully	22	40.0
Inability to take children to school	6	10.9
Inability to supervise my business venture	4	7.3
Less participation in family affairs	7	12.7
Always late to programmes	3	5.5
Easily forgets other programmes	12	21.8
Forgoing any form of recreation	18	32.7

Source: Field Data (2012)**Multiple responses**

Results in table 4.7 shows that 54.5 percent of the responses offered indicated that forgoing Sunday programmes was one effect that the combination of academic work, childcare and domestic chores have had on other roles expected of them. Other effects mentioned were inability to supervise other children effectively (40%), inability to attend funerals and other social gatherings (36.4 %), forgoing any form of recreation (32.7%), easily forgets other programmes while the least effect was always late at programmes.

Husbands' Attitude

An important factor that could influence married women's access to further education is their husband's expectations, approval and attitude. The husband's attitude could influence the level of support he will be willing to offer. In this line respondents were asked to

describe their husbands' attitudes towards combining academic work and childcare. The result is presented in table 4.8

Table 4.8: Husbands Attitude

Husbands Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
He sympathizes with me	10	18.2
He feels neglected	9	16.4
He encourages me	6	10.9
He supports sometimes	7	12.7
He is usually angry about breast feeding of the baby	6	10.9
He is not cooperative	8	14.5
He feels I have misplaced priorities	5	9.0
Dislikes the idea of my being too busy	2	3.6
Dislikes the stress on the family	2	3.6

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple responses

Results presented in table above shows that husbands of 18.2 percent of the respondents sympathized with respondents, 16.4 percent of their spouses feel neglected and 10.9 percent are angry about breastfeeding of the baby, 14.5 percent of respondents husbands were not cooperative at all while the least, 3.6 percent each of the husbands of respondents disliked the idea of being busy throughout and the stress that is exerted on the whole family while 10.9 percent of the respondents husbands encourages them.

In line with the attitudes of respondents' husbands a respondent said:

“My only luck is the level of support I receive from my husband. Apart from paying part of my fees, he daily gives us lift, helps me in my assignments and takes the kids to school. In any case he encouraged me to enrol so he sees it as a responsibility to assist me”.

The view expressed above represents an ideal situation that few people may get. A contrary view expressed concerning the attitude of respondents' husband is as follows:

What makes my burden heavier as a student nursing mother is the attitude of my husband. Though he initially accepted my enrolment he has become so apathetic. He insists that I am chasing my degree at the expense of the child's welfare and at the neglect of the family at large. Because of this he easily picks up quarrels with me on very trivial matters. I sometimes feel like abandoning the programme. I pray that he changes”.

4.5 Economic Situation

Finance is a major factor that determines one's ability to pursue further education in contemporary Ghana. Considering the situation respondents face as nursing mothers and as well as pursuing academic programme the research sought to know whether respondents faced some financial difficulties. The result shows that almost all the respondents, 50 representing 90.9 percent faced some financial challenges while only five (5) representing 9.1 percent had no financial challenge.

The financial challenges faced by the fifty (50) respondents are presented in table 4.9

Table 4.9: Financial Challenges

Financial Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Payment of fees	13	26.0
Cost of employing the services of a baby sitter	9	18.0
Buying weaning food for the baby	10	20.0
Renting a room closer to the university	3	6.0
Money for transport to school	8	16.0
Buying text books/photocopies of materials	7	14.0
Total	50	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

Results in table 4.9 shows that 26 percent of the respondents who said they faced financial challenges stated the payment of fees. Buying of weaning food for the baby was mentioned by 20 percent of the respondents. This could probably be due to fact that respondents mentioned in table 4.6 that they had to wean their babies too early. Other areas mentioned included cost of employing the services of baby sitters (18%), buying text books/photocopies of materials (14%) and renting a room closer to the university (6%).

Transportation

Most nursing mothers are unable to reside on campus because university facilities do not make provisions for them. In this sense respondents were asked to mention the challenges they faced with transport. Table 4.10 indicates the responses offered.

Table 4.10: Challenges faced with Transport as Student Nursing Mother

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Reliance on hired taxis daily	22	40.0
Traffic on roads	7	12.7
Struggling over public transport	8	14.5
Walking long distances to pick vehicle	2	3.6
Fuelling vehicle every day	10	18.2
Staying in long queues with baby before and after lectures	6	11.0
Total	55	100

Source: Field work (2012)

Result in table 4.10 shows that respondents faced various challenges with transport to and from lectures. Among them are reliance on hired taxis (40%), fuelling of vehicles everyday (18.2%), struggling over public transport with the babies (14.5%), staying in long queues with the babies before and after lectures (11%) and walking long distances to pick vehicle 3.6%. The result is indicative of the daily hustles student nursing mothers go through as they attempt to further their education.

4.6 Coping Strategies

From the preceding presentation it is obvious that respondents faced myriads of challenges. Their continual pursuit of their academic and reproductive duties is indicative that respondents have however evolved strategies to cope with these role conflicts.

The research was also interested in finding out the coping strategies adopted by respondents to manage the challenges they encounter with academic work activities, childcare and finance.

4.7 Coping with Academic Work

Respondents were asked whether they got any support in their studies. The result shows that most of the respondents, 45 representing 81.8 percent got some support in their studies while the remaining ten (10) representing 18.2 percent did not get any support.

Preparation towards Examinations

Respondents were further asked to indicate how they coped with preparing for examinations. The result is presented in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Preparation for Examination

Reponses	Frequency	Percentage
Group discussions	11	20.0
Studying at night when baby is asleep	25	45.5
Taking the baby to my mother parents/ Inviting mother in-law to come and assist	5	9.1
Organise special class with teaching Assistant	2	3.6
Doing discussions on phone with friends when I don't understand	2	3.6
Hiring house help / baby sitter to assist	10	18.2
Total	55	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

Result in table 4.11 shows that to avoid the negative effect of the conflicting roles on respondents preparation for examination 45.5 percent of them studied at night when the baby is asleep, 20 percent engaged in group studies, 18.2 percent hired the assistance of

baby sitters/ house help to care for the babies while they studied, while the least 3.6 percent either organise special classes with teaching assistants or do discussions on phone with friends when they do not understand what they leant.

Commenting further on the coping strategy a respondent said: *“My biggest thanks go to my mother who comes to stay with us during the examination week. She is a big relief”*

Respondents were further asked to indicate how they cope with child care and lectures. The result is presented in table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Ways challenges encountered with Childcare and Lectures are addressed

Preparation for examination	Frequency	Percentage
Skipping some lectures to breastfeed	6	10.9
Employing the services of paid domestic workers / paid baby sitters on campus	13	23.6
Support from husband and relatives	10	18.2
Support from friends	1	1.8
Day care centres	17	30.9
Attended child welfare clinic on days I have less lectures	8	14.6
Total	55	100

Source: field Data (2012)

In order to be able to attend lectures respondent adopted various means. These included sending babies to day care centres (30.9%), employing the services of paid domestic workers and baby sitters (23.6%), and attending child welfare clinic on days they have less lectures (14.6%), 10,9 percent of the respondents skip some lectures to breastfeed with the least being support from husbands (1.8%).

Tutorial and Group Discussions

Respondents were asked to indicate how they coped with group discussions/ tutorials and child care. The result is presented in table 4.13

Table 4.13: Strategies adopted to manage challenges encountered in Child Care vis-a-vis attending Group Discussions/ Tutorials

Response	Frequency	Percentage
My mother brings the child for breastfeeding	2	3.6
I leave the child with husband and relatives	28	50.9
Eldest child care for the baby during discussions and tutorials	1	1.8
Inviting group members to the house for group discussion	4	7.3
Send the baby to daycares centres	27	49.1
I send the baby to group discussion	7	12.7
House helps and baby sitters	5	9.1

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple responses

To participate in group discussions and tutorials most of the respondents left their babies with husbands and relatives (50.9%), send the child to day care centres (49.1%). The result further shows that 12.7 percent of the respondents sent their children to group discussion. The least approach adopted was the eldest child taking care of the child during the discussion.

Concerning group discussions observation carried out by the researcher revealed that some of the student mothers had to take their babies along, some breastfeed their babies in the course of discussion. Those who could not do so had to excuse the group periodically to go and breastfeed the baby who is usually kept with a baby sitter. The sad aspect is that the group continues with the discussion in the absence of the nursing mother.

Roles Stopped in order to Study

As student nursing mothers combine academic work with other responsibilities she is more likely to experience role conflict thus causing stress. To avoid this stress and overload they may stop some roles and concentrate on others. The research was therefore interested in finding out whether respondents had stopped some roles and if so which of the roles they have stopped in order to be able to cope with child care and academic work. The result shows that majority thirty five (35) representing 63.6 had to stop some domestic chores in order to concentrate on their studies while the rest 20 representing 36.3 percent had to continue their roles irrespective of their studies.

Respondents who said they had to stop some roles were asked to mention specific roles they had to stop. The response is presented in table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Roles Stopped in order to Study

Roles stopped	Frequency	Percentage
Regular sex	7	20.0
Attending church services/ programmes frequently with kids	9	25.7
Washing and cleaning the house	10	28.6
Preparing dinner	8	22.9
Taking the children to school	6	17.1
Outing with the family	5	14.3

Source: Field Data (2012)**Multiple responses**

Result in table 14 shows that 28.6 percent of the respondents had to stop washing and cleaning the house, in order to be able to study, 25.7 percent had to stop attending church services/ programmes with kids, 22.9 percent had to stop preparing dinner, 17.1 percent had to stop taking kids to school. The least role that respondents stopped in order to make time for studies was going out regularly with the family. The result is an indication that the academic programme could have a big toll on the organisation of the home in the absence of the mother.

Despite the relief that respondents who stopped performing various roles to study gain, it is clear that in our cultural setting such persons dread the risks associated with it. This is exemplified in the comment made by one of the respondents. She said:

“...as the manager of the home one is not psychologically free. This is because apart from societal perception about neglect of one’s responsibly, the mismanagement of the resources and the effect on the relationship with husbands

and children cannot be underestimated. Individuals must thus read in between the lines before resorting to stop some specific roles.

4.8 Coping with Childcare

Support from husbands in terms of finance, child care or domestic chores are indispensable in reducing role strain on the respondents. In view of this, respondents were asked whether they received some support from their husbands. The result shows that majority of the respondents thirty two (32) representing 58.2 percent received some support from their husbands while twenty three (23) representing 41.8 percent did not receive support from their spouses. It is clear that though majority got some support, the percentage of women who did not receive support was quite significant.

Respondents who received some support were asked to indicate specific supports they got from their husbands. The result is presented in table 4.15

Table 4.15: Support Received from Husbands.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Taking care of the baby at home when he is free	7	21.9
Helping me with my assignments	6	18.8
Giving me a lift to campus	10	31.2
Helping me with the house chores	13	40.6
Taking the other children to and from school	9	28.1
Payment of fees	3	9.4
Paying of house help/ baby sitter	2	6.2

Source: Field Data (2012)

Multiple responses

Table 4.15 shows that the support they received from their husbands was helping them with their house chores 40.6 percent, 31.2 percent of the respondents were given lifts to campus by their husbands as a form of support to them. Other supports mentioned by respondents were taking children to and from school (28.1%), taking care of the baby at home when he is free (21.9%), and helping me with the assignments. The least support offered was in the form of paying of house helps and baby sitters.

Respondents who did not receive any assistance from their husbands were further asked to indicate why their husbands did not support them. The result is presented in table 4.16

Table 4.16: Reasons why Respondents' Husbands did not Support them

Response	Frequency	Percentage
He is not used to such domestic chores	4	17.4
He is always busy	6	26.1
Did not approve of my study	7	30.4
Influenced by family members	5	21.8
Not sure	1	4.3
Total	23	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

Respondents who did not receive any support from their husbands said their husbands did not approve of the study (30.4%), he is always busy (26.1percent), 4.3 percent of the respondents were not sure, 17.4 percent said their husbands were not used to such domestic chores while 21.8 percent said their husbands were influenced by family members (Table 4.16).

Commenting further on the lack of support from husbands a respondent said:

“In any case he was not in support of the course so I do not expect any support from him. I just ignore him”

Engaging the Services of Someone to Assist in their Domestic Chores

It was found that some of the respondents engaged the services of some people to assist in their house chores. The research was thus interested in knowing the exact number of respondents who had engaged the services of people. The result shows that majority of the respondents found the engagement of people as a panacea to reduce the burden on them. In all, thirty three (33) respondents representing 60 percent of the respondents hired the services of other people while twenty two (22) representing 40 percent did not hire anybody. While the reason some respondents hire persons to support is obvious respondents who did not hire assistants gave reasons such as:

- Fear of hiring someone who will injure the baby
- Husband is against hiring a house help
- Due to my personal experience
- Difficulty in ascertaining the background of the person.

4.9 Coping with Financial Challenges

As indicated earlier, most of the respondents faced some financial difficulties. The research was thus interested in knowing how the respondents coped with the financial demands associated with their studies and childcare. The result is presented in table 4.17

Table 4.17: Ways challenges encountered with Finances were addressed

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Avoiding impulse buying	2	3.6
Support from husband	25	45.5
Loans from banks / credit unions	20	36.4
Assistance from relatives	11	20.0
Buying items in bulk	2	3.6
Soft loans from parents and relatives	9	16.4
Avoid buying food on campus	1	1.8
Students loans	19	34.5
From my salary	24	43.6
From petty trading at home (provision store)	3	5.5

Source; Field Data (2012)**Multiple responses**

Results in table 4.17 shows that all the respondents adopted some measures to be able to cope with the financial demands associated with combining childcare and academic work. In all, 45.5 percent got support from their husbands, 43.6 percent depended on their salaries, 36.4 percent relied on loans from banks/credit unions, and 34.5 percent depended on student loans while the least 1.8 percent avoided buying food on campus which they considered to be expensive.

Means of Transport to School

Earlier results showed that most of the respondents faced some challenges in getting to campus. The research thus asked respondents to indicate how they coped with such challenging situation. The results is presented in the table below

Table 4.18: Means of getting to campus

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Taking Trotro/taxi	30	54.5
Trekking	3	5.5
Lifting from husband	7	12.7
Personal vehicles	15	27.3
Total	55	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

Result in table 4.18 shows that 12.7 percent of the respondents were usually picked to school by their husbands, 27.3 percent of the respondents owned their own vehicles with which they went to school, 54.5 percent went to school with public transports usually the trotro and taxis, while the least 5.5 percent walked to campus.

Recounting their harrowing experiences during the interview a respondent said:

“I spent close to GHC 20.00 a day to hire taxi to and from home”

Another respondent said:

“I stopped going by the trotro (buses) when my bag was snatched from my hands when I was struggling to pick a vehicle at the Legon bus stop”

Table 4.19: Way forward for would be Student Nursing Mothers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Plan well ahead of time	12	21.8
Train other children to assist	4	7.3
Employ domestic workers/ baby sitters if possible	10	18.2
If possible, finish making baby before enrolling	5	9.1
Get some labour saving devices to aid domestic activities	8	14.5
Convince partner to assist you	6	10.9
Handle challenges that emerge one at a time	10	18.2
Total	55	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

From table 4.19, 21.8 percent respondents suggested that, would be student mothers must plan ahead of time, 18.2 percent each suggested that would be student mothers must employ domestic workers/ babysitters and handle challenges that emerge one at a time respectively. Other suggestions included getting some labour saving devices to aid domestic activities, convince partner to assist you, finish making babies before enrolling for the course and train other children to assist.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study in light of the objectives and literature reviewed. The objectives of the study were:

1. Identify the challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in Ghana in the areas of:
 - i Academic work activities
 - ii Childcare
 - iii Economic situation
2. Identify how student nursing mothers cope with their challenges.

5.2 Challenges Faced by Student Nursing Mothers

The research sought to find out the challenges of student nursing mothers in the areas of academic work activities, child care and economic situation.

5.2.1 Academic Work Activities

Areas covered by the study under academic work activities were lectures, tutorials, difficulty in learning and examinations. The study revealed that most of the student nursing mothers (72.7 percent) could not attend lectures regularly. Reasons offered included tiredness, sickness of the child, attending to child and solving some other personal problems. The result shows clearly that the upkeep of the child is a major cause of student's irregular attendance to lectures.

Writing on reasons for students' non-attendance at lectures and tutorials Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) stated that absence from lectures can be viewed as a very personal decision based on both the *ability* to attend and the *motivation* to attend. The individual

decision to come to lectures will be influenced by many factors. At one extreme, there will be those conditions which make attendance virtually impossible, while at the other extreme there are circumstances where managers or lecturers would say that there is no justification whatsoever for non-attendance, cited in Kottasz (2005). In the case of student nursing mothers reasons such as the sickness of the babies are reasons for which their absence from lectures is inevitable. Again Banda (2000) found that some children get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. Banda cited a teacher-learner who lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the program as the cause of the child's death.

The result further supports the assertion by Mugenzi (in Women's Vision, 2002) that further studies create tension in homes, and in working places. Family hurdles are a major problem as women have to work at home; they have to raise their children, which affect their studies. Sometimes, children fall sick and the mothers have to be near and nurse them, as a result they do their exams without revision or sometimes fail to sit for them at all (Najjuma and Kyarugahe, 2006). The result shows clearly that student nursing mothers face enormous challenges that have dire consequence on their ability to cope with both academic work and domestic responsibility.

Tutorials

Tutorial is a small class of students that is supplemental to a large lecture course, which gives students the opportunity to discuss the lectures and/or additional readings in smaller groups. These tutorials are often led by graduate students, normally known as "Teaching Assistants" (TAs). The research therefore probed respondents on their attendance of tutorials, considering how important it is to their understanding of topics treated at

lectures. The result shows that majority (72.7%) of the respondents could as well not attend tutorials regularly for reasons such as attending tutorials is too stressful and the time for tutorials is inconvenient. Respondents recounted the ordeals they had to go through to attend all lectures and at the same time attend tutorials which are usually organised at times when it is impossible to attend. It could be concluded that most nursing mothers do not patronise tutorials because of the way they are organised.

Another reason stated by respondents was that tutorials were not relevant at all. The reason being that they felt that at tutorial they just discuss what the lecturers had taught them during lectures. This reason supports the findings of Kotasz (2005) that students were less worried and stressed about attending tutorials than lectures when they are nursing.

The study also revealed that an overwhelming majority of the student nursing mothers (81.8%) faced one difficulty or the other. Most prominent among reasons mentioned for their difficulty was combining child care and learning at night. It is clear that the drudgeries of child care make it difficult for student nursing mothers to combine it with learning. Baby's cry for attention takes off their minds from the books thus making it difficult to concentrate. Another area of much concern is the combination of other domestic chores with learning. This according to respondents is worsened when you have uncooperative husband. Other reasons mentioned included reading of lots of books, lack of concentration, and not understanding topics that were taught in ones absence. The result supports the findings of Christopher et al (2002) cited in Najjuma and Kyarugabe (2006) who commented that mothers do not have enough time to study. They often wait until the children and their daddy go to sleep then start their school works and moreover, at that time they are very tired.

Research conducted by Harrison (2008) on tutorial attendance and student performance showed that students who attended all or most tutorials received a mean final mark in the course just over a full letter grade higher than students who attended none or very few tutorials. The current study showed that most of the student nursing mothers (83.6%) effectively took part in group discussions. This is very encouraging considering the fact that it will enable students to gain some peer support.

Very related to the tutorials was the meeting of deadlines for the submission of assignments. The study shows that 50.9 percent of the students could submit their assignments on time while 49.1 percent could not. Though majority in this case could submit their assignments on time, it is clear that the numbers who were unable to submit their assignments is so significant to ignore. This is because writing assignment requires that one visit the library where necessary and also read lot of books. With conflicting demands, student nursing mothers may be unable to do so. The result support Dallan's findings that undergraduate studies, especially, are time structured and inflexible, such that a woman would have to attend classes when they are offered not when they fit into her day. She has to study before exams, read and prepare for her assignments, and shift her focus to these tasks she does. University studies, unlike a 9 am to 5 pm job, do not allow one to punch out at a certain hour and leave work behind, but often occupy one's thought and emotions throughout the day (Dallan, 1998).

The result further supports the assertion of Welch (1990) that being a mother means being constantly interruptible and continually responsive to needs of someone else, which makes it difficult to develop the concentration necessary to write and study (Cited in Dallan, 1998).

Challenges during Examination

The research probed student nursing mothers on the challenges they faced during examinations. The result shows that one outstanding challenge faced by respondents during examinations was inability to prepare adequately. The inadequate preparation could probably be due to the role conflicts they face as they combine the childcare, domestic chores and academic work.

The student nursing mothers as well expressed much concern about the difficulty in getting a place to keep their babies during the examination. As expressed by some of them, they usually had divided attention. The result is supported by the findings of Hordzi (2008) that for distance education programme, the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those of them who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. He goes on to state that the situation at times become so desperate for the mothers such that it is uncommon to see a mother carrying her baby on the shoulders of one hand while using the other hand in answering the examination questions. In such a situation one wonders how effectively the student nursing mother will be able to write the exam.

5.2.2 Combining Childcare and Academic Work

The most prominent challenges respondents faced as they combined childcare and academic work was the sickness of the child. Other challenges included breastfeeding of the baby during lectures, lack of place for baby sitters to keep baby safe, and breastfeeding the child when learning.

Aspects of Childcare affected by Academic Work

Respondents were asked to mention the extent to which academic activities influenced the upkeep of their babies. The result showed that majority conceded that their academic activities affected the upkeep of their children. It is a clear indication that irrespective of respondents' efforts to balance their academic work with child upkeep the children do suffer some effects. Areas of child care mostly affected by respondents' academic work were inability to do exclusive breastfeeding, limited attention for the baby, weaning of babies too early and cooking at home.

According to Milner-Home, Power and Dennis (1996) the traditional image of a mother is that of a self-sacrificing being. If taken as such, the adult student is likely to exhaust herself as she attends to both her studies and the parenting role. Besides, the demands of parenthood and studentship are not only conflicting but stressful thereby posing great challenges to the adult learner (cited in Mamhute, 2011)

Apart from domestic roles, women unlike men have some social and community roles they are expected to play within the extended family and other social groupings such women may belong to. Unfortunately engaging in multiple activities outside this domain affect the extent to which one is able to perform such roles. The net effect will be the assumption that she has neglected her roles. This was confirmed by the result obtained from respondents. Forgoing Sunday church services was identified by 54.5% of the respondents as the main social activity that was affected by respondents' new roles as student nursing mothers. In addition, respondents were unable to supervise other children effectively. This was followed by inability to attend funerals and other social gatherings, less participation in family affairs, and forgoing any other forms of recreation. This

findings support the statement of Dallon (1998) that when the children are old, a student mother worries more about the quality of time spent with her child(ren). She is aware that her focus often is on her school work even when she is at home with her child.

Husbands' Attitude

According to Sutor (1987) the decline in marital happiness among full-time students and their husbands appear to have been related to changes in the women's performance of family roles over the years, and to husbands' responses to those changes. The result from the study revealed that while some of the respondents' husbands were sympathetic (18.2%), others felt neglected, and usually got angry because of the breastfeeding of the baby (10.9%). In other situations some husbands even felt that their wives had misplaced priority because of the combination of their reproductive roles and schooling, one cannot expect any good cooperation. Such women are also bound to struggle to cope.

5.2.3 Economic Situation

Financial

Mihaela (2002), comments that raising a child and attending school is not easy especially when there is shortage of money. One needs money for renting a room, pay school fees and for home keeping. Sometimes one fails to get someone to leave the child with and so she has to go to school with it (Cited in Najjuma and Kyarugahe, 2006). The assertion by Mihaela (2002) confirmed the findings of the research. In all 90.9 percent of the respondents confirmed that they faced some financial difficulties. Specifically, they had financial difficulty in the payment of fees, buying of weaning foods, cost of employing the

services of baby sitters, money for transport to school, buying of textbooks and photocopies and renting rooms closer to the university.

A study conducted by Manhute (2011) found that both pregnant and nursing students had their studies negatively affected by financial problems. When financial resources were not sufficient to sustain them, students temporarily absconded from some educational activities such as lectures to source for funds and other essential materials. Even when the student mothers did not abscond from lectures and continued as if all was well, worry and anxiety tormented them so much that their presence in the lecture room did not yield the intended academic benefits.

Transportation

The study found that some of the respondents' had transportation problems such as relying on hired taxi daily, fueling vehicles daily, struggling over public transport and heavy traffic on the roads. These problems invariably added to the challenges respondents faced daily as they commute from home to campus because the universities make no provisions for such categories of students and even when such facilities were to be available most women will prefer to commute because of the other domestic responsibilities they are mandated to perform.

5.3 Coping Strategies

According to Malone (1998) the steady increase in the number of women in professional and managerial occupations, the pursuit of higher education by women, and a tendency for professional women to develop and maintain a marriage and family life have contributed to the performance of multiple role. Trying to satisfy job demands, time

schedules, family obligations, or social obligation associated with the performance of multiple roles can be stressful, time consuming, and sometimes impossible. Women use time management strategies and organizational strategies to cope with the conflict. The statement of Dalan notwithstanding is clear that irrespective of the coping strategy women will find it very difficult without support from those around them. Result from the study shows that majority of the student nursing mothers (81.8%) got some form of support in their studies.

5.3.1 Strategies for Coping with Academic Work Activities

Regarding how they coped with preparation towards examinations, respondents mentioned studying at night when babies are asleep. In addition, respondents engaged in group discussions to make up for what they could not understand during lectures or when they missed lectures. Hired house helps and baby sitters, and either taking the baby to parents or inviting mothers and mothers-in-law to come over and assist was also identified as strategies used by the student nursing mothers.

The result above support the findings of Dallan (1998) that students mothers may attempt to redefine their own roles as mothers, or their expectations of themselves as a student. Or they may try to re-negotiate the support they receive from family and friends. They may even redefine how they see the university system, and their role within it. A student mother may try any or all of these strategies at one time or another. It further confirms studies by Oppong (1994:11) that working (busy) mothers rely on paid house maids/helps.

Strategies for Coping with Childcare and Lectures

The research revealed that some of the respondents sent their babies to day care centers in order to attend lectures. Another strategy identified by respondent as useful was the hiring

of babysitters who accompanied them to the school. This result supports the findings of Banda (2000) who researched on Challenges Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. It was earlier found that some of the respondents could not attend tutorials and group discussions regularly. However, majority of the respondents left their babies with husband or relative in order to attend discussions and tutorials. The result confirms the findings of a research conducted by Grohman and Lamm (2009) on coping strategies used by student mothers to succeed in Occupational Therapy School which revealed that physical support from husbands was used by all the participants. Emotional support from husband and peers and time management strategies was used by 93.3% of the participants. Findings concluded that 100% of the participants who had their first child in school reported that they used emotional and physical support from their husband and parent and time management strategies. The result therefore shows the indispensable position of the husbands of student nursing mothers if they wish to succeed in their academic pursuit.

Another strategy used was taking the child to the day care centers as some did during lectures. This confirms studies by Blanc and Lloyd (1994:125) that schools and other care centers have recently emerged to address partial problems confronted by working mothers. Some of these crèches accept infants as young as six months and have vehicles, which convey them to and from homes to the school every day.

The research as well revealed that with the intense stress and helplessness experienced by some respondents they ended up cutting lectures in order to cater for the babies' while others had no alternative but to send the child to group discussions. This is quiet possible considering the fact that group discussions are quiet informal. Observations made by the researcher revealed that others could carry the babies on their laps during discussion or temporarily leave the group to breastfeed the baby who may be with a babysitter. The findings tend to support III coping styles that were identified by Hall (1972) and cited in Ahmad (1995). Type III coping (reactive role behavior) entails attempting to improve the quality of role performance with no attempt to change the structural or personal definition of one's roles. Implicit in coping through role behavior is the assumption that one's role demands are unchangeable and that the person's main task is to find ways to meet them; this coping strategy involves a passive or reactive orientation toward one's roles (Ahmad, 1995). In this case some respondent realised that they could do nothing about their roles and so they must just cope i.e. the mothers who take their babies to group discussions.

Roles Stopped in Order to Study

The research revealed that majority of the student nursing mothers had to stop some roles in order to concentrate on their academic work. Specific roles respondents had to stop included washing and cleaning the house, attending church programmes with kids, preparing dinner sometimes, not having regular sex with husband, and taking children to school. The findings support type I coping strategy identified by Hall (1952). Type I coping (structural role redefinition) involves an active attempt to deal directly with role senders and lessen the conflict by mutual agreement on a new set of expectations. One way of changing structural demands would be to relocate and share one's role tasks (cleaning, washing, and child care, for example). It was clear from the study that stopping

some of the roles did not go without criticisms and its associated challenges (cited in Ahmad, 1995)

5.3.2 Strategies for Coping with Childcare

When it comes with child care at home the result revealed that majority of the husbands are very supportive. This was very encouraging, prominent among them were husbands helping with the house chores, giving them lift to school, taking the other kids to school, taking care of the baby at home when he is free. Kwagala (1992) found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres (cited in Najjumah and Kyarugabe,2006).

Some student nursing mothers did not receive any assistance from their husbands because they do not approve of their study, they were not used to such domestic chores or they are always busy. Very significant was the respondents who said they were not sure. It is clear that in such homes marital happiness will decline totally as the men may view their wives as not listening to them or working against the happiness of the family. In a study conducted by Suiters (1987), forty-married mothers and thirty-three of their husbands were interviewed in depth at the beginning and at the end of the women's first year of enrollment in a university. The study revealed that marital happiness declined over the years among couples in which wives were enrolled as full time students, and changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled as part time students. Marital happiness change substantially more among husbands than wives.

Engaging the Services of someone in their Domestic Chores

Earlier results showed that respondents engaged some people to assist them in their duties. The results showed that 60 percent of the respondents did engage someone to help in their activities while others decided not to do so. According to Malone (1998) women develop a number of strategies for coping with the demands of work and family. Some women respond by seeking outside help. Others respond by redefining what is necessary in the home or redefining their roles, marrying men who will share work at home or trying to change the husband's of his role at home.

Reasons why some respondents did not engage others to assist them included fear of hiring someone who will injure the baby, husband is against hiring a house help, due to their personal experience and difficulty in ascertaining the background of the person.

5.3.3 Strategies for Coping with Financial Challenges

According to (Dallan,1987) not having enough money means not being able to buy good food, having to take on several part time jobs and owing a large debt. It was discovered that respondents coped with the financial challenges in various ways. Among them were support from husbands, from salaries and loans from the banks, student loans, assistance from relatives and soft loans from parents and friends. It is clear from the result that even though the ready loans offsets ones debts and relieves the students some stress they might go through, too much reliance on the loan components as could be seen from the results could render her indebted as asserted by Dallan, (1993).

5.4 Respondents' Suggestions

In view of this respondents suggested that the university should provide them with some place where their baby sitters can rest with their babies. The provision of breast feeding

rooms in the various universities will go a long way to ease the challenges faced by student nursing mothers as provided by some universities in the United States. For example Columbia University provides lactation rooms to support nursing mothers returning to work, school, or campus. Each room offers a clean, secure, and private space for women who need to express breast milk during their time on campus. All of the rooms are equipped with a table, chair, and lock from the inside; some contain refrigerators and sinks. Where rooms do not have a refrigerator, student mothers are recommended to bring a cooler to store their breast milk (<http://www.worklife.columbia.edu/breastfeeding-support>).

The provision of child care centres where student nursing mothers can keep their children till they close from lectures was one of the major suggestions. This is in conformity with the findings of Kappner, 2002 cited in Gasser & Ray F. Gasse, (2010) who stated that the most significant way to combat the inherent disadvantages for student parents is the provision of on-campus child care. Research has shown that graduation rates are significantly higher for student parents when campus child care is provided, and further, students are more likely to remain in school, graduate in fewer years, and earn higher grades.

Another suggestion worth considering was the provision of hostel facilities that could accommodate nursing mothers so that those who are capable and willing to stay on campus could do so. This result confirms the findings of Onsongo's (2004) research on Promoting Gender Equity in Selected Public Universities of Kenya which revealed that when students were asked what can be done to improve the situation of student mothers on campus the students interviewed mentioned the following:

- i. The university should provide accommodation for student mothers on campus. This they said will ensure access to clean water and electricity
- ii. A day care center for student mothers should be set up in the campus for student mothers to access at a cost.
- iii. Lower the fees for student mothers, especially the health fees charged for their sick children.

5.5 Advise to would be Student Mothers

As the saying goes ‘experience is the best teacher’. Respondents thus made some suggestions to will be student mothers. Key among them were, they should plan well ahead of time before they enroll, they should employ domestic workers, handle challenges that emerge, get some labour saving devices and convince partners to support them.

Very interesting was the advice by some respondents that women must finish making their babies before going back to school. This could probably be due to the ordeal they are going through. Such respondents may be taking solace in the argument made by Hensel (1990) "having children is detrimental to a woman's career success". He points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have “uninterrupted” time. Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (cited in Williams, 2007).

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study, draws conclusion and makes appropriate recommendations based on the findings.

6.2 Summary

The purpose of the study was to find out the challenges and the coping strategies adopted by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The objectives that directed the study were:

1. Identify the challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana in the areas of:

- Academic work activities
- Child care
- Economic situation

2. Find out how student nursing mothers cope with their challenges.

To achieve the stated objectives, the research adopted the mixed method research design. In all sixty five (65) students nursing mothers were purposively and accidentally selected for the study. The research instrument adopted for that study was the questionnaire which was administered to fifty five (55) student nursing mothers. The remaining also granted a face-to- face interview. The results obtained were analysed and presented in tables while some were transcribed.

6.3 Major findings of the Study

This section presents the major findings of the research questions which guided the study.

The major findings covered areas under challenges and coping strategies of academic work activities, childcare and economic situations.

6.3.1 Academic Work Activities

The main findings on the challenges faced by student nursing mothers on their academic work activities were:

- i. Majority of the respondents could not attend lectures and tutorials regularly because of tiredness, sickness of child and taking child to welfare clinic.
- ii. The major difficulties confronting the respondents were combining learning with childcare and doing domestic chores.

6.3.2 Childcare and Academic Work

The research revealed that sickness of the baby (94.5%) breastfeeding of baby during lectures (83.6), lack of place for baby sitters to keep babies safe (89.1%) and breastfeeding of baby when learning (87.3) were the major challenges faced by student nursing mothers as they combine child care and academic work.

6.3.3 Economic Challenges

- i. The study found that almost all the respondents (90.9%) faced financial problems.
- ii. The study revealed further that the main economic problems were payment of fees, buying weaning foods, buying textbooks/ photocopies of materials and money for transport.

- iii. The cost of hired taxis, fuelling vehicles daily, traffic and standing in long queues with their babies after lectures were the main transportation problems faced by respondents.

6.4 Coping with Academic Work

- i. Concerning learning the study found that majority of the respondents (81.8%) received some support in their studies.
- ii. Concerning preparation towards exams, the study found that respondents coped by studying at night when baby is asleep, partake in group discussions and hiring house helps/baby sitters to assist.
- iii. It was revealed that respondents sent their babies to day care centres, employed the services of paid domestic workers/baby sitters or attended antenatal on days they have less lectures to attend as a way of coping with lectures.
- iv. The study found that majority (63.6%) had to stop roles such as cleaning the house, attending church services, preparing dinner, regular sex, taking children to school and outing with the family.

6.4.1 Coping with Childcare

The study found that majority (58.2%) of the respondents received some support from their husbands. The support included giving them lift to school, helping with house chores, taking care of babies when they are free and helping them with assignments.

6.4.2 Coping with Economic Challenges

- i. The research revealed that respondents coped with financial challenges through support from husbands, went in for loans from banks/credit unions and student loans.
- ii. Concerning transport to school, respondents mainly coped by having lifts from their husbands, use of their personal vehicles while others used commercial vehicles.

6.5 Conclusion

Motherhood is a complicated and marvellous adventure. This major hurdle becomes more complicated when mothers add demands of the global changing roles, such as working outside the home, furthering of education to their many traditional family responsibilities. From the findings of the study it is concluded that the role conflict experienced by student nursing mothers affect their performance both at home and in their academic pursuit. The challenges faced included inability to attend lectures, tutorials and group discussions regularly and also prepare adequately for exams. They are as well unable to perform their childcare functions adequately. Even though they adopt numerous strategies including hiring of house helps, baby sitters, assistance from family members and even stopping some domestic chores in order to cope with the challenges it is clear that the universities must provide some services and facilities like counselling, rest rooms and child care centres while the family must be ready to assist student mothers to cope in order to avoid stress.

6.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research it is recommended that:

- i. Universities must provide day care centres where student nursing mothers could keep their babies during lectures and other academic activities on campus. This will go a long way to ease the frustrations faced by student nursing mothers since they will be sure that their babies are left in the care of professionals.
- ii. The universities must provide lactation rooms for student nursing mothers. This could serve as temporal resting places for them as they breastfeed their babies
- iii. Student nursing mothers must keep their priorities straight. They could do this by keeping a check list of activities to be executed in the day and trying to keep to them.
- iv. Most nursing mothers enter the university unaware of the university operations. This ignorance leaves student nursing mothers frustrated when they are confronted with the realities. There is therefore the need for intensive orientation of student mothers in order that they will be able to cope.
- v. People must be re-socialised to see the two roles of student and motherhood as complimentary rather than conflicting. It is when a new perception that sees females as help mates that concrete actions will be taken to correct structures that make it impossible or problematic for women to combine both roles as students and mothers. The re-socialisation process must be given all the urgency it deserves as women's roles are not going to become limited (to being mothers only) but rather incorporate them into vast areas of specialisation.

vi. Husbands and men in general should be encouraged to contribute to childcare.

This has become particularly important in recent times where women are not only mothers but also breadwinners. Thus, now more than ever there is the need to educate all and sundry that work is what all people (of either gender) do as a process of self actualisation.

6.7 Areas for Further Research

A comparative study could be conducted on the challenges faced by student nursing mothers pursuing tertiary education at a distance and their regular counterparts.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Madam,

I am a student of University of Ghana pursuing MPhil in Adult Education. The purpose of this study is to collect information on the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region. I would be grateful if you could provide objective answers as much as you can. Information provided will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Thank you.

SECTION A: CHALLENGES OF STUDENT NURSING MOTHERS

A. Academic Work Activities

1. Are you able to attend lectures?

Yes [] No []

2. If no, give reason(s) for your answer

.....
.....

3. Are you able to attend tutorials regularly?

Yes [] No []

4. Do you find learning difficult?

Yes [] No []

5. If yes, which of the following challenges do you face in learning? (You can tick more)

- a) Lack of concentration
- b) Combining child care and learning at night
- c) Understanding topics taught in my absence
- d) Inability to learn in the libraries

Any other

6. Do you take part in group discussions?

Yes [] No []

7. Are you able to meet deadlines for assignments?

Yes [] No []

8. What are some of the challenges you face with your examinations?

- a). Inability to prepare adequately towards examination.
- b). difficulty in getting a place to keep the child during examination.

Any other, state.....

B. Child Care

9. Do you face some challenges with combining child upkeep with academic work?

Yes [] No []

10. If yes, what are some of the challenges you face? (You may tick more than one option)

- a. Sickness of child
- b. breastfeeding of child during lecture hours
- c. lack of a place for babysitters to keep baby comfortable
- d. breastfeeding the child while learning

Any other.....

11. Do your academic activities influence the upkeep of your baby?

Yes [] No []

12. If yes, which aspects of childcare does your academic work affect.

.....
.....

13. Mention three major challenges you face while combining learning with child upkeep and house chores

i.....

ii.....

14. What is the attitude of your of husband towards combining the nursing responsibilities with academic work?

.....
.....

C. Economic

15. Do you face some financial difficulties as a student nursing mother?

Yes [] No []

16. If yes, which financial challenges do you face?

- a. Payment of fees
- b. Employing the services of a babysitter.
- b. Buying weaning food for the baby.
- c. Renting a room closer to the university.

Any other.....

17. What problems do you face with transportation as a student nursing mother?

.....

SECTION B, COPING STRATEGIES

A. Academic Work Activities

18. Do you get any support in your studies?

Yes [] No []

19. How do you prepare for examination?

.....
.....

20. How do you cope with combining child care and lectures?

- a) Skipping some lectures to breastfeed.
- b) Employing the services of paid domestic workers.
- c) Support from husband and relatives.
- d) Support from friends.

Any other.....

21. Mention ways you manage with tutorials and group discussion with childcare.....

.....

22. Have you stopped some specific roles in order to have rest and studies?

Yes [] No []

23. If yes, mention specific roles you have stopped.....

.....

B. Child Care

24. Do you receive some support from your husband towards childcare?

Yes [] No []

25. Which of the following supports are provided by your husband? (You may tick)

- a). Taking care of the baby at home
- b). Helping me with my assignments
- c). Giving me a lift to and from campus
- d) Helping me with the house chores

Any other

26. Mention ways you cope with the child upkeep and examination

.....
.....

27. Have you employed the services of anybody to assist in your childcare?

Yes [] No []

C. Economic

28. Mention three ways you cope with the financial challenges you face as a student nursing mother.

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....

29. Mention ways you cope with transport to and from school.

.....
.....

30. What suggestion(s) will you give to a will be student nursing mother

.....
.....
.....