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Work-Life Balance and Women Academics in Higher Education: A Comparative Study of UK and Nigeria

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

- Isaiah 40:31

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Abbreviations

Athena SWAN …........................Athena project and the Scientific Women's Academic Network

COVID-19 …..Corona Virus Disease - 2019

HE …..Higher Education

HESA …..Higher Education Statistics Agency

IFS …..Institute for Fiscal Studies

JAMB …..Joint Admission and Matriculation Board

NBTE …..National Board of Technical Education

NUC …..National Universities Commission

ONS …..Office for National Statistics

Abstract

The shift from the male-breadwinner model to the dual career couples has led to widespread discussions around work-life balance, particularly for women due to an increased likelihood of managing caring commitments and domestic work. Despite extensive debates, the role of culture in influencing the work-life balance experiences of women has received much less attention. Where culture has been addressed in the work-life balance literature it has been confined to national contexts that share similar cultural characteristics.

This thesis addresses this gap by exploring the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria. Utilizing role conflict theory; interviews, diary studies and participatory visual drawings show how the bi-directional impact of work and non-work domains into conflict. The research also addresses the impact of time-based conflict, on the experiences of women academics. It further utilizes spillover theory to understand the positive and negative spillover that occurs between the work and non-work domains of these women. Advance HE's Athena SWAN gender equality charter is used as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the charter in alleviating some of the tension between work and home life in the UK and whether a similar approach might be useful for women academics in Nigeria.

Culture was found to be deeply embedded in the lives of these women particularly with Nigeria having a high level of dominance in patriarchy. Women academics in Nigeria had greater share of household responsibilities and were more prone to prioritizing caring responsibilities which led to making choices that slowed down their career progression. Similarly in the UK, women academics with African, Asian and Irish backgrounds were more likely to hold perceptions of not fulfilling their duties as a woman than those with British

backgrounds. Women academics in the UK worked longer and unsocial hours and were less inclined to take annual leave which was a contributing factor to the decline in their mental and physical health. Religion was also found to negatively impact working time in Nigeria and was also a major determinant of paid maternity leave.

The findings confirm that women academics experience a high level of work-life conflict particularly work to life conflict which was more evident than life to work conflict although, this was more prevalent in Nigeria. It further revealed that women academics experience negative spillover between their work and non-work domains, in comparison to positive spillover. Women academics in the UK appeared to lack knowledge around the available work-life balance policies and practices, despite the Athena SWAN Charter.

Evidence from the research shows that it is imperative for Higher Education Institutions to understand the cultural implications such that in the UK, considerations should be given when forming policies around promotion structures and in Nigeria, where they are lagging immensely, structures should be embedded to support women facing cultural barriers. The findings from this research will also be useful to Advance HE's gender equality charter by informing them on issues that need to be addressed in order to effectively promote work-life balance.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the background and significance of the research. It outlines the aim and the research questions. It discusses the research's contribution and the context, alongside the PhD journey. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the research

Despite the increasing percentage of women's activity in the global labour market, currently 38.8% (World Bank, 2021) and a shift from the male breadwinner to modernised model in which both men and women are actively participating in work and contributing to the household income (Chapman, 2004), relatively little attention has been paid to the impact that national culture might have on working life and the work-life balance experiences of women particularly in academia. As Dorenkamp and Süß (2017) argue, the difficulties that arise from the work and non-work domain are particularly intense for women academics, as they must often make a choice between the multiple roles of their academic career and personal life, with some academics taking the decision to leave academia due to the inability to manage both domains effectively. Debates around work-life balance and academia exist; see for example, Winslow (2005), Emslie and Hunt (2009) and Delecta (2011). However, they have predominantly been carried out in developed countries such as in the UK, Europe and other Western countries which means that the findings and recommendations from these studies cannot be entirely applicable to countries that have cultural and institutional differences (Mordi, Mmieh and Ojo, 2012). This lack of attention to culture, may mean that

efforts to support the progression of gender equality and eradicate barriers to the career progression of women academics may be missed. Since working life plays a critical role in society, this would mean that a crucial piece of the jigsaw leading to equality in all aspects of life may be absent. Rubery and Hebson (2018) argue that policies aimed positively at women may exhibit different effects due to women's social class, ethnicity, age and other characteristics.

Within the field of employment, the concept of work-life balance, effectively the bridge between one's job or career and their non-working time is critical because it can have both positive and detrimental effects on an individual's life. The concept of work-life balance might be particularly pertinent for women who have multiple roles of being primarily in charge of the household whilst being a significant contributor to the household income. Aziz and Cunningham (2008) argue that due to the increase of women entering into the labour force in the last two decades, the male breadwinner model is constantly diminishing. Nonetheless, women are still disproportionately affected by the conflict that arises from managing their work and non-work domains as evidence has shown (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006; Eze, 2017). One major consequence of this shift is the level of work-life conflict experienced by women, that emerges from the pressures of the work and non-work domains in the process of attempting to be an ideal worker and a homemaker (Buzzanell, Meisenback, Remke, Liu, Bowers and Conn, 2005).

Jones, Burke and Westman (2006) argue that work-life balance has become a concern due to the demographic and social changes that have led to an increase of women in the workforce and the blurring of boundaries thereby leading to difficulties in maintaining a balance

between the two domains. Although both men and women experience work-life conflict with evidence from OECD (2018) research on better life index, shows that women value work-life balance to a greater degree than men as they have less time for other significant activities such as personal time and leisure. Although there is strong evidence for the need for women to have a healthy work-life balance, the concept curiously remains under-explored in different national contexts. The Literature review in Chapter 2 reveals the dearth of literature and comparative literature that explores how women in different national contexts experience work-life conflict.

1.2 Significance of the research

This section begins with a discussion of research linked to the work-life balance of academics and then explains the motivation behind the decision to conduct comparative research relating to women academics.

1.2.1 Work-life Balance and Academia

Research on work-life balance in higher education institutions has focused on both academic and non-academic staff (Kinman, Jones and Kinman, 2006; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006; Johnson, Willis and Evans, 2019). For example, Fontinha, Easton and Van Laar's (2019) study of nine British higher education institutions indicates that academics are significantly more likely than non-academics to experience higher levels of stress due to long working hours and work overload. This is consistent with several studies (Hamilton, Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2006; Currie and Eveline, 2011) that have provided evidence of flexible working hours being disadvantageous in academia. Segal (2014) and O'laughlin and Bischoff (2005) argue that although academic careers can provide a large degree of flexibility which can be crucial

to the achievement of work-life balance, it can also lead to conflict with work often spilling over into the non-work domain due to the inability to separate the domains.

Academics have been assigned the role of teaching, marking, supervision, research and administrative duties which can lead to both time and strain-based conflicts that arises from the inability to deal with the demands from the work and non-work domains (Ogbogu, 2009; Kinman, 2014; Winefield, 2014; Darabi, Macaskill and Reidy, 2016). These numerous tasks can impede the time that should be spent on other activities due to the blurring of boundaries between responsibilities. This can lead to long and unsocial working hours which may result in less attention for family and other important aspects of life. For instance, Currie and Eveline (2011) argue that it is difficult to set boundaries because academics are expected to be constantly checking emails and effectively being on call during non-working hours.

Kinman and Wray (2013) argue that the numerous roles and responsibilities that are assigned to academics are risk factors, as each role requires its own specific demands, which have strong potential to cause conflict. Yet, O'Laughlin and Bischoff (2005) mention that there is limited research on the work-life balance in academic careers irrespective of the difficulties they face in trying to balance their work and their non-work domains. While these arguments are critical to the discussions on work-life balance and academia, there seems to be a greater level of focus on the impact of work demands, with little focus placed on the possible effects of the non-work demands which could also be detrimental to their work demands. A main objective of this research therefore is to shed light on the impact of the family and life domain on the work demands of academics to ascertain the forms of impact and to contribute to existing literature on the non-work domain.

This sub-section has set out to address the significance of exploring the work-life balance experiences of individuals in academia. The next sub-section aims to present literature around the work-life balance experiences of women academics, and the need to address their work-life balance issues.

1.2.2 Women Academics: the significance of addressing work-life balance issues

Literature around gender and work-life balance in academia has shown that women academics experience a greater level of work-life conflict than men, due to the impact of childcare responsibilities and being the primary homemaker (Santos and Cabral-Cardoso, 2008; Misra, Lundquist and Templer, 2012; Hogan, Hogen, Hodgins, Kinman and Bunting, 2015; Eze, 2017). Women in academia face multiple demands from work, family and personal life which include being an academic, a spouse, a mother and a friend (Dutta et al, 2011). Thereby leading to struggles in balancing their work and non-work domains (Akanji, 2012). Thomas (2013) argues that without attention to research in academia, women who are unable to successfully balance their work and non-work domains are more than likely to leave academia.

Women academics may face both institutional and personal consequences which are strongly linked to the conflict arising from multiple roles. For example, Currie and Eveline's (2011) study of Australian academics showed that women academics had a slower career progression compared to men, due to the inability of having time to lecture, supervise, write research papers and focus on family responsibilities. Similarly, Doyle and Hind's (2002) study of women academics in UK institutions showed that women were progressing at a slower rate than men, with a significant number of women concentrated in junior positions.

This poses as a concern particularly with the influx of women in academia. Jacobs and Winslow (2004) argue that women academics in their late careers have fewer childcare responsibilities and are able to devote more time to their careers. Yet, Emslie and Hunt (2009) argue that work-life conflict isn't only a concern for women in their early and mid-career as women in their late career still have family responsibilities that are linked to taking care of elderly parents and grandchildren. Family issues will remain paramount for women academics in Higher Education as they are expected to demonstrate singular devotion to a career while also dealing with family demands (Gerdes, 2006). Therefore, women academics attempting to balance both, may be viewed as incompetent, detached or both (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Women academics with childcare responsibilities seem to experience a greater level of challenges that could impede their career progression as literature has shown evidence of positive correlation between childcare and slower career progression (Gerdes, 2006; Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2006; Hoschild and Machung, 2012). For instance, Mazerolle et al's (2018) research on women academics in U.S showed that achieving work-life balance was challenging for women, particularly when young children are involved as the needs of children are often prioritized and are unpredictable. Wilson and Greenhill (2004) argue that this is particularly dominant in academia as women with spousal or childcare responsibilities often focus more on family demands while those who are single, engage in long and unsocial working hours. Women academics with no spousal or childcare responsibilities experience work-life conflict as they often get consumed by work demands which could spillover into their personal time while still having to make time for other family responsibilities (Hamilton et al, 2006). The effects of childcare responsibilities on the career

progression of women academics have impacted the choice and number of children they decide to have. Schroen, Brownstein and Sheldon's (2004) research on academic women in the U.S found that they were less likely than men to be married or have children and they often delayed childbearing. Additionally, findings from Koyuncu, Burke and Fiksenbaum's (2006) study on 406 professors in Turkey, showed that women professors were less likely to be married and have fewer children, yet they had less university tenure and earned lesser incomes than the men. However, Hamilton, Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2006) argue that women academics who have no spousal or childcare responsibilities are often perceived by institutions as being more stable as they are less likely to leave their jobs due to maternity leave or other family demands.

There are also health challenges linked to work-life conflict, for women in academia. For example, Fox and Gasper's (2020) duo ethnography research on their personal experiences as women academics showed that their workload adversely affected their mental health thereby impacting their individual performance at work and they were often hesitant to disclose their mental health issues in the workplace as they perceived that it could be detrimental to their career progression. Gill (2011) suggests that the way in which work is done in academia changes as we work in an 'academia without walls' which emerges from innovative information and communication technologies that makes work portable. The blurring of boundaries between work and non-work domain could lead to mental and physical health issues for academics. For instance, Ysseldyk et al (2019) research on 2 universities in Canada and Germany showed that, post-doctoral researchers experienced mental and physical health issues which include, depression, anxiety, exhaustion, high blood pressure, back pain and insomnia which were associated with stress at work. The COVID-19

pandemic has heightened the degree to which many of the factors that are associated with health issues, are affecting women academics. An example of this is, Epperson, Harry, Regensteiner and Ribera's (2020) review of literature relating to the COVID-19 pandemic which showed that women academics experienced an increase in the level of stress and a decline in productivity as they published fewer papers and received fewer citations since the pandemic commenced. In regard to the efforts made by women academics to avoid career-related consequences primarily linked to gender inequality, it is obvious that examining work-life balance issues and proffering solutions is key to the success of women academics in Higher Education (Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2006; Cress and Hart, 2009).

This section has addressed the significance of the research by justifying the need to address the work-life balance issues in academia particularly for women academics. The next section presents an overview of the Higher Education system in UK and Nigeria and further provides details on gender equality and the work-life balance experiences of women academics in both countries.

1.3 Higher Education in the UK and Nigeria

This section presents the research context, UK and Nigeria. It discusses the literature around gender equality in the workplace, and an overview of the work-life balance experiences of women in academia. It further discusses the Athena SWAN charter in the UK and the Nigerian National Gender Policy. It begins by discussing the Higher Education system in the UK and Nigeria.

1.3.1 Higher Education System in the UK

Higher Education as a term has been used interchangeably with university in some national contexts such as the U.K, however these two terms are distinct and do not cover the same reality (Assie-Lumumba, 2005). Higher Education encompasses all post-secondary and tertiary institutions while a university is an academic environment comprising of schools, faculties, colleges that engages in teaching, learning, research and community services (Assie-Lumumba, 2005). The UK's Higher Education has seen a surge in the total number of enrolments by 8.5% from academic year 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 as shown in Table 1.1 with females representing 57% (HESA, 2021). The UK's Higher Education Institutions are grouped into the Russell group and non-Russell group universities with the distinction being that the Russell group universities are 24 research-intensive universities that have huge social, economic and cultural impacts globally (Russell Group, 2021). These Russell Group universities represent only 14.63% of the UK's 164 universities and Higher Education institutions (Statista, 2021). The UK welcomes international students yearly from a variety of counties such as Nigeria, China, Malaysia with the previous academic year 2019/2020 accounting for 538, 600 international students (Hubble and Bolton, 2021). According to IFS (2017), home students in the UK graduate with average debts of £50,000 which is even more for the poorest students, due to a combination of high fees and large maintenance loans. The UK fees is even more for international students

ONS (2021) reports that 53.5 million people are actively participating in the UK labour market. The Academic staff in Higher Education account for 223,170 with women academics representing 48% of full-time staff and 66% of part-time staff in 2019/2020 academic year (HESA, 2021). Gender inequality seems to be present in academia as the table 1.2 shows that

men represent a higher proportion at all levels particularly in the top-level ranks such as Professor and Senior Academic. According to Santos and Phu (2019), the reason for this gender inequality in UK academia is due to their time constraints caused by work-life conflict and the discrimination against assigning more women to leadership positions in academia.

Table 1.1: HE Student Enrolments in the UK. HESA (2021)

Level of Study	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Female	1,314,730	1,344,635	1,372,860	1,402,970	1,440,815
Male	1,017,245	1,031,120	1,040,755	1,051,220	1,087,710
Doctorate research	98,525	100,085	100,430	102,030	101,350
Other postgraduate research	14,615	12,435	11,325	10,950	9,325
Total postgraduate research	113,145	112,520	111,755	112,985	110,675
Masters taught	293,915	320,720	345,955	367,450	411,500
Postgraduate certificate in Higher Education	26,015	24,030	24,960	26,365	25,890
Other postgraduate taught	98,185	101,135	99,790	96,210	94,845
Total postgraduate taught	418,115	445,885	470,705	490,025	532,235
Total postgraduate	531,255	558,410	582,460	603,005	642,915
First degree	1,596,100	1,630,790	1,657,145	1,690,335	1,734,775
Foundation degree	40,605	38,100	35,055	33,645	31,520
HNC/HND	32,050	29,350	28,240	23,625	20,985
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	2,030	1,730	1,440	1,160	1,000
Other undergraduate	130,780	118,600	111,320	105,380	101,185
Total other undergraduate	205,465	187,775	176,055	163,805	154,695
Total undergraduate	1,801,570	1,818,565	1,833,205	1,854,140	1,889,475
Total	2,332,825	2,376,975	2,415,660	2,457,150	2,532,385

Table 1.2: UK Academic Staff by Gender and Age Group. HESA (2021)

Academic Staff	Gender			Age Group				
	M	F	Other	25/under	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65
Professor	16,415	6,345	50	0	115	3,190	8,995	7,920
Senior Academic	3,725	2,390	0	0	100	1,015	2,690	2,070
Other Contract Level	98,725	95,570	305	6,930	57,270	58,015	42,495	24,360
Total	118,865	104,305	355	6,930	57,485	62,220	54,180	34,350

1.3.2 Higher Education System in Nigeria

The Higher Education system in Nigeria consists of a university sector and non-university sector comprising of polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education (QAA, 2019). According to NUC (2021), there are 49 Federal universities, 99 Private universities and 54 State universities. The fees for Federal and State universities are subsidized however, the private university's fees are significantly high in comparison to the other two forms of universities (QAA, 2019). Table 1.3 shows the Higher education enrolment by gender for full-time and part-time at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. There are also 126 polytechnics, 27 monotechnics and over 400 colleges, innovation and vocational enterprise institutions (NBTE, 2021). However, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) which controls admissions to higher education, has shown evidence that the number of students who apply to universities every year, exceeds the number of available spaces at these universities (QAA, 2019). This has led to a significant number of students going abroad with UK being one of the most popular countries for Nigerian students as they represent 13,020 out of a total of 33,290 African students in the UK for the academic year 2019/2020 (HESA, 2021). Furthermore, the Nigerian Higher Education system has been linked to critical

issues such as increase in student enrolment number with no increase in funds, gender inequality, poor management, poor teaching and research facilities (Ogbogu, 2011).

The World Bank (2021) reports that 62.2 million Nigerians are actively participating in the labour force. The number of Nigerian academic staffs in the Federal, State and Private universities have been identified in Table 1.4. The table further shows that there is gender inequality in all higher education ranks; Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer 1 & below, as there is a higher proportion of men than women in all ranks. According to (Adamma, 2017), men dominate the governance and management levels of higher education levels globally. Olubor (2006) stresses that despite many Nigerian women in academia being qualified, institutions do not appoint them to top management positions due to the perception held by the institutions regarding their ability to devote themselves to work coupled with their home demands.

Table 1.3: HE Enrolment by Gender and Level in Nigeria. NUC (2019)

University	FT/UG		PT/UG		FT/PG		PT/PG	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Federal	697,833	508,992	30,611	27,271	100,966	64,826	11,223	7,137
State	297,997	246,939	14,308	11,453	16,400	10,636	2,270	1,437
Private	52,515	49,985	1,043	797	2,515	1,762	257	288
Total	1,048,345	805,916	45,962	39,521	119,881	77,224	13,750	8,862

Table 1.4: Nigerian Academic Staff by Gender. NUC (2019)

University	Professor		Reader		Senior Lecturer		Lecturer 1 & Below	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Federal	5,943	1,167	2,628	748	5,455	1,894	16,038	5,983
State	2,601	439	1,468	330	3,397	882	9,340	2,970
Private	1,531	196	678	184	2,333	553	4,652	2,034
Total	10,075	1,802	4,774	1,262	11,185	3,329	30,030	10,987

1.3.3 Gender Equality in Higher Education – UK and Nigeria

According to UNICEF (2017), gender equality is the equal valuing by society of the similarities and differences between men and women, and the roles they play. The increasing debates on gender equality in academia has led to legal frameworks being developed to support the promotion of gender equality and career progression for women. The uprise of gender equality discussions has led to the establishment of the Athena SWAN charter in the UK which is a framework that encourages institutions to achieve their gender equality objectives, meet equality legislation requirements and promote inclusive working practices (Advance HE, 2021). While in Nigeria, the National Gender Policy which aims to achieve a just and gender-equitable society and economy with women and men contributing their optimal quota to the development process (NWTF, 2006). Nonetheless, an overarching institutional framework aimed at promoting gender equality in Nigerian Higher Education seems to be absent.

The literature around the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter suggests that linking the charter's award to the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funding has motivated institutions to design action plans and take practical steps towards improving gender equality in academia (Arnold et al, 2019; Ovseiko et al, 2017). However, since the charter was established in 2005, there has been a slow improvement in the work-life balance and career progression of women academics in the UK. For example, Woodward (2007) and Fontinha, Easton and Van Laar's (2019) research have shown that academics experience poor quality of life, long working hours, high workload and low job satisfaction. Additionally, amongst the few studies that have reviewed the effectiveness of the Nigerian National Gender Policy, it is suggested that the policy has made little to no progress in addressing

gender issues since its establishment in 2006 due to ineffective implementation (Kezie-Nwoha, 2007; Bryan and Ejumudo, 2013; Amadi, 2017).

1.3.3.1 Women Academics and Work-life Balance: Country Context

Discourse on women academics has considered the impact of culture on their work-life balance experiences and have done so in different national contexts. This has been well documented in the literature for example, Thanacoody, Bartram, Barker and Jacobs (2006) study on Australian and Mauritius women academics, and Ren and Caudle's (2016) research on British and Chinese women academics. These studies have shown evidence that cultural differences are significant to the work-life balance discussions of women academics. Although there are several cross-cultural research studies on western countries like the UK, the lack of attention given to developing countries like Nigeria is staggering as literature has shown that women academics in Nigerian Higher Education experience work-life conflict and slow progression. Chang, McDonald and Burton (2010) argue that cross-cultural comparisons of work-life balance issues address not only the problems faced in diverse regions themselves but may also better illuminate the types of structures that differentially impact on work-life balance in developed countries. The next 2 sections set the context for Higher Education in the UK and Nigeria by justifying the need to examine women academics in both countries.

1.3.3.1.1 UK Higher Education Context

Women academics in Higher Education represent 46.6% in the UK, and only account for 39% at senior academic levels (HESA, 2021). Santos and Phu (2019) argue that although all Higher Education institutions in the UK value diversity and are committed to equality of

opportunity, women are under-represented at senior academic grades and if this trend continues, it will be decades before gender equality at professional level is achieved. Research has shown that the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic due to an increase in role conflict which led to consequences such as decreased research activity and increased workload (Crabtree, Esteves and Hemingway, 2020; Adisa, Aiyenitaju and Adekoya, 2021). It is therefore vital to identify and address their work-life balance issues which may have been heightened post-pandemic.

Career success may be more difficult for women academics as men's adaptation towards their role in the home tends to remain "lagged" and, women academics work in a sector where women are under-represented and is inherently masculine in nature which may be reflected in the institution (Haynes and Fearfull, 2008). Findings from the literature on the UK context has shown that women academics particularly mothers, are hindered by lack of mentoring opportunities, multiple work and non-work demands, and lack of support from colleagues and management (Crabtree and Shiel, 2019; Howe-Walsh, 2016; Rosewell, 2021). For example, Lord and Joel's (2019) research on UK women academics found that women with children experienced difficulties in gaining adequate organisational support through maternity cover arrangements and slow career progression post-maternity due to the organisational rigidity with flexible working and lack of promotional opportunities for part-time working mothers. Additionally, Forster (2000) found that family responsibilities interfered with the career progression of women academics in the UK.

1.3.3.1.2 Nigeria Higher Education Context

Research on work-life balance in Nigeria has shown evidence of women academics experiencing work-life conflict (Odejide, Akanji and Odekunle, 2006; Ogunsanya and Olorunfemi, 2012; Eze, 2017). Despite the increasing growth in the Nigerian female labour force participation rate currently 49.34% and the number of women academics accounting for 43.19% globally, Nigerian women academics account for 11.6% which is a decline from it its figure of 31.42% over 20 years ago (World Bank, 2021). Hence, it is crucial to investigate the factors responsible for this decline. Eze (2017) argues that women are increasingly participating in all sectors of the Nigerian economy particularly in Higher Education yet, women academics experience a high level of work-life conflict due to long working hours and role overload. This therefore leads to women academics lagging and having a slower career advancement than men (Odejide et al, 2006). Findings from Eboiyehi, Fayomi and Eboiyehi's (2016) study on 3 Nigerian universities showed that there was gender inequality in senior management positions and the positions of vice-chancellor and provost of colleges have been held by men since the universities were established. This highlights the unceasing under-representation of Nigerian women academics in leadership positions.

One of the reasons for Nigerian women academics experiencing work-life conflict is the high level of patriarchy in Nigeria which expects women to care for the home while also contributing to the household income (Olaogun, Adebayo and Oluyemo, 2015). Prozesky (2008) argues that women academics in countries that are associated with strong patriarchal ideologies are adversely impacted by strong gender role stereotypes which includes expectations of women prioritizing their family responsibilities very highly. Furthermore, Ristad and Rigstad (2007) argue that academia is highly patriarchal in nature

which has a glass ceiling of unstated norms that hinder women's effective participation and advancement in Higher Education. Nonetheless, women will continue to remain in lower positions in academia while men occupy the decision-making positions (Ogbogu, 2011).

Work-life balance policies as an institutional strategy in promoting work-life balance has presented some limitations particularly for Nigerian women academics. Research on academia in Nigeria has shown that work-life balance policies seem to be non-existent or ineffective in majority of the Higher Education institutions (Adebayo, 2016; Oludeyi and Olajide, 2016; Awosusi, Olusesi and Zakariya, 2020). For example, in a research on the banking, educational and power sector, Ojo, Salau and Falola (2014) found that there was a high number of work-life balance practices in Nigerian Higher Education Institutions however, barriers such as lack of managerial support, long hour culture and ineffective implementation strategies have led to the usage of these policies lagging in comparison to the actual implementation. McMillan et al (2011) argues that workplace policies and practices aimed at promoting work-life balance will remain ineffective until the institution fully understands the nature and implications of the employee's work-life balance struggles.

1.4 Research aim and research questions

The discussion above has provided insights into the significance of this research and the need to address the critical gap in knowledge relating to cross-cultural research and work-life balance in academia. This section sets out the main aim of the research as well as the research questions that will be addressed by the findings.

The main aim of this research is to compare the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria, and to examine the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in promoting gender equality in Higher Education.

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1. To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance?

RQ2. How do women academics in the UK and Nigeria perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?

RQ3. What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?

RQ4. What are the policies and strategies adopted by universities in the UK and Nigeria to improve the work-life balance experiences of women academics?

1.5 Overview of the Methodology

This section presents an outline of the methodological approach used in this research by highlighting the significance of the methods. This qualitative research adopted the use of triangulation to obtain an extensive understanding of the research focus. The research involves the use of semi-structured interviews with hybrid diaries and participatory visual drawings being novel in regard to examining the work-life balance experiences of women academics in a comparative setting. The diaries are of further significance by contributing to

the methodological approaches of carrying out research in Nigeria. As majority of the studies in Nigeria that engage in qualitative research, do so with the use of interviews, observations and focus groups.

1.6 Contribution

This section presents the contributions of this research to theory, knowledge and practice.

1.6.1 Contribution to Theory

- A key contribution of this research relates to the development of a conceptual framework identified in the discussion chapter which takes into consideration, the life domain and, extends the role conflict theory and spillover theory.

- It also develops an understanding of work-life balance by providing a revised definition which considers key factors such as culture, family, gender and career life stages.

1.6.2 Contribution to Knowledge

- A main contribution of this research is addressing the gap in literature, which is the lack of pertinent studies relating to work-life balance in developing countries.

- It adds to the discourse on the impact of culture both from the individual and the institution's perspective and its correlation with both positive and negative work-life balance experiences.

- It contributes to the literature regarding methodological approaches by going beyond the traditional interviews to include other forms of data collection; diary studies and

drawings to measure variations in daily work-life balance experiences and to identify unspoken feelings and thoughts.

- It adds to the literature which relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has impacted the way of working in Higher Education. This is a relatively new area of discussion therefore, this research provides empirical evidence on its impact on home working.

- It examines the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter and addresses the gap in literature relating to the lack of key studies on non-STEM departments.

1.6.3 Contribution to Practice

- It provides significant recommendations for the Nigerian Higher Education, which presently has no framework aimed at tackling gender inequality in the workplace.

- It provides key recommendations for the UK Higher Education Institutions on ways in which their policies and strategies can be improved to effectively promote gender equality and career progression for women academics.

Having discussed the contributions of this research, the next section focuses on the PhD journey of the researcher by providing a brief overview of how the researcher came about the decision to pursue the research topic.

1.7 PhD Journey

Consistent with many research, this study has been subject to change over time particularly regarding the shift from primarily aiming to examine the effects of flexible working policies. However, as the research was ongoing, the aim became more specific, and the contributions

deemed impactful. The goal to pursue this research area emanated from an initial interest in the career progression of women. Although the research idea was initially broad, continuous research led to narrowing down the focus and the main aim became apparent. While the research focus remained on gender equality, the decision to focus mainly on the work-life balance experiences in academia was because it remained under-researched in cross-cultural research specifically in relation to comparisons between developed and developing countries. This research paves the way to understanding the impact of certain factors such as work-life balance policies, gender, and family with culture on the forefront and it adds to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in non-STEM departments. Furthermore, during the process of data collection, fundamental information relating to COVID-19 began to emerge and was therefore included in the study to further explore the work-life balance experiences of women academics.

1.8 Thesis Overall

This thesis is structured into 6 chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

As discussed above, the introductory chapter provides an introduction into the research investigation by providing insights into the background of the research, the rationale, aims and objectives of the research. It further gives an overview of the methodology and identifies the contributions of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter critically reviews the literature by identifying the existing gaps. It is categorised into two sections: It focuses on the past discussions relating to the role conflict theory and

the spillover theory and how they both link to the work-life balance experiences of women academics in developed and developing countries. It examines literature relating to the impact of culture, family life, work flexibility and social support.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This section focuses on the nature of the research and justifies the choice of approaches and methods used in the study. It also provides details on the sampling technique and sample size, as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter explores the themes that emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, diary studies and participatory visual methods. It examines the 9 themes, and the findings from the interviews with HR officials and members of the Athena SWAN team.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The discussion chapter focuses on establishing the relationship between the research questions and the findings of the research. It is structured into two stages: discussing the findings in relation to the 4 research questions and identifying the contributions of the research findings in relation to the conceptual framework and the methodological approach.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the research study by discussing the contributions of the research, limitations of the research, evaluating the research objectives as well as the future implications of the findings.

1.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided insights into the justification of this research by discussing the significance of the research, methodological approach, and the significant gaps in literature. It also identifies the aim, objectives, and research questions, as well as the contributions of this research. The following chapters will provide details on the specific gaps in literature through a critical evaluation, process and justification of research methodology, the findings of the data collected, the discussion which informs the relationship between the research questions and the themes that emerged from the findings. Lastly, the conclusion chapter highlights the contributions, limitations of the research, and the implications of the findings as well as recommendations.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents a critical review of pertinent literature relating to the work-life balance of women academics in western and non-western countries. It includes debates on gender and further looks at the impact of family, social support, culture, and workplace flexibility on the experiences of women, by identifying the key gaps in literature that need to be addressed. A brief introduction justifying the need for this review is provided in the section below.

2.1 Introduction

Debates on work-life balance have progressed significantly over the last two decades as both men and women are prone to experiencing difficulties in managing their work and their non-work domains (Misra, Lundquist and Templer, 2012; Hogan, Hogen, Hodgins, Kinman and Bunting, 2015) thereby making it a discussion that cannot be disregarded. However, evidence indicates that women experience a greater level of difficulty due to the numerous responsibilities designated to them (Frankenhaeuser et al, 1989; Lundberg, Mardberg and Frankenhaeuser, 1994; Winslow, 2005; Lewis and Humbert, 2010, Fujimoto, Azmat and Hartel, 2012). These difficulties can lead to a trade-off between the work and the non-work domain, which may result in lower earnings and poorer prospects for career advancements (Keene and Quadagno, 2004). Similarly, Mani (2013) argues that due to the struggles faced by women, they tend to forego the opportunity to network, go for social events and travel for work thereby impeding their career advancement. In addition, a poor work-life balance can have an undesirable effect on individuals' personal lives. For instance, findings from

Fujimoto et al's (2012) qualitative research on professional and non-professional roles in Australia, showed that women employees participate in little to no social activities outside their family life. Findings from Wattis, Standing and Yerkes (2013) in-depth qualitative research in the UK shows that women do desire to have a personal life outside their work and family domains but due to the struggle in trying to successfully balance their work and family domains, they have little to no time for other activities. Similarly, Fapohunda's (2014) study on Nigerian women journalists reported that they spent more hours at work due to the pressure of them trying to prove themselves in a male dominated profession, which then leads to difficulties in the amount of time spent in other domains most especially on family. Additionally, Owusu-Poku's (2014) qualitative study on Ghanaian women in the mining industry showed that women stated that they spent most of their productive life on work responsibilities, which leads to inadequate time with family, relationships and personal time.

This serves as a premise for the need to investigate and address the difficulties that women experience in their work and non-work roles, as the findings from previous research, acknowledge the implications for working women in both developed and developing countries. However, this research investigation takes on cross-cultural research to further examine women's work-life balance experiences in academia, in UK and Nigeria as cross-cultural literature tends to overlook developing countries, therefore this needs to be addressed as the findings from Fapohunda (2014) and Owusu-Poku (2014) studies have indicated that women in developing countries struggle to achieve work-life balance. More so for women in academia as evidence from Siyanbola's (2017) quantitative research indicated that Nigerian women academics reported greater difficulties in balancing their work and non-work domains compared to their male counterparts who had extra time for leisure and

other activities after work. Examples of cross-cultural research which focuses on developed countries include Ren and Caudle's (2016) qualitative research on Chinese and British academics, and Lyonette, Crompton and Wall's (2007) quantitative research on Britain and Portugal, both which justifies the contention that cross-cultural research relating to developed and developing countries is limited and should be included in the debates on work-life balance.

The chapter begins with a review of the literature around the definition of the term work-life balance which identifies the need to include the life domain as an important aspect of the non-work domain. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the approach in which the literature review was conducted.

Table 2.1: Overview of approach in conducting literature review

Literature Themes	Key Words	Key Authors
Work-Life Balance	Balance, personal life, work, family	Super (1980), Guest (2002), Reiter (2007), Delecta (2011)
The Impact of Family	Childcare, workload, career progression, part-time, motherhood	Akanji (2003); Emslie et al (2004); Doherty and Manfredi (2006); Lyonette et al (2007), Ren and Caudle (2016).
The Impact of Culture	Patriarchy, Breadwinner, Religion	Hofstede (1980), Acker (1989), McSweeney (2009), Kamenou (2008)
Work Flexibility	Flexibility, working hours, homeworking, unsocial hours, COVID-19 pandemic	White et al (2003); Rubery et al (2005); Wattis et al (2013); Toffoletti and Star (2016); Adisa et al (2021).
The Role of Social Support	Support, strategy, family-supportive organizations, work-life balance policies.	Cobb (1976), Carlson and Perrewe (1999), Allen (2001), Ren and Caudle (2006), Marcinkus et al (2007), Ashencaen et al (2020).
The work and non-work domains: challenging work-life balance theories	Conflict, spillover, work domain, non-work domain	Kahn et al (1964), Crouter (1984), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Zedeck (1992), Frone (2003), Cleveland et al (2007), Darcy and McCarthy (2007), Steiber (2009), Andreassen et al (2013), Bell et al (2017)
Athena SWAN Charter: Implementation and Effectiveness	Athena SWAN, gender equality, academia	Gregory-Smith (2015), Caffrey et al (2016), Arnold et al (2019), Rosser et al (2019), Tzanakou and Pearce (2019)

2.2 Work-life Balance

Work-life balance as a concept has remained irresolute over the past decades, as it has majorly been viewed by scholars (Clark, 2000; DeCieri, Holmes, Abbott and Pettit, 2005) from a constricted perspective whereby emphasis has been made on the work and family domains while neglecting the life domain, which is a significant factor to be considered. Fisher (2001) argues that one major limitation of past literature on work-life research is the inability to explore other aspects of the non-work domain apart from the family domain. However, a more salient standpoint was postulated by Delecta (2011) who is of the opinion that work-life balance is the ability to satisfy three domains of life: work, family and personal life. This definition aligns with Joshi et al (2002) who state that work-life balance is a meaningful achievement and enjoyment of work, family, friends and oneself, which not only applies to what an organization can do for an individual but also what an individual can do for themselves. These life domains are the spheres of activity that makes up an individual's identity, importantly not all individuals occupy all life domains at any given point in time instead, may shift in and out of domains based on their interests and life circumstances (Super, 1980). Although, there may be changes to this as Super (1980) argument was over 40 years ago and work and the way we work has changed in that period of time. The inclusion of personal life is very important to the discussion of work-life balance as it recognizes that individuals have other commitments outside their work and family life.

Several studies have identified other non-work roles that are important to the debates on work-life balance. For instance, findings from Kirchmeyer's (2012) study of 110 men and women in Canada, that community, volunteering, church, charities and political parties are some of the non-work domains that are important to individuals. A two-stage qualitative

study on 102 full-time employees in Tasmania by Wickham and Parker (2007) identified 35 non-work roles which were categorized into family-based, sporting-based, charity-based, education-based and socially based roles, although family-based roles had a greater impact on their work-life balance. This result coincides with Prakash's (2018) study on managerial and non-managerial roles in India, which showed that family was the most important non-work domain for both single and 21 married participants although they identified hobbies, personal care, friends and community as other important non-work domains. According to Keeney, Boyd, Sinha, Westring and Ryan (2013), limiting the life domain to family life, researchers risk missing out on other significant forms of work-life interference. The exclusion of other important life domains seems to depict the inadequate and flawed dichotomy of work and life balance (Aldoory, Jian, Toth and Sha, 2008). However, based on their critical review of work-life balance definitions, Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) argue that balance is an equal distribution of time, energy and commitment to both the work and non-work roles. Yet, their definition of what balance entails implies equality in the work and non-work domains and therefore, gives no consideration to an individual's perception of what balance means to them as Kalliat and Brough (2008) argue based on their review of work-life balance conceptualizations, that one's idea of balance may not necessarily mean equality and could differ based on each individual's situation rather than a predetermined thought. This corroborates with Reiter (2007) contention from their review of work-life balance definitions from an ethical point of view, that work-life balance should be viewed from a subjective stance which assigns the interpretation to the individual's personal situations.

Work-life balance has also been defined in relation to specific family structures. For instance, Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper and Sparman (2013) argued that work-life balance encompasses the way parents of dependent children balance responsibilities and commitments to paid work and parenting. This definition firstly, suggests that work-life balance is important for parents with dependent children, which corroborates with Reiter's (2007) situationist perspective of work-life balance which states that balance depends on the family structure, life stage, gender career or income level of the individual. Secondly, Gatrell et al's (2013) definition depicts that the word 'balance' portrays different meanings to different individual as the above definition shows that for parents, balance is the ability to be properly manage their work and parenting responsibilities. This reinforces (Guest, 2002; Meenakshi, Subrahanyam and Ravichandran, 2013) argument that balance may not necessarily mean equality but rather it could mean stability, which varies amongst different individuals. Nonetheless, Gregory and Milner (2009) argue that work-life balance is simply a trade-off between the work and life domains which encourages quick fix solutions that do not address fundamental inequalities but rather, shifts the responsibility from balancing the two domains unto the individual. Yet, these definitions give no consideration to cultural differences which may impact an individual's work-life balance experiences by having a significant role to play in their daily lives. Therefore, this research aims to provide a more suitable definition that acknowledges the key role of culture in influencing work-life balance experiences.

Having discussed various definitions of work-life balance and the need to consider cultural differences in work-life balance definitions, the next 6 sections evaluate the literature pertaining to key areas relating to the work-life balance experiences of women. These key areas include: the impact of family, the impact of culture, work flexibility, role of social

support, the work and non-work domains: challenging work-life balance literature, Athena SWAN Charter: implementation and effectiveness. It begins with an evaluation of the impact of family and discusses the relationship between parenthood and work-life conflict. Table 2.2. shows how the literature review themes contribute to addressing the research questions.

Table 2.2: Relationship between the themes developed in the literature review and the research questions

Literature Review Themes	Sub-Themes	Research Questions
Work-Life Balance	-	RQ3 - What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?
The Impact of Family	▪ Childhood: Motherhood, Work-Life Conflict, and Career Progression	RQ3 - What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?
The Impact of Culture	▪ Patriarchy and Culture ▪ Religion as a Coping Mechanism	RQ3 - What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?
Work Flexibility	▪ Working Time Arrangements: Debates on Working Hours ▪ COVID-19 and Homeworking: The Blurring of Boundaries	RQ1 - To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance?
The Role of Social Support	▪ Work-Related Support ▪ Family-Related Support	RQ2 - How do women academics in the UK and Nigeria perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?
The work and non-work domains: challenging work-life balance theories	▪ Role-Conflict Theory ▪ Spillover Theory	RQ3 – What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria
Athena SWAN Charter: Implementation and Effectiveness	-	RQ4 - What are the policies and strategies adopted by universities in the UK and Nigeria to improve the work-life balance experiences of women academics?

2.3 The Impact of Family

This section examines past literature on work-life balance relating to the impact of childcare responsibilities on the career progression and its role in influencing the level of work-life conflict experienced by working women. Work-life literature has shown evidence of the correlation between childcare responsibilities and its significant impact on the work-life balance experiences of women (Emslie et al, 2004; Bacik and Drew, 2006;) and has been further linked to the socio-cultural expectations of women (Akanji, 2003; Lyonette et al, 2007; Cho et al, 2016). This section therefore explores these studies in detail by examining factors such as age of children, part-time work and cultural expectations. The following sub-section below explores present research on childcare demands.

2.3.1 Childcare: Motherhood, Work-Life Conflict and Career Progression

Findings from Emslie et al's (2004) quantitative research on white collar bank employees in the UK showed that having children was more strongly associated with work-home conflict for women than men. Although their research focuses on the banking sector due to the long working hours, the findings cannot be generalized to represent other occupations therefore, a comparative study of different occupations could have provided more significant results. Similarly, Lewis and Humbert's (2010) study using interviews on employees working in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) in France, found that women with children were more likely than women without children, to work four days a week in order to cope with childcare demands irrespective of the consequences associated with it such as a 20 percent cut in salary and non-reduction in workload. One issue with their research is that it focuses solely on SET employees with no attention to those in other departments such as Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Findings from Bacik and Drew (2006) using 2003 lawyer's survey on legal professionals in Ireland showed that women lawyers are less likely to have children compared to men counterparts due to the phenomena of postponed parenting. Of those women who have children, the norm is to have only one or two children. While this shows that women appear to perceive that having children could impede their career, their research doesn't consider that this perception might vary across women in their early, mid and late careers. In their quantitative research using data from 2006 General Social Survey (GSS) in the U.S, Lawton and Tulkin (2010) found that the presence of children leads to work to family conflict and family to work conflict regardless of the number of children and age of children. Despite the significant relationship between presence of children and work-family conflict, it should be noted that the age and number of children are vital in analyzing the impact of children on work-family conflict as those with younger children and a greater number of children could possibly have a higher level of work-life conflict. Ezzedeen and Ritchey's (2009) study on U.S women executives found that women who decided not to have children believed that they would not have been successful in their career, while those who decided to have children subjected themselves to slow career advancement. Although they focus on women with and without children, their research includes a small sample of North American women who are predominantly white thus the research fails to consider the diverse range of women on career pathways.

The choice of undertaking part-time work due to childcare responsibilities appears to have adverse implications on women's career progression. Warren and Lyonette (2015) analysis of the data from the Skills and Employment Survey Series (SES) found that part-time work is associated with lower career opportunities, reduced pay and poorer rewards. Tausig and

Fenwick (2001) study using data from the U.S 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce revealed that women are more likely than men to have part-time jobs and assume the majority of the household and family demands work which is unpaid. Similarly, results from Lyonette's (2015) qualitative research on UK part-time employees and managers showed that a large proportion of women work short part-time hours even though the majority would prefer to work full-time. While the findings coincide with the results from Tausig and Fenwick (2001) study, it uses a relatively small sample of part-time employees who represent only 8 out of 26 participants thereby restricting the validity of the findings.

Cho et al's (2016) qualitative study on Korean women leaders found that women experienced work-family imbalance as they prioritized their children and home over work responsibilities. While their research shows that children were a priority for women in high ranks, the study does not examine the possible fluctuations in the daily decisions made by these women to prioritize one domain over the other. Findings from Akanji's (2003) study using interviews on different professional employees in Nigeria, showed that women experience role overload due to conflict arising from their work and childcare demands which lead to feelings of burnout, strain, fatigue and chronic stress. Their research greatly differentiates from other studies by exploring a developing country that is influenced by the patriarchal system. However, it overlooks the possible impact of differences in cultural backgrounds by not considering other cultures in their study. Similarly, Bruce-Twum's (2013) research on women accountants in Ghana using questionnaires and interviews found that women experience work-life conflict led to making choices that impact their career by making family their priority, with most of them willing to leave the accounting profession for a more flexible job if they decided to have more children. Nonetheless, their sample is limited

to only the accounting profession and does not make comparisons with other professions such as academia which is a gendered occupation that has a high number of women employees therefore, it is important to consider other professions that may be susceptible to work-life conflict.

Despite the recurrent finding in both developed and developing countries relating to women and work-life conflict arising from family responsibilities, the majority of the research on western and non-western countries seem to examine the work-life balance experiences of women in single countries rather than implementing comparative research. For instance, Muraya, Govender, Mbachu, Uguru and Molyneux (2019) research on Kenyan healthcare managers reported that family obligations and societal expectations of women impeded their ability to take up certain job positions thereby limiting their opportunities for career progression. A comparison with a country with similar or distinct cultural characteristics and values may provide an explanation of why societal norms and expectations could impede one's career. An example of this is Lyonette, Crompton and Wall (2007) study on Britain and Portugal using 2002 family module International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data which showed that although both are Western countries, Portuguese women reported a higher level of work-life conflict than the British women because they were more family oriented.

Academia as a profession seems to be prone to work-life conflict thereby adversely affecting the work-life balance of women academics. For instance, Thomas (2013) research on women academics in Nigeria shows that the inability to successfully balance their work and non-work domains results in women academics either leaving academia or being in lower

positions. This aligns with Doherty and Manfredi's (2006) research in UK which showed that women were greatly under-represented in the two old universities than the two new universities included in the study, due to emphasis on research which appears to be detrimental to women who have less developed research profile as they have insufficient time to carry out research and publish papers. Similarly, Misra et al's (2012) surveys and focus groups interviews in the U.S found that men spend more time on research than women particularly in the case of associate professors. Although these findings suggest that work-life conflict is greater for women especially due to family responsibilities, no consideration is given to institutional factors such as inadequate number of academics particularly in departments with a high number of women thereby increasing workload with little to no time for research. As Baker (2012) argues, gender differences are more salient at the senior levels in academia due to the unbreakable glass ceiling, institutional policies, family and personal responsibilities.

Findings from Ren and Caudle's (2016) study on British and Chinese academics showed that in order for women academics to maintain a healthy work-life balance, they must make compromises by sacrificing their career advancement for family and other personal responsibilities. According to Santos (2014) research in Portugal, women academics tend to have difficulties in balancing the work and non-work domain because they struggle with feelings of not always being available for their children while also, needing their career because they are passionate about it. The distinctive challenges including the dominance of women working in academia in terms of balancing a successful career and parenthood further encourages research within this sector, especially with regards to women who frequently report higher demands in relation to family obligations and childcare (O' Laughlin

and Bishoff, 2005). As expected, this inevitably affects their career progression as the family demands may outweigh their work demands. Thomas (2013) argues that the decision for women academics to have children is the greatest factor that differentiates a woman's career from a man's career.

Having discussed the impact of childcare responsibilities on the work-life balance experiences of women, the next section examines the impact of culture in relation to the role of patriarchy and religious beliefs in influencing the ability of women to successfully balance their work and non-work domains.

2.4 The impact of Culture

This section explores how culture impacts the work-life balance experiences of women, by examining the patriarchal system and religious beliefs as determinants of work-life balance.

It is of utmost importance to define culture and distinguish between national and organizational culture, before examining the relationship between culture and work-life balance. Several prominent authors have provided definitions of culture, for example, Harris (1975) and Hofstede (1980) however, their definitions share an agreement, which is the idea of 'a shared or collective way of life'. According to Harris (1975), culture is the total socially acquired lifeway or lifestyle of a group of people which consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of the society. A more commonly discussed definition of culture is one provided by Hofstede (1980) defining culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. However, these definitions are somewhat constricted as they assume that individuals from the same group

share a similar belief and they fail to consider the distinct experiences that may exist within various groups. McSweeney (2009) argues that in the process of searching for uniformities within countries, diversity within cultures should not be ignored. For example, empirical findings in literature (Dale, 2005; Kamenou, 2008) have shown that each individual's experience or reality cannot be the same as others. In their research on management and non-management ethnic minority women, Kamenou (2008) argues that their career experiences cannot be viewed in isolation without acknowledging their broader life circumstances, in relation to their family, culture and religion, and there needs to be an acknowledgement of diversity across and within these ethnic groups as their experiences cannot be assumed to be uniform. Furthermore, findings from Dale's (2005) study on Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in the UK, showed that they experienced greater work-life conflict than their white counterparts.

Similar to culture, a variety of definitions have been proposed by authors (Hofstede, 1983; Denison, 1990) to distinguish between national and organizational culture. According to Nicolescu and Verboncu (2008), organizational culture is a collection of values, beliefs, aspirations, expectations, and behaviors formed over a period in various organizations that triumphs inside them and regulate the tasks and performance of those organizations either directly or indirectly in the long run. Similarly, Denison (1990) argues that organizational culture refers to the values, beliefs and principles that serve as a foundation for an organization's management system as well as the set of management practices and behaviors that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles. While these definitions of organizational culture suggest a broader set of values and norms that shape an organization's practices, sub-cultures within these organizations exist and shouldn't be

ignored for example, organizational culture may exist differently across departments in the workplace, which in turn can significantly impact the experiences of the employees negatively or positively. In regard to the discourse on sub-cultures, Maddox and Perkin (1993) and McCarthy (1994) argue that gender cultures, which are sub-cultures in organizations, exhibit dominance and are characterized by stereotypic beliefs and values relating to the work roles of women compared with men. This highlights the importance of the role sub-culture plays, in gender-related issues. These issues may also be linked to the dimensions of national culture, proposed by Hofstede (1983) as one's societal culture can influence their organizational culture. For instance, an individual whose societal background is highly masculine may exhibit similar beliefs in the workplace.

Using data from IBM employees in 66 countries, Hofstede (1983) proposes four cultural dimensions; power distance which refers to unequal distributions of power, uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations which are avoided, individualism-collectivism which explains the relationship between the individual and collectiveness in a society and, masculinity-feminism describes the division of social roles between men and women. He further develops two dimensions, long term orientation and indulgence. Although Hofstede's (1983) perspective and ideologies can be viewed as significant in the debates on culture, it poses certain limitations that should not be overlooked. These limitations which include the sample, data collection technique, constricted definition of national culture have been greatly critiqued in literature (Acker, 1989; Hamden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; McSweeney, 2002; Baskerville, 2003).

Firstly, the sample raises a few concerns relating to homogeneity. The sample utilizes participants from one organization which is IBM, therefore questions can be raised on how this organizational-related data can be used as a representative of a nation's culture. As Wildavsky (1989) mentions, cultures are not countries and there is generally more than one culture in one country at any one time. Baskerville (2003) argues that Hofstede was not trying to maximize the diversity, incorporating and equalizing cultures with nations minimized the variety in the units of analysis. In addition to the issues with the sample, McSweeney (2002) mentions that only 6 countries in the survey, had a sample size of more than 1000, with others being mostly less than 200, therefore, this limits the reliability and validity of the findings. Furthermore, Myers and Tan (2002) argue that almost all respondents in the Hofstede's sample were male and therefore, not representative of people in the respective countries.

Although the previous limitation discussed above, has highlighted the questionable approach used by Hofstede (1983) to define national culture, the cultural dimensions seem to add to this lack of clarity in attempting to conceptualize national culture. For instance, Hamden-Turner and Trompengaars (1997) argue that an individual can be both an individualist and a collectivist as some people tend to be very individualistic at work, and family-oriented or collective at home. In addition, Hofstede's dimensions do not consider that individuals within cultures may exhibit variations in the cultural dimension they fall into, which can be influenced by a variety of factors which include their backgrounds, religion, family values, etc. Lastly, a quantitative approach was used to measure cultural differences among nations. This can be quite problematic because Hofstede's (1983) approach of using surveys, means that culture was viewed through an objective method and

therefore, doesn't adopt a more subjective method to gaining an in-depth understanding of these cultural disparities. As Schwartz (1999) argues, using quantitative methods in his research, questions the reliability of the findings.

Having discussed the culture in relation to national and organizational culture, the next sub-section examines Hofstede's cultural dimensions and its applicability in the UK and Nigeria context.

2.4.1 Cultural Dimensions - UK and Nigeria

The previous section examined the debates on culture, in relation to national and organizational culture. Although, Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions were critiqued on reasonable grounds, it is still of significance in examining the cultures in different national contexts. This is because despite its limitations, having a benchmark to measure culture is still better than having none. Therefore, this section aims to explore the cultural comparison of UK and Nigeria (Figure2.1) based on Hofstede's (1983) dimensions in relation to women and their work-life balance experiences. However, this sub-section focuses mainly on power distance, individualism and masculinity, which are closely linked to work-life balance discourse.

Figure 2.1: Country Comparison – UK and Nigeria (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

* estimated
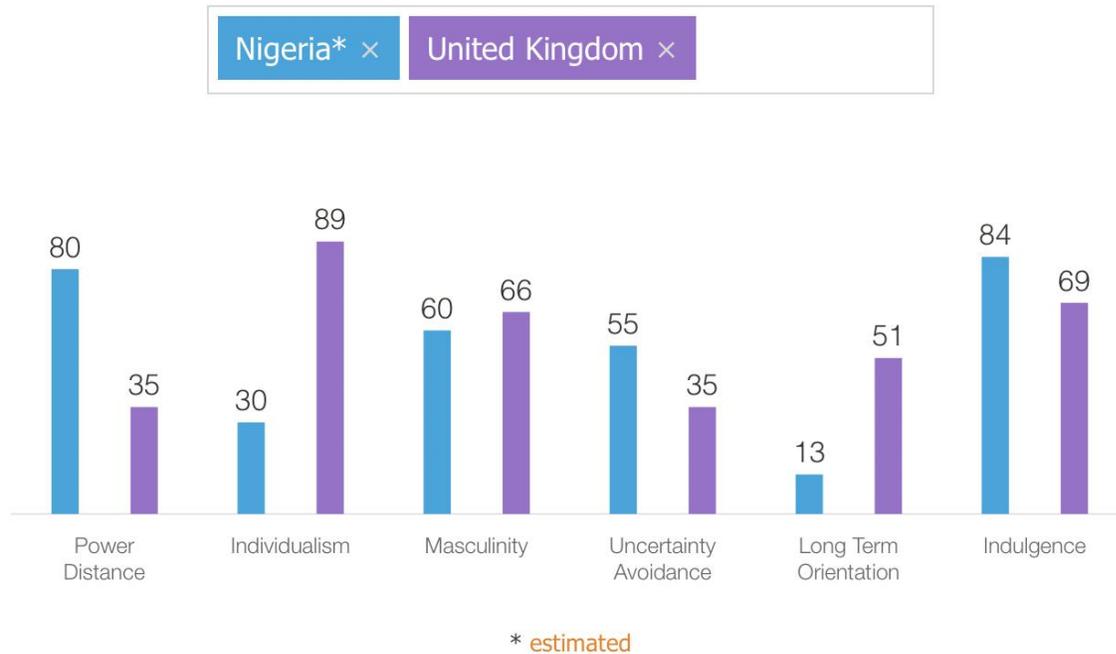
According to Carrasco et al (2014), the notion of gender is in itself a cultural construct created to refer to differences between men and women in society in terms of attitudes, mental structures, and expectations. Some societies seem to ignore these differences when assigning roles, others seem to maximize them. Findings from Oruh and Dibia's (2020) qualitative research on manufacturing and banking employees in Nigeria, showed that the high-power distance culture existing in organizations weakens the employees' ability to experience a healthy work-life balance therefore, leading to burnout and increased stress levels. While their study aligns with Hofstede's estimated score for Nigeria's high-power distance, it doesn't provide a gender comparison to examine how the impact of high-power distance may differ from men and women. Akanji, Mordi and Ajonbadi's (2020) research on women doctors in Nigeria, showed that they experienced lack of spousal support in assisting with family and childcare responsibilities. This finding aligns with Hofstede insights (2022)

which shows that Nigeria has a relatively high masculinity score. One explanation for this relates to a high level of patriarchy in which the men are less active in participating in household responsibilities. However, their findings also show that 55% receive support from extended family and parents. This implies that despite having a low individualism score, experiences may differ among sub-cultures in which some families or cultures may be less collective than others.

Carrasco et al's (2014) study on 32 countries using data from BoardEx database showed that in the UK, 6.19 percent of women were board directors. While this links to the UK's high masculinity score by showing that there is a significant disparity in the number of women board directors, their study doesn't consider key factors for example, educational level and level of experience which may also play a role in influencing the number of women. Findings from Rich et al's (2016) research on UK doctors in training showed that they experienced a great degree of work-life conflict and also, struggled with being away from partners and families due to changing workplace locations. This shows that despite UK scoring a very high score in individualism, it could vary across people, as some might be more individualistic than others. Therefore, it is imperative that while Hofstede's (1983) dimensions are useful in the debates on cultures, they should not be used to make generalizations.

The next sub-section examines the relationship between patriarchy and culture, and the role of patriarchy in influencing the career progression of women academics and their ability to successfully have a healthy work-life balance.

2.4.2 Patriarchy and Culture

This section begins by examining various definitions of patriarchy and discussing the patriarchal structures that exist. It further examines the role of patriarchy in influencing the work-life balance and career progression of women. Debates on culture appear to be linked to patriarchy. For instance, Adisa (2019) argues that the patriarchal construct is real and is deeply embedded in cultures which is also evident in religion, certain responsibilities are imposed on women regardless of their status or career. According to Acker (1989), the content of patriarchy is gender, as social relations are constituted through processes in which the linkages are inbuilt therefore, to be non-restricted in our interpretation of patriarchy paves the way for fully understanding the deeply embedded character of the subordination of women and the pervasive influence of gender.

Patriarchy as a theoretical lens, has been defined by various authors (Walby, 1989; Aina, 1998) although there seems to be a consensus amongst these definitions, on patriarchy being about 'male dominance and the unfair treatment of women'. According to Walby (1989), patriarchy is a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Similarly, Aina (1998) states that patriarchy is a feminist concept that is used to understand and analyze the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination, or the domination of women by men. Yet, these definitions are somewhat 'westernized' as they do not consider that patriarchy is multifaceted and can exhibit differently particularly among and within races and ethnicities. Acker (1989) argues that the notions of patriarchy seem to reflect a white, middle class woman's reality and cannot be used to generalize because women from ethnic and racial minorities, as well as working class women have different realities. It is even more alarming to see that after over 2 decades, this

remains a significant issue that is yet to be fully addressed. For instance, a more recent definition provided by Nash (2020) explains that patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs and values embedded in political, social and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women. Despite these limitations posed in the definitions of patriarchy, it remains a useful theoretical framework that helps to highlight the unfavorable experiences of women. As Clibsy and Holdsworth (2016) argue, the concept of patriarchy is valuable because it makes visible that which is unacceptable.

Walby (1989) argues that patriarchy can take different forms and is therefore, not a universalistic notion. Hence, discussing patriarchy from one or more perspective rather than as a whole, should not diminish the significance of the discourse. For instance, Walby (1989) provides 6 structures of patriarchy to explain the different components that comes together to form the broader meaning of patriarchy: patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations within waged labour, patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal culture however, these 6 structures come under two types of patriarchy namely private and public patriarchy. According to Sultana (2010), private patriarchy is based upon household production as the main site of women's oppression while public patriarchy is based principally in public sites such as employment and the state. Although Duncan (1994) proposes that these 6 structures should take account of historical and cultural variations as these structures are relatively autonomous, but will nonetheless have causal effects on each other, both reinforcing and blocking effects. This argument is valid to a great degree, as the effect of patriarchy in one structure can influence another structure for instance, the degree to which women are primarily responsible for household duties may influence their job status in the labor market such as in women in part-time

employment and low-skilled jobs. Nonetheless, it is important to note that other scholars (Brown 1981, Dworkin, 1983) have attempted to distinguish between the various forms of patriarchy however, their perspectives are somewhat limited as Brown (1981) focuses on labour and family while Dworkin (1983) focuses on sexuality and reproduction. Walby's (1989) 6 structures takes a broader approach than the aforementioned scholars and will therefore be the focus of this study.

While each structure identified by Walby (1989) plays a critical role in the discourse on patriarchy, 3 of the structures were closely linked to the notion of work-life balance and therefore, will be focused on. These include patriarchal mode of production, which is linked to family and household duties, patriarchal relations in paid work which focuses on organizational level, and patriarchal culture which considers religion. Each structure will be examined individually, starting with the patriarchal mode of production however, Duncan's (1994) argument of the interrelationship between structures will be considered in the discourse of each structure.

2.4.2.1 Patriarchal mode of production

Empirical studies relating to the patriarchal mode of production has been exhibited in literature particularly in cultures with a high level of patriarchy, see for example, Akanji (2012), Seierstad and Kirton (2015) and Eze (2015). Akanji's (2012) study on Nigerian employees in the banking, telecommunications and motor insurance sector showed that role overload was a main source of work-life conflict for women which was significantly caused by family demands. Their study asserts that regardless of their status as a contributor to the household income, women remain primarily responsible for the home due to the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian culture which then conflicts with their work demands. Yet, their study

remains restricted to those three sectors and does not consider other sectors that may be highly gendered such as academia. Nonetheless, Adisa (2016) argues that this may be the reason why work-life conflict is prevalent for women, as they have their careers pulling them in one direction with their family obligations pulling in the other direction. Similarly, Eze's (2017) study on Nigerian women in management and leadership roles showed that the impact of patriarchy was significantly evident as these women struggled to cope with their family demands and they would often decline progressive career opportunities in cases where their spouses did not approve, thereby hindering their career advancement. While their study shows the extremity of patriarchy's role in hindering the career progression of women, they ignore the patriarchal experiences of those in non-managerial or leadership roles, who could possibly be facing similar impediments.

Seierstad and Kirton's (2015) interviews with Norwegian women who are politicians and non-executive directors showed that they received backlash from their society for not assigning more time to childcare demands. Their study is significant to the discourse on culture as it shows that the impact of patriarchy on societal opinions and expectations is still present in some western cultures. However, one limitation that needs to be addressed by future research is the comparison of various ethnicities within a national context. This is significant as the possible differences in their work-life balance experiences might be linked to distinct cultural norms and expectations as Kamenou (2008) calls for more attention to consider diversity in the personal and family experiences across social groups and acknowledges differences across ethnicity, culture and religion. Based on their study of work-life imbalance on white collar full-time professionals in the U.S, Aziz and Cunningham (2008) suggest that more women are moving away from the traditional role of caregiver to

a career-oriented caregiver in which they engage less in household duties while men are increasingly participating in household demands. One explanation for their findings could be that the sample which is predominantly European Americans could have a lower level of patriarchy than individuals from other backgrounds included in their study.

2.4.2.2 Patriarchy in the workplace

Patriarchy in the workplace has been identified by Walby (1989) as patriarchal relations within waged labor. Individual's behavior in the work setting is influenced by what they have learned at work and other interrelated factors such as their cultural beliefs and norms (Ashforth and Fried, 1988; Menon, 2014). Using interviews on Black women academics in South Africa, Dlamini and Adams (2014) found that workplace patriarchy exhibits itself in many forms such as during meetings, the inability of women to achieve goals by not assigning them responsibilities which will lead to career progression, insensitivity to women's issues, manipulating promotion criteria in which women are highly disadvantaged, which is evident in the lack of women in senior management. While their findings are significant to the debates on workplace patriarchy, it doesn't discuss how these findings can be linked to the broader aspect of women's lives such as its effect on their work-life balance in the form of mental health, low productivity, and lack of motivation. It is important to highlight the distinction that may occur in the degree of patriarchy faced in various national contexts however this doesn't diminish the impact of patriarchy faced by women. For instance, Lekchiri and Eversole's (2020) interview with 45 Moroccan women in the public and private sectors showed that cultural barriers relating to patriarchy are not only present in their personal lives but are also evident in the workplace as women are not expected to apply for leadership roles and there are no effective policies to promote work-life balance. Despite

addressing the role of patriarchy in the work and non-work domains, their research does not effectively analyze key variables such as religion which should be embedded into the discussions on culture. This is an evident gap in work-life balance studies relating to culture, as they tend to give more attention to patriarchy when religion should be deemed equally significant. Nonetheless the few studies that have addressed this key gap will be discussed in the next sub-section.

2.4.2.3 Patriarchal Culture

Patriarchy and culture are interrelated and are intricately linked conceptually to one another (Kang'ethe, 2014). While patriarchal culture can be viewed in different ways such as in the form of religion, educational systems, feminity and masculinity (Walby, 1989), religion is often less discussed in relation to culture and its impact on work-life balance experiences. Most importantly, Boyce (2005) argues that work-life studies which have focused on the role of religion, examine work and family roles rather than the broader non-work roles such as life. Saroglou and Cohen (2011) who argue that religion is a significant aspect of culture, explain that it can be viewed from different aspects; as a part of culture, constitute culture, include and transcend culture, be influenced by culture, shape culture or interact with culture. Nonetheless, adopting religion as a lens to examine culture, can show both positive and negative correlations between religion and work-life balance. Yet, there is limited empirical evidence of the negative impact of religion on work-life balance.

A range of studies have provided evidence that there is a positive correlation between religion and work-life balance. For instance, a systematic literature review by Hieu (2020) confirmed that religion provides individuals with the perception that they are in control of their work-life balance, and it is deemed to have a similar level of importance as friendships,

families and other significant activities. Similarly, Kojima's (2015) quantitative research using data from 2009 survey on comparative study of family policies in East Asia showed that religion is a determinant of utilizing family policy measures. Although their findings highlight the role of religion in certain cultures, it focuses on the individual's perspective and disregards the institutional practices that are influenced by religious beliefs, for example attendance at church or time for practicing religion such as prayer time. Furthermore, it narrows the scope of the research to only Asian individuals thereby overlooking other religious cultures. Heath's (2012) qualitative study on 22 women leaders in the U.S found that faith was used by majority of the women as a strategy for balance by redirecting their focus when overwhelmed with workload, to religion which gives them personal satisfaction. While their study explores spillover from the personal into their work life using religion as a strategy for encouraging positive emotions, they do not explore negative spillover which could occur if the stress from work leads to negative emotions in the non-work domains and vice versa. Among the few studies that have examined the role of religion in the work-life balance experiences, there is a dearth of research in African cultures.

2.5 Work Flexibility

This section explores the literature around working hours and workload, and the impact they have on an individual's work-life balance. According to Hill et al (2008), workplace flexibility is the ability of individuals to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related activities. Working hours and workload are interconnected concepts as they affect one another interchangeably, that is, heavier workloads, longer hours worked. The literature shows that working hours are discussed much more workload (White

et al, 2003; Anttila, Oinas, Tammelin and Natti, 2015). As with the work-life balance literature, there have been arguments (Hogan, Hogen, Hodgins, Kinman and Bunting, 2015) to indicate that men work longer hours than women. However, these arguments fail to consider the significance of unpaid work which relates to caring and household responsibilities therefore indicating that women are more than likely to have longer total work hours. For example, Fagan et al (2012) state, that when unpaid work is included in the calculation of the total length, women have a longer total working week than men. The following section therefore examines the impact of working long hours and unsocial hours. Additionally, it examines the notion of flexibility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5.1 Working Time Arrangements: Debates on Working Hours

Anttila et al's (2015) research using the European working conditions survey collected in 2010, revealed that flexibility of working time predicts perceived work-life balance especially with regards to timing and duration of work. While their study highlights the relevance of work flexibility, examining the institutional and sector specific working time arrangements could have provided extensive findings relevant to the discussions on flexibility as working time arrangements can differ across occupations. For instance, results from Rubery et al's (2005) qualitative research on six large service sector organizations in the public and private sectors in the UK showed that working in the evenings and weekends was detrimental to the family and personal time. Furthermore, there have been identified health-related issues that have been linked to irregular working hours. An example of this is Wong, Chan and Ngan (2019) review of literature from 1998 to 2018 revealed that long working hours are strongly linked to sleep deprivation and a higher risk of suffering from cardiovascular heart diseases and metabolic syndrome. In addition, Rodriguez-Rivero,

Yanez, Fernandez-Allez and Carrasco-Gallego (2020) quantitative research on 663 Spanish university staff showed that in addition to the actual time spent on work, the mental burden which results in a greater level of stress should not be overlooked. While this argument should not be dismissed, the relationship between time-based and strain-based conflict should also be considered as they both cause an increase in the likelihood of health-related issues. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) explain that there are three significant forms of work-family conflict: Time-based conflict involving multiple roles competing for a person's time, strain-based conflict involving work and family characteristics producing strain symptoms such as anxiety and tension, and behavior-based conflict involving specific patterns of in-role behavior being incompatible with behavioural expectations in another role.

Studies relating to work flexibility have shown that women face a high level of conflict due to the number of hours spent on both work and non-work domains. However, there appears to be a dominant focus on Western countries. For instance, Wattis et al's (2013) study on employed mothers in the UK showed that mothers in the service, retail and elementary occupations who worked part-time in order to manage their work-life conflict had to often work on evenings and weekends, and they still had similar workloads to full-time employees but with less time to get work done. The experiences of women who have no children should also be considered as there is the possibility of working long and unsocial hours when they have no childcare responsibilities therefore leading to a situation where their work becomes their life which could be detrimental to their health (Wilson and Greenhill, 2004). Fagan, Lyonette, Smith and Saldana-Tejeda (2012) mention that long working hours tend to be associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices and physiological changes affecting both mental and physical health.

Segal's (2013) qualitative research on women academics in South Africa found that flexibility promotes work-life balance however, it could also be detrimental due to working weekends and answering emails at odd hours. Yet the study sample is confined to one university which may mean that the findings would need to be validated by exploring other institutions. Additionally, the validity of this research could be questioned at it uses a relatively small sample of 10 interviewees. Findings from Rafnsdottir and Heijstra (2011) interviews with academics in Iceland found that although workplace flexibility reduces work-family conflict, this cannot be necessarily assumed for academia as evidence was shown that flexibility was detrimental for women academics due to the blurring of boundaries thereby leading to conflict. Although this confirms the argument in the literature that flexibility in academia can be quite disadvantageous, it examines only academics who are lecturers, senior lecturers and professors, and does not look at those who are assistant lecturers and research assistants. Toffoletti and Starr's (2016) qualitative research on full-time academics showed that flexibility in work hours and technology have been featured as facilitators of work-life balance, although it proved a double-edged sword for many academics who felt that the expectations and demands of paid work extended into all other spheres of life. Their research addresses the gap in Rafnsdottir and Heijstra's (2011) research by focusing on all academic ranks, however, does not examine the experiences of academics who have had a career break to determine how they are coping after returning to work.

Lindfelt, Ip, Gomez and Barnett's (2018) research on academics in the Faculty of Pharmacy in the U.S showed that a higher percentage of young women academics wanted to leave academia while those that wanted to remain were older and held higher academic ranks as the former have reported greater levels of stress and lower work-life balance. Furthermore,

women academics reported that they do have flexibility working in the university which is one of the reasons they decide to stay in academia although, boundaries often become disoriented as they sometimes have to work on weekends and unsocial hours (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). Brummelhuis and Lippe (2010) also argue that flexibility tends to blur the boundaries between work and family life.

2.5.2 COVID-19 and Homeworking: Blurring of Boundaries

In the past, studies on employment have largely focused on work that takes place outside the home. Some studies, for example, Holly and Mohnen's (2012) study using German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) data set revealed that employees who work at home regularly want to reduce their hours significantly more than those who work in the office. One explanation could be the blurring of boundaries at home. This attention to working from home is now highly significant in the post-pandemic world. In the last 18 months the COVID-19 pandemic led a highly disruptive shift from office to working from home across the world. According to the United Nations (2020), both men and women have increased unpaid workloads during the pandemic, although women are still doing the majority. Anderson and Kelliher (2020) argue that COVID-19 has exposed greater challenges for working women in juggling their work-family obligations. Other studies (Adisa, Aiyenitaju and Adekoya, 2021; Manzoor, 2021; Uddin, 2021) have explored the role of the recent pandemic in developed and developing countries.

Adisa et al's (2021) research on British working women during COVID-19 pandemic revealed that they experienced difficulties in separating their work and familial duties which both took place at home. While their research points out the adverse impact of the pandemic,

a comparison between both married and single women with and without children, could have examined the relationship between their family status and work-life conflict at home. Similarly, findings from Uddin (2021) interviews with working women in Bangladesh showed that women struggled with difficulties during the pandemic but were able to occasionally create a boundary with effective time management. Manzoor's (2021) study of the experience of women academics in Kashmir during COVID-19, found that there were variations in hours worked showing that the participants' working hours had increased from 6 to 12 hours or more and experienced an increase in unsocial working hours therefore leading to burnout. Although one limitation of these recent studies relating to the pandemic, is the focus on a single country rather than a comparative study between countries. The critical impact of the pandemic was revealed in the findings of Matulevicius et al's (2021) study involving U.S academics which showed that there was an increase in the intent to leave academia and consideration to move from full-time to part-time employment in academia since the pandemic began. Despite the obvious negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work-life balance of women, it should be noted that there are positive aspects to working from home during the pandemic such as possibly more time with family, and a shorter commute nonetheless, the shortcomings undoubtedly seem to outweigh the advantages.

This section explored the effects of flexibility in terms of working hours and home working, The next section therefore focuses on the role of social support on the work-life balance of working women.

2.6 Role of Social Support

According to Cobb (1976), social support refers to the confidence of being loved, valued and cared for by a social network of shared relationships. Social support at home and in the workplace remains pertinent to the debates on work-life balance particularly for women who remain the dominant care provider in the home which has been even more heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic as women began working at home while also taking care of the children (Ashencaen et al, 2020). Most research on social support tends to focus on the U.S with less attention given to other countries, particularly non-western countries. This lack of geographic diversity in the literature is similar to other aspects of work-life balance such as the impact of family and culture, as they focus majorly on western countries. Carlson and Perrewe (1999) have established that there are two forms of support namely, work-related social support and non-work social support. This section therefore aims to examine this gap extensively by exploring these studies on the U.S as well as discussing the significance of work-related social support and non-work social support, specifically family-related social support.

2.6.1 Work-related Support

One significant limitation of past literature is the recurrent focus on one aspect of social support, either work or home/family support, rather than both forms of social support. This section examines the studies that have focused on work-related social support. Greenhaus et al's (2012) survey-based research on business-related employees in the Mid-Atlantic region in the U.S, found that employees who report to family-supportive supervisors experience high levels of balance and, a combination of a family-supportive supervisor in a family-supportive organizational environment improved balance. Although their research

highlights the impact of supportive supervisors on improved work-life balance, it focuses on just one region of the U.S and does not consider examining the availability of work-life balance policies in the organizations which is also a significant aspect of a supportive workplace. Thomas and Ganster (1995) argue that family-supportive supervision involves empathy and actions provided by supervisors to help their subordinates achieve greater levels of work-life balance. Similarly, Allen's (2001) quantitative research on women business professionals in the U.S, found that employees who perceived that the organization was less family-supportive experienced a greater level of work-family conflict than those who perceived that their organization was more family-supportive. This clearly shows the significant relationship between supportive organizations and work-life balance however, generalizations cannot be made from the findings of this research, as the sample was predominantly Caucasian therefore, doesn't represent other racial and ethnic groups.

Ehrens (2016) research on faculty members in Northern Eastern U.S, showed that faculty members were only aware of one policy provided by the institution which is paid maternity leave and stated that the college hadn't been progressive in implementing work-life balance policies. These findings highlight there is a lack of advancement in institutions implementing work-life balance policies particularly in a developed country and further shows that it is important to recognize the distinction between the availability and dissemination of knowledge regarding work-life balance policies, by social support related studies. This supports Woodward's (2007) argument that the concept of work-life balance as used in policy documents appears to have a static quality, implying that once parents have found an employment arrangement that enables them to meet their domestic commitments, then their problems are solved. This is evidently not true for women academics.

The role of work-related social support is especially important for working mothers as they have childcare demands alongside their work life which could involve long working hours and heavy workload thereby leading to a decline in career progression. As Kamel and Omran (2016) argue that the relationship between work-life balance and intention to leave amongst women who are married with young children is positive because when they do not have adequate support and their workload doesn't diminish, they experience work-life conflict. Kelley et al's (2020) research on academic librarians in the U.S, showed that mothers with children at home reported that they were less likely to consider promotions in comparison to their colleagues who do not have children. It should however be noted that the average age for the sample was 49.98 therefore other age groups might produce different results. Ma et al's (2021) in-depth interviews on hotel working mothers in U.S, showed that mothers were dissatisfied with the duration of maternity leave, which was 12 weeks although, there was provision of childcare services and flexibility for new mothers. However, their findings only represent the hotel industry in the U.S, and therefore does not consider other occupations and national contexts which could have different maternity leave policies.

Despite the limited range of research in developing countries, there are still a few studies that have addressed work-related social support in these countries see for example, Njenga (2010), Acheampong (2013), Uddin, Binti and Khan (2020). Acheampong's (2013) quantitative study on lecturers in Knust campus Ghana, found that academics were aware of work-life balance policies which included part-time work, flextime, maternity leave, study leave, childcare arrangements, casual leave and sabbatical leave which were instrumental to achieving work-life balance. Although their study shows that there has been a development in implementing work-life balance policies in a non-western country, a comparison could

have been undertaken to examine if similar findings would emerge from another non-western country's university. Evidence from Njenga's (2010) research on women employees and HR officials in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) showed that employees had a significant level of awareness of work-life balance policies although, requests for using such policies was solely dependent on the supervisor's discretion. Their research emphasizes the importance of awareness of these policies which is lacking in literature, therefore it is important for more studies to focus more on awareness rather than restricting their research to the availability of these work-life balance policies. Uddin et al's (2020) quantitative research on women bankers in Bangladesh found that there was an absence of sufficient formal support structures and limited policies. While this suggests that key policies aimed at promoting work-life balance remain absent in some countries and sectors, a comparison of other sectors will produce extensive findings pertinent to work-life balance policies.

2.6.2 Family-Related support

Carlson and Perrewe's (1999) research on a department of a state government in the U.S found that social support can be a significant coping mechanism against the strain of work-family conflict through its impact on perceived stressors as it indirectly decreases work-family conflict. Marcinkus et al's (2007) mixed-methods research on healthcare and financial services in the U.S relating to mid-life women found that women experienced expressive and instrumental support from their family and organization however, they perceive that they experience a higher overall level of personal social support than work-based social support. Their research examines both work-related and family-related social support. However, the sample was predominantly Caucasian therefore no consideration is given to other ethnic

groups. Akanbi's (2016) quantitative research on married women academics in 6 public tertiary institutions in Nigeria showed that the social support which academics receive from their friends, family and significant other is the strongest variable in reducing the effect of work-family conflict. Although their research addresses a gap in literature by giving a greater level of attention given to academia, it focuses significantly on instrumental support and to a certain extent overlooks emotional support.

Research related to remote working has argued that it could be a likely determinant of work-life balance however, recent studies relating to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it could also be positively related to work-life conflict due to the blurring of boundaries between the work and non-work domains. For example, findings from Ashencaen et al's (2020) survey on UK academics showed that some academics experienced difficulties in creating boundaries between work and home life during the pandemic lockdown as a good number of academics had partners who are key workers and were unable to share childcare responsibilities equally. This would most likely lead to an increase in conflict especially for those who had support from friends, parents and other family members before the pandemic and are unable to gain access to these forms of support due to the COVID-19 restrictions set out by the UK government. Nonetheless, a comparative study on different national contexts would have explored the various countries' restrictions pertaining to the pandemic as they may differ from one another. Ren and Caudle's (2016) interviews on British and Chinese academics showed that support from family relating housework and childcare were more accessible for Chinese rather than British academics. This is quite significant as it shows that family-related social support is more accessible in China despite it being a country with a high patriarchal level. Similarly, evidence from O'Laughlin and Bischoff (2005) survey on U.S

academics revealed that support from partners from career and work responsibilities was related to reports of less family stress among women but not men. However, this limits the debates on social support to family and doesn't consider the impact of organizational support.

2.7 The work and non-work domains: challenging work-life balance theories

This section reviews the role conflict theory and spillover theory by examining the literature relating to these theories and further highlights the apparent gap in literature, in which studies relating to these theories tend to overlook one form of work-life conflict and spillover which varies between the work and non-work domains, amongst studies. It commences with a review of the Role Conflict theory.

2.7.1 Role Conflict Theory

The role conflict theory refers to the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal, 1964). Dahm, Kim and Glomb (2019) argue that making compromises between the work and non-work domains should theoretically reduce work-life conflict however, these compromises lead to detrimental effects in both domains reducing overall wellbeing. Although this argument raises questions on why compromises lead to conflict rather than balance, it does not explain that making compromises in favor of one domain will presumably not eradicate the existing challenges in the other domains. Despite role conflict theory being the most discussed theory in work-life balance literature, many of the empirical studies (Damiano-Teixiera, 2006; Barnet et al,

2010) that have adopted this theory remain restricted in their methods therefore hindering the ability to grasp a full and rich understanding of the work-life interface.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argue that inter-role conflict in work-family conflict can be influenced by three factors: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavior-based conflict. While studies (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Bagger, Reb and Li, 2014) have shown that time-based demands have a stronger effect on conflict than other determinants, it should be acknowledged that other forms of conflict still play a key role in work-life conflict experiences. Moreover, these studies (Frone, 2003; Steiber, 2009) tend to ignore the life domain which should be embedded into the discussions on work-life conflict. Barnes, Wagner and Ghumman (2012) point out that focusing solely on the work and family domains ignores an entire non-work domain that is critical to employee effectiveness, health and well-being.

One major drawback of work-family conflict studies is that most studies focus on either work or family domain, and among these studies that focus on one domain, preference is usually given to the work domain. Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) argue that role conflict theory has been widely used in debates on work-family conflict however, it pays less attention to the family domain and the likely effects it would have on the work domain. Although, Frone (2003) argues that work has greater negative effects on family than family has on work because work to family conflict is reported more frequently than family to work conflict. While evidence from past literature shows that work to family conflict is much discussed, it shouldn't be assumed that it has a greater effect than family to work conflict but rather, it

should be seen as a need for studies to examine both domains with the inclusion of the life domain.

In their quantitative analysis of dual-earner couples using data from the European social survey (ESS), Steiber (2009) discovered that time-based work demands were strongly associated with work-family conflict for men and women due to long working hours and unsocial hours while people with three or more children especially below age 3, face an increased risk of time-based conflict. Although they consider the impact of gender roles and presence of children, their research lacks in-depth insights into the experiences of those who are single. Similarly, Bagger et al's (2012) research on full-time working parents using a situational time-based survey showed that those who prioritize their family over work had no anticipated regret whereas, those who prioritize their work over family, anticipated regret. The findings, however, only focus on those who are married or have a partner thereby not considering those who are single, and the findings are also based on a hypothetical situation with one situational question regarding time-based conflict. Therefore, a more substantial approach would be to view their perceptions in relation to real-life work-life balance experiences.

Darcy and McCarthy's (2007) research on hotel employees in Ireland, showed that job involvement and job stress were significantly positively related to work-family conflict among those parents of children ages 13 years or more. However, these findings focus on only the work to family conflict and does not separate male and female parents to allow for independent analysis. Results from Uzoigwe, Low and Noor's (2016) cross-sectional research on Nigerian women in STEM fields showed that work factors are strongly

associated with work-family role conflict in comparison to family factors and there was no significant difference in the level of work-family conflict experienced by women in the field of medicine, engineering, and IT. Although their research differs from previous studies discussed, by examining the experiences of females in a non-western country, the inclusion of other relevant fields such as arts, humanities and social sciences could provide a stronger basis for comparison among various fields.

Despite the vast range of studies focusing on work and family conflict, few studies (Damiano-Teixeira, 2006; Barnes et al, 2012) have addressed the broader aspect of the non-work domain which goes beyond family life to include other activities relating to personal life. Barnes et al's (2012) research using the Bureau of labor statistics survey in the U.S showed that each additional hour spent on work demands comes at a higher cost to time spent sleeping. While this finding highlights the impact of long working hours on sleeping patterns which could be detrimental to one's health, carrying out a longitudinal study using qualitative research tools like diary studies could possibly explain the varying patterns that might occur over time as the hours spent on work activities can fluctuate daily. Similarly, Damiano-Teixeira's (2006) qualitative interview on 18 women faculty members in U.S showed that they tend to favor one aspect of their life over the other which is subject to change at different points in time and the impact of children played a key role in affecting career decisions while also determining if single faculty members wanted to have children, because of their career goals.

This sub-section has examined the role conflict theory and the apparent gap in the literature which overlooks the life domain as a significant aspect of an individual's work-life balance.

The next sub-section therefore aims to examine the literature relating to the spillover theory which takes into account, the bidirectional effects of spillover between the work and non-work domains.

2.7.2 Spillover Theory

The spillover theory which states that an individual's attitudes, emotions, skills and behaviors generate similarities between the domains due to their interdependence (Zedeck, 1992, Edwards and Rothard, 2000), has been instrumental in the debates in work-life literature, particularly in challenging the Segmentation Theory (Lambert, 1990) which argues that the work and family domain are separate and therefore do not affect one another. This perspective on segmentation overlooks the complex issues regarding work-life debates which are evident in empirical studies (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Cleveland et al, 2007; Bell et al, 2012; Lawson et al, 2013) that support the notion of interconnectedness.

The growing debate on the spillover theory seems to share one significant limitation with other work-life theories such as role conflict theory, which is the focus on the work and family domains, with no consideration of the life domain. Although this has slowly changed over the last decade, it is still a key gap that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, there is an overarching lack of distinction made between work-family spillover as they are seen as one construct rather than two different constructs that are separate but dependent as Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon and Kiger (2007) review of work-life balance literature shows that many scholars loosely use the term work-family spillover, failing to delineate between work to family spillover and family to work spillover however, among studies that do make this conceptual distinction, more attention has been paid to work to family spillover. This

indicates that empirical inquiry on family to work spillover is restricted therefore raising debates on why there is an overemphasis on one construct over the other and whether both constructs should be examined objectively. According to Crouter (1984), family to work spillover is viewed as the neglected side of the work-family interface.

Despite the immense lack of studies on the bi-direction of the spill-over theory, few studies have acknowledged this distinction, however they are not exempted from limitations. For instance, in their quantitative study on 283 employees in a major U.S shipping company, Lourel et al's (2007) found that negative work to home and negative home to work interference were linked to both perceived stress and job satisfaction. Although their study highlights the presence of both work to home and home to work spillover, the results are restricted to the shipping industry and therefore cannot be used to make generalizations about other key industries. Evidence from Lawson et al's (2013) study on 869 hotel managers using data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the U.S (MIDUS) showed that women and hotel managers with children at home reported fewer stressful work conditions suggesting that they may be choosing jobs with fewer demands to balance work and non-work roles. Findings from Keene and Reynolds (2005) research using data from 1992 National Study of the Changing Workforce in the U.S, showed that some individuals may achieve a better work-life balance than others due to the nature of their job. In addition, Cleveland et al's (2007) mixed-methods research on hotel managers and their spouses revealed that managers in rooms, food and beverage departments reported conflict due to working long and non-standard hours, in comparison to managers in human resources, engineering and accounting who had schedules that were more compatible with their non-work domains. Although the relevance of their findings should not be disregarded,

a comparison of women in   they could have considered the gender spectrum on a comparative basis, in order to analyze the experiences of males and female managers in the various departments.

An evaluation of the spillover theory through the work-balance experiences of women is required as it acts as a tool through which an understanding of the gendered experiences can be attained. Buzzanell, Meisenback, Remke, Liu, Bowers and Conn (2005) explain that one major consequence of the shift from the male-breadwinner model to the dual-career model, is the level of conflict experienced by women in the attempt of women to take on the role of an ideal worker and a homemaker. Some empirical studies (Keene and Reynolds, 2005; Stevens et al, 2007; Tsai, 2008) have discussed the spillover theory in relation to working women. Results from Tsai's (2008) research on Asian American working mothers in the U.S through online surveys, showed that work to family conflict correlated with number of working hours, work role quality and workplace support of familial obligations whereas, family to work conflict correlated with family role quality. While their study reveals the impact of gender on work to family and family to work conflict, it does not explore the experiences of Non-Asian American women to compare their work-life balance experiences. Furthermore, it disregards the experiences of Asian women who are single, as well as those who have no children even though these group of women are pertinent to the discussions on work-life issues. Similarly, Steven et al's (2007) research on dual-earner couples in Northern Utah showed that the presence of preschool children was positively related to negative spillover for women due to the gendered expectations. Nonetheless, the majority of the sample was white, therefore constricting the findings to a specific group of women.

Andreassen et al's (2013) research on 1300 Norwegian employees using internet-based questionnaires showed that women reported less negative family to work spillover than men and therefore suggests that it could be due to the recent increase in male's domestic responsibility. However, their research overlooks significant determinants such as the availability of support, the presence of children and the cultural expectations of women in the Norwegian culture, which could play a key role in the occurrence of family to work spillover. Contrary to their findings, Keene and Reynold's (2005) research in the U.S using data from 1992 National study of the changing workforce (NSCW) showed that women experienced greater levels of family to work spillover than men. Yet, both studies are restricted to work and family spillover, and therefore overlooks other aspects of the non-work domain.

One significant finding among these studies is that they are primarily westernized, overlooking the non-western countries thereby justifying that the progress made in work-life literature is still lagging. For instance, Bell et al's (2012) research on 139 Australian academics in the business and social sciences departments, revealed that academics experience high levels of job stress, decreased work-life balance and increased work-life conflict. Undoubtedly, they provided a key contribution to work-life literature by focusing on academia, which remains a gendered profession in comparison to other occupations. Nonetheless, their study is limited in scope as it does not recognize the role that culture plays, by not comparing the experiences academics from different cultural backgrounds. Melinda and Jacobs (2008) argue that spillover may be particularly relevant in western countries due to the uprise of dual-earner couples. This argument should not be viewed as a valid finding as there is in fact an increase in dual-earner couples not just in western countries, but

globally, which has been evident for decades. This is confirmed by OECD's (2017) research on dual-earner couples which explains that the dominance of the traditional male-breadwinner model has fallen largely in majority of the countries with the exception of Mexico and Chile where the male-breadwinner model remains the primary work arrangement. Hence, an in-depth focus should be placed on these non-western countries that have little evidence of work-life spillover in order to make both substantial theoretical and empirical contributions with regards to the work-life balance discussions.

The next section evaluates the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN Charter, which is a UK framework established to address women issues in academia and promote gender equality.

2.8 Athena SWAN Charter: Implementation and Effectiveness

This section presents an overview of the Athena SWAN charter in the UK and evaluates the effectiveness of the charter in promoting gender equality and the career progression of women in academia. It begins by reviewing the objectives and principles of the charter, before examining the empirical research that has been carried out in UK universities to determine the progress made by this charter.

In the UK, gender equality has been a debated issue over the past few decades, however it should be highlighted that the Athena SWAN charter was only established in 2005, which is less than 20 years ago hence, institutional and structural challenges that have existed for several decades cannot be eradicated precipitously. The Athena SWAN Charter, which has been instrumental in the institutional progression of women advancement since it emanated, is not exempted from challenges. Some of the limitations of Athena SWAN have blindsided a few of its principles which have been identified in Figure 2.1. For instance, one

of the principles of the Charter states that it is committed to mitigating the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks and supporting flexibility and the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance' (Advance HE, 2021) nonetheless, several studies (Caffrey, Wyatt, Fudge, Mattingley, Williamson, McKevitt, 2016; Ovseiko, Chapple, Edmunds and Ziebland, 2017), have provided conflicting results.

In their qualitative research on a university medical department in UK, Caffrey et al (2016) discovered that women academics were disproportionately responsible for majority of the Athena SWAN work compared to their male counterparts as there was a significant increase in their workload resulting in long working hours which rather than supporting women academics ironically increases their workload. Similarly, Ovseiko et al (2017) study of a UK research-intensive university at Oxford through surveys and interviews, showed that women academics lacked a good work-life balance due to being on committees and panels for Athena SWAN applications which could affect their research productivity, thereby influencing their career advancement and leadership opportunities. This indicates that despite the affirmative objectives of the Athena SWAN charter, the implementation has been relatively detrimental to the work-life balance of women academics that participate in the Athena SWAN process, thereby adversely affecting the attainment of the charter's objectives. This raises debates on how effective the implementation of the charter's objectives is, in comparison to how it is presented as an action plan.

Figure 2.1: Athena SWAN principles (Advance HE, 2021)

Athena SWAN Principles

Adopting robust, transparent, and accountable processes for gender equality work

Addressing structural inequalities and social injustices that manifest as differential experiences and outcomes for staff and students

Tackling behaviours and cultures that detract from the safety and collegiality of our work and study environments for people of all genders, including not tolerating gender-based violence, discriminations, bullying, harassment and exploitation

Understanding and addressing intersectional inequalities

Fostering collective understanding that individuals have the right to determine their own gender identity, and tackling the specific issues faced by trans and non-binary people because of their identity

Examining gendered occupational segregation, and elevating the status, voice, and career opportunities of any identified under-valued and at-risk groups

Mitigating the gendered impact of caring responsibilities and career breaks, and supporting flexibility and the maintenance of a healthy 'whole life balance'

Mitigating the gendered impact of short-term and casual contracts for staff seeking sustainable careers

Notwithstanding the apparent limitations of the charter, there is evidence to show that it has brought about positive changes, however, the genuineness of these positive changes has also been questioned due to lack of reliable measurement of implementation (Rosser, Barnard, Carnes and Munir, 2019), linkage to National Institute for health research (NIHR) funding (Ovseiko, Chapple, Edmunds and Ziebland, 2017) and lack of sufficient data regarding the effectiveness of the charter (Gregory-Smith, 2015). According to Rosser et al (2019) review, the Athena SWAN charter has supported women to utilize and develop their administrative skills, while providing a pathway to leadership positions by improving their prominence within their institutions and external institutions. Evidence from Gregory-Smith's (2015) econometric analysis on UK medical schools, showed that there was a surge in the number of women academics however, no evidence to show that the introduction of the charter's awards has led to a significant improvement in the careers of women academics. Yet, the results of Gregory-Smith's (2015) cannot serve as a basis to determine the effectiveness of the charter, instead it shows that there is insufficient data collected to determine the relationship between the Athena SWAN awards and the progression of women academics, as other research have shown contradictory results (Munir et al, 2014; Arnold, Barnard, Bosley and Munir, 2019; Rosser et al, 2019).

A mixed-methods study by Arnold et al (2019) using interviews, diaries and surveys on UK and Ireland women in academic and professional services roles showed that the Athena SWAN award had a statistically significant impact on flexible working options, promotions and team working across various departments. Similarly, an evaluation of the charter's implementation in STEM (Munir et al, 2014) using survey and case studies in 44 UK institutions showed that it had a positive effect on the visibility, leadership, satisfaction, and

career development of women. Despite the evident results highlighted by the above study, it is focused primarily on STEM departments although, this could be due to the charter only being extended to non-STEM departments in 2015 therefore, the findings of Munir et al (2014) and other STEM related studies cannot be used to make generalizations about the overall effectiveness of the charter.

Furthermore, Rosser et al (2019) argue that Munir et al (2014) findings are based on the perceptions of women involved in the study and is therefore not a direct measured impact. This argument provides the opportunity to raise questions on whether it would be a more effective approach to collect data from an institutional perspective based on a benchmark rather than relying solely on an individual's perceptions. Notwithstanding, the perceptions of these women academics should not be neglected, as it provides an opportunity to understand these impacts through a means that cannot be explained intrinsically through quantitative measures alone. Additionally, Rosser et al (2019) review of the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter shows that its approaches can be adopted and adapted to other countries, however the possibility of this is limited due to the lack of reliable measurement of the implementation. Hence their review also implies that an in-depth evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the charter in all departments is required, before a measurement can be deemed fit and reliable. Although, there have been changes made to the charter in 2021 aimed at maintaining rigor and credibility and reducing the administrative workload in response to the independent review of the charter (Advance HE, 2021). However, since the changes were only made in June 2021, there is yet to be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the recent changes.

According to Tzanakou and Pearce (2019), the Athena SWAN charter distinguishes itself from other EU gender equality schemes such as the Norwegian ministry of education and research annual gender equality award, by incorporating a monitoring process through the requirement of institutions and departments to show that they have made progress in attaining the goals set out in the action plans. The gold, silver and bronze award at different levels alongside the research funding provided by the charter not only aims to challenge short term goals on equality through awards and research funding, but it also ensures that it is a continuous process of commitment by the institutions in ensuring that it creates an equitable environment, therefore Athena SWAN can be identified as a sustainable scheme towards equality, however the extent to which it is sustainable is difficult to measure (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019). Results from Ovseiko et al (2017) study on a medical science department in Oxford showed that Athena SWAN led to new mentoring schemes, events to increase the visibility of women role models, career development seminars and talks about women in science, provided a well-structured process to improve equality with an incentive and reward system for addressing them however, it was suggested that these positive changes were linked to the National institute for health research (NIHR) funding, as it was perceived to be a motivation for institutional leaders to be engaged in achieving Athena SWAN awards. Although their study shows that the motivation of the university of oxford to implement positive changes was linked to the research funding, the validity of the findings could be tested by examining other universities.

The linkage of the Athena SWAN awards to the NIHR funding places an overemphasis on attaining the awards with the sole aim of receiving funding rather than ensuring there is a true commitment from the institutions to achieving equality. This explains why several

researchers (Gregory-smith, 2015; Rosser et al, 2019; Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019) have identified the awards application process as a "box ticking" exercise, therefore it is expected that this linkage will lead to short term achievements with the inability to achieve long-term milestones towards equality. As Gregory-Smith (2015) points out, 35 UK universities with a medical school signed up to the charter between 2005 to 2013 and it wasn't until 2009 before the first UK university received a bronze award however, 27 medical schools have achieved the bronze award while 17 have achieved the silver award since the NIHR funding was tied to the Athena SWAN awards. Hence, the possibility that the linkage between the funding and the awards is a relative identifier for an institution's incentive to participate in Athena SWAN is not without foundation (Gregory-smith, 2015).

Results from Tzanakou and Pearce (2019) mixed-methods research on academics showed that institutions use it as a box-ticking exercise to increase their competitive advantage and are not genuinely committed to equality were on the submission team as women academics on the Athena SWAN team were penalized and turned down for a promotion due to the unsuccessful application for an Athena SWAN award. Yet, Caffrey et al (2016) suggests that the linkage between the NIHR funding and the Athena SWAN awards ensured that institutions are taking the commitment towards equality seriously. While the findings from Caffrey et al (2016) suggest that institutions are seriously committed towards equality, it places an overemphasis on the institution's external milestones while neglecting what goes on internally and within the structure of the institution and therefore fails to show that the linkage to funding could be beneficial but also detrimental to an institution's work culture. As Gamage and Sevilla (2019) suggest, more attention in research should be given to how this linkage to research funding affects the lives of women academics rather than focusing

solely on the positive externalities across the wider academic community. Furthermore, Tzanakou and Pearce (2019) argues that this approach can be pragmatic and have its benefits, but such drivers can lead to reductionist approaches to gender equality, which neglect the complexity of gender and also leads to additional unpaid emotional labour for women. In support to this, Rosser et al (2019) argue that Athena SWAN involves a huge compilation of data including progression and promotional data, uptake of training, awareness and use of flexible working and leave policies which are significant as it moves away from assumptions as to what the issues with gender equality might be or even the assumption that there are no problems at all and the generation of action plans also means that mechanisms in the past may have been seen as novel, are swiftly becoming part of standard practice as institutions lean from and draw on the ideas of other institutions however the charter holds the danger that they may diminish the exercise to form a 'tick-box' for those who are driven purely with this incentive in mind.

2.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has critically reviewed pertinent literature relating to the work-life balance of female academics, and it is evident that there is the need for further research to consider the impact of culture, on their experiences as well as on policy and practices implemented by institutions. Additionally, the review of literature has highlighted that for studies that consider the role of culture, they remain restricted by focusing mainly on western countries and furthermore, do not consider the possible variations that may exist in other racial and ethnic groups. The following chapter discusses the methodological approach used in this research which includes the research philosophy, research design, data collection methods and sampling technique.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the research methodology adopted, in order to justify the approaches that were chosen to address the research questions of this study. Discussions will be undertaken on the research philosophy, the approaches and the research design of this study. Furthermore, the pilot study will be discussed as well as the ethical considerations. In order to ensure that the methodological process was adequately examined and justified, the researcher developed objectives to be addressed:

1. To discuss the meaning of research and research methodology

2. To establish the epistemological and ontological positions of this research

3. To justify the adopted research approach for this research

4. To explain the adopted research design

5. To identify and explain the most appropriate data collection methods for this research

6. To justify the most suitable method for data analysis and the interpretation of the data collected

7. To discuss the pilot study of this research

8. To explain the ethical considerations that were made in this research

3.1 Research Defined

This section aims to provide an appropriate definition of research and identifies the type of research which this specific study is linked to. It begins by examining various perspectives of what research is, as it is imperative that a logical definition of what constitutes research is provided before the research methodology for this specific study is discussed. According to Saunders et al (2019), research has been defined as a process that people undertake in a systematic way in order to find out things, thereby increasing their knowledge. Different perspectives on what the term 'research' signifies have been proposed (Collins and Hussey, 2003; Walliman, 2007; Bryman and Bell, 2015) yet, the common consensus is that research involves the acquisition of new information. However, Walliman (2007) argues that the term 'research' is used vaguely to represent the collection of facts or information with no clear purpose and the reassembling of information without interpretation. A review of literature on what a research entails was carried out for the purpose of this study, and it has been acknowledged that there is genuineness in Walliman's (2007) criticism therefore, a comprehensive justification will be provided for the purpose of undergoing this research. The definition provided by Saunders et al (2019) was applied to this study as they further explain that research should involve an explanation of the method or methods used to collect data, an argument on why the results obtained are meaningful as well as identifying the limitations thus far.

According to (May, 2001; Bryman, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al 2012, Macintosh et al 2017 and Saunders et al, 2019), a researcher must first decide if the research is categorized as basic or applied research in order to effectively carry out a research investigation. Although Huff and Huff (2001) is of the opinion that business management related research should fit

into both basic and applied research due to the possibility of having both theoretical and practical implications, there are distinct characteristics between these forms of research, that should be taken into consideration when making a decision, regarding the most appropriate category for the research investigation. Saunders et al (2015) explain that basic research is undertaken by a researcher to develop findings that are crucial and valuable to the society in general whereas, applied research deals with scientific enquiry with findings that are of practical relevance and value to managers in organizations. Similarly, Sarantakos (2005) argues that basic research is purposive and rigorous which aims to generate new knowledge that is based on facts, gathered by the researcher while Bryman (2008) states that applied research requires experiments that solve a specific problem in a work environment. Based on these characteristics, it is evident that this research investigation falls into basic research which involves human inquiry that provides findings which would have both theoretical and practical implications. Therefore, this research corroborates with Huff and Huff's (2001) viewpoint that research can have both theoretical and practical implications without being in the middle of the spectrum of both basic and applied research.

Having identified what research entails and distinguishing between basic and applied research, the next section discusses the research model that is specific to this research study. It identifies the significance of a research model and discusses each phase of the methodological process that will be undertaken in a hierarchical order.

3.2 Research Model

This section provides a framework for this research which presents an overview of the research structure and the process which commences with the research philosophy and concludes with ethical considerations.

The purpose of integrating a framework in this research is to establish the methodological rigor of the research process. Saunders et al (2019) points out that methodological rigor involves the strength and quality of the research method used in terms of planning, the data collection methods, the data analysis, and the findings. There are significant differences between the frameworks used by several scholars (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Sarantakos, 2005; Saunders et al, 2007; Bryman, 2008) which are evident in the components and chronological order of each element of the framework. For instance: Saunders et al's (2007) research onion involves six phases; philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons and techniques & procedures whereas, Creswell's (2003) framework involves 3 phases; philosophical assumptions, research approach and research method.

It should however be highlighted that every research is distinctive and is therefore expected to involve different structures on how the research should be undertaken. Sarantakos (2005) is of the view that having a research structure can be a constraint which restricts the researcher to the boundaries of the structure. Yet, this criticism fails to acknowledge that a lack of structure can impose the possibility of carrying out the research in a way that does not align with the purpose of the research inquiry. In order to avoid this error, the research model that has been designed for the purpose of this research investigation (Figure 3.1) was influenced by Crotty's (1998) hierarchical levels of research, who proposes that the terms;

epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and methods represent distinct hierarchical levels of decision-making in relation to the research design process. In comparison to other models, Crotty's (1998) model was adopted to this research as it shows a comprehensive and chronological process in which each component informs one another. However, one drawback of Crotty's model is the exclusion of Ontology which is a vital component of research philosophy. Crotty (1998) explains that if ontology was included in the model, it would sit alongside epistemology as a tool to inform the theoretical perspective of the research as to talk of the construction of meaning is to talk of the construction of a meaningful reality. Crotty (1998) further states that scholars have trouble keeping ontology and epistemology apart conceptually and both epistemological issues and ontological issues often tend to integrate with each other. Hence, this presents a rationale on why it is imperative that this research addresses what epistemology and ontology entails, to clearly identify what philosophical position this research investigation will undertake.

Figure 3.1: Research Model for this study
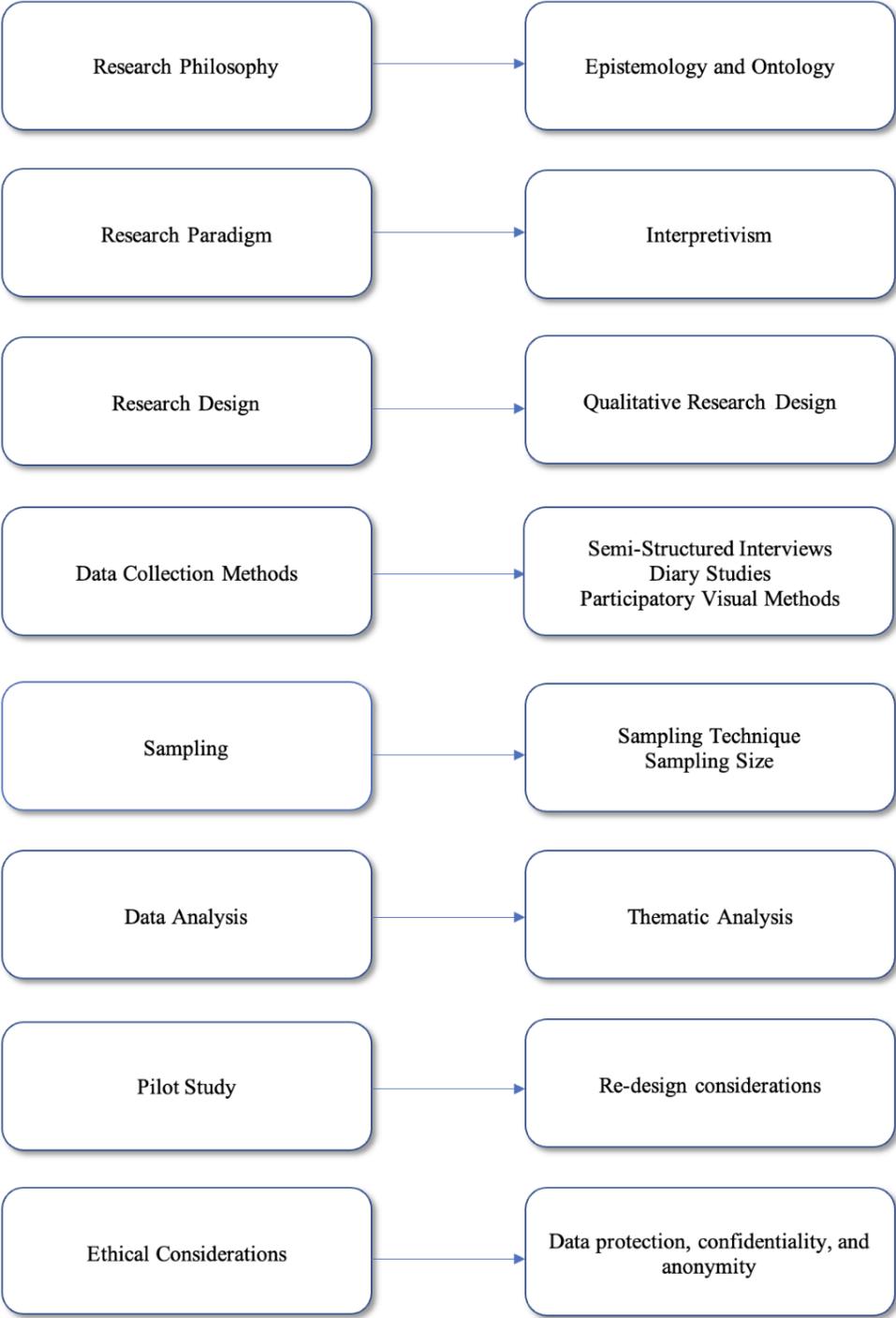
3.3 Research Philosophy

This section discusses the research philosophy that has been chosen for this research while justifying the philosophical stance and why it is the most applicable for this research. It begins by explaining the significance of determining the appropriate research philosophy before explaining what philosophical approach has been chosen.

According to Easterby- Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002), the research philosophy is the most important factor in the research methodology as it provides a path for the research process. The research philosophy that the researcher adopts is dependent on the assumptions they hold on how they view the world, which inherently influences the research strategy and methods adopted for the research investigation (Saunders et al, 2012). Several authors have identified the two major forms of research philosophy namely ontology and epistemology (Crotty, 1998, Easterby-Smith, 2012, Oates, 2009).

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the assumptions we make about whether a phenomenon is real or the nature of the phenomenon under study (Scotland, 2012). It shapes the way we view and study our research objects, therefore determining the choices we make on what to research (Saunders et al, 2016). Epistemology on the other hand, involves the theory of knowledge and is concerned with how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). Based on the following definitions provided for epistemology and ontology, a researcher's ontological belief about reality which is concerned about what is true, will influence one's epistemological belief.

To understand why this research is focused on the work-life balance experiences of women academics, it is key that the various ontological positions are discussed. Although several

researchers have identified different ontological positions such as realism, internal realism, relativism, nominalism (Marsh and Furlong, 2002; Easterby-Smith et al, 2012; Saunders et al, 2012), the realist and constructionist ontologies (Sarantakos, 2012) will be discussed as they are the most logical approaches from which a choice relating to the aim of this research can be made. The realist ontology involves an empiricist epistemology that has a quantitative methodology while a constructionist ontology involves an interpretivist epistemology that has a qualitative methodology (Sarantakos, 2012). Although Sarantakos (2012) uses the terms 'realist' and 'constructivist', it should be noted that different researchers can adopt different terms for their ontological and epistemological positions which is evident above therefore, it is difficult to ascertain if one's idea of research philosophy surpasses another researcher's opinion. Hugli and Lubcke (1997) explain that in realism, reality exists independent from our consciousness and experience. While in constructionist, the meaning of a phenomena emanates from our consciousness engaging with the world and its objects (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). According to Crotty (1998), 'there is no meaning without mind as meaning is not discovered but constructed'.

Upon considering the meanings attributed to realist and constructivist, this research takes on the constructivist stance as the definitions above suggest that realist deals with objective measures of how truth is viewed while constructivist is concerned with different meanings and experiences that individuals attribute to the phenomena which acknowledges that there are multiple versions of reality. For the researcher to explore the experiences that women academics hold about their work-life balance, there must be a link between the individual (subject) and the phenomena under study. This research is shaped by the work-life balance experiences of these group of women and therefore, cannot take an objective approach. In

addition, the previous chapters have shown evidence of the phenomena being subjective in nature. For instance, the themes discussed in the literature review some of which include, the impact of family, work flexibility, the impact of culture, the role of social support are all discussed based on the experiences of individuals.

The next section discusses the research paradigms by examining the positivist and interpretivist paradigms and identifying the chosen paradigm for this research.

3.4 Research Paradigms

This section provides an understanding of research paradigms and further justifies the adoption of the interpretivism paradigm for this research.

Research paradigm refers to a set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived and helps to provide a basis for the research process, its logic and criteria which feeds into the methodology of the research (Crotty, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005). However, Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that the term 'research paradigm' has been used loosely and has different meaning to different researchers. Nonetheless, Easterby-Smith et al (2012) argue that understanding philosophical issues is crucial in order to effectively clarify the research design, identify the limitations of each design and provide guidance on how to adapt research designs according to the constraints of different subject or knowledge structures. Philosophical assumptions and research paradigms are significant to gaining insights into the overall perspective from which the study is designed and carried out (Krauss, 2005).

According to Collis and Hussey (2009), there are two main research paradigms namely positivism and interpretivism. According to Creswell (2014), positivism involves the researcher having an objective account, viewing the world as a factual entity, that is

separated from human experiences subjectively. The goal of positivism is the discovery of theories based on observation and experimentation (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Looking back at section 3.3 which showed that this research takes on a constructivist philosophical stance, the positivism paradigm does not align with this research as constructivist is linked to multiple realities. Therefore, positivism is inapplicable to this research due to its idea of viewing the world by testing theories. Hence, interpretivism will be considered for this research.

According to Collis and Hussey (2003), interpretivism involves the researcher understanding human behaviour from the participant's personal point of view. Interpretivism paradigm aims to understand the individual, the belief that cause and effect are mutually interdependent, that knowledge is derived from the findings, the acceptance that context is vital for knowledge and there is an inevitable interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Morgan, 2007). According to Van Maanen (1983), interpretivists adopt a range of methods that seek to describe, translate and come to terms with the meaning, frequency, of more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. Having looked at the positivism and interpretivism paradigms, the researcher chose interpretivism for the following reasons;

Work-life balance as a phenomenon has multiple realities and the researcher can only examine it from the participant's point of view. Therefore, it is subjective in nature as the aim is to 'understand' the work-life balance experiences of women academics through interacting with them and examining their interpretations. These experiences cannot be viewed from an objective point of view as the goal is to understand the factors that influence

their experiences and what perceptions they hold about their work-life balance. There are a variety of research paradigms such as post-positivism, realism, subjectivism, critical realism, pragmatism (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Maylor and Blackmon, 2005) however, positivism and interpretivism are the 2 main traditional approaches to research paradigms and were therefore the focus of this discussion.

The next section discusses the research design for this study. Kivunja and Kuyini (2007) argue that research approaches suitable for interpretivism paradigm include narrative inquiry, naturalist, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography and action research. Therefore, the chosen research design and approach will be discussed and justified.

3.5 Research Design

The research design is essentially a strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of the methods and linking the choice and the use of methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). Similarly, Saunders et al (2012) explains that a resign design is a plan of how you intend to answer your research questions in relation to the data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations. The most common research designs for business management research are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods which involve a combination of both qualitative and quantitative (Saunders et al, 2016).

This section therefore aims to evaluate the various research designs and validate the rationale for the chosen design. According to Silverman (2013), no method of research is intrinsically better than the other and it is crucial that the most appropriate research design is not pre-determined, but rather it should align with the research questions. Hence, each

research design will be examined in the next sub-section, by identifying the strengths and limitations of each approach in order to determine which approach would best address the research questions of this study.

3.5.1 Adopted Research Design

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an inductive method used to explore the experiences of individuals on a specific phenomenon in order to gain an understanding of events. Bryman and Bell (2015) argue that qualitative research involves words and is inductivist, constructivist and interpretivist in nature, while quantitative research emphasizes quantification and is deductivist and objectivist in nature. Therefore, quantitative research involves developing knowledge that yields statistical data such as cause and effect thinking, the use of measurement, the testing of theories and experimentation (Creswell, 2003). Nonetheless, this research takes on qualitative research design.

The key determinant of choosing qualitative research design for this research is how the research questions will be answered. It was established in sections 3.3 and 3.4 that this research is taking a constructivist and interpretivist approach towards its philosophical stance. Based on the arguments provided by Bryman and Bell (2015) above, it is evident that qualitative research is the most appropriate design for this research. Punch (2008) argues that qualitative research is the only research design that can identify and handle the complex emotions and attitudes of individuals. Returning to the research questions identified in chapter 1, they are all linked to exploring the work-life balance experiences of women academics by gaining an understanding of the relationship between the work and non-work

domains and how they impact one's work-life balance. Hence, qualitative research design was appropriate due to its ability to capture these work-life balance experiences in the own words of the participants, thereby ensuring that the researcher has an in-depth understanding of their perceptions and experiences. Nonetheless, there are criticisms of the use of qualitative research design.

One criticism of qualitative research is that it is time consuming. Bryman (2001) explains that the use of quantitative research design aids the reduction of time and resources spent. Nonetheless, the quality of data collected is of utmost importance in this research as it aids in addressing the research questions therefore, the time and resources involved in qualitative research is minor compared to what can be achieved. Researcher's bias which involves any influence that provides a distortion in the results of the study (Polit and Beck, 2014) has been identified as another limitation of qualitative research. Galdas (2017) argues that researchers are an integral part of the research process and the results, therefore separation from the research is neither possible nor desirable however, the concern should be whether the researcher has been transparent or reflexive. Therefore, crucial steps involving reflexivity were taken by the researcher to reduce the possibility of bias during the data collection process. These steps will be elaborated in sub-section 3.5.1.1. Additionally, Litchman (2006) argues that quantitative research which involves the researcher not being directly involved with the participants could be disadvantageous as researchers will be unable to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its natural setting. Therefore, this implies that the relationship between the researcher and the participants may not be entirely unfavorable. In regard to considering a mixed-method research design, Mason (2002) argues that mixed-method approach can offer a deeper understanding of the

phenomenon of interest. Mixed-method approach is characterized by using both qualitative and quantitative designs in the data collection and analysis (Nastasi et al, 2010). However, Creswell (2009) emphasizes that combining methods is challenging and should only be applied when there is a specific reason to do so. While mixed methods has its benefit of offering a deeper understanding of the research investigation, the researcher concluded that qualitative research design was sufficient due to its benefits and its link to the research questions which have been addressed above.

This sub-section has set out to justify the use of qualitative research design by addressing its benefits as well as its limitations. The next sub-section discusses phenomenological research as the chosen form of qualitative research design for this study.

3.5.1.1 Adopted Approach

According to Creswell et al (2007), the forms of qualitative research design include narrative research, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology and participation action research. Although these forms of qualitative research designs all have their specific significance to research, this study adopts phenomenological research for a primary purpose which will be discussed. However, it is crucial to understand first what phenomenology means. According to Cohen et al (2007), phenomenology is a theoretical point of view advocating for the study of individuals' experiences because human behavior is determined by the phenomena of experiences rather than objective physically described reality that is external to the individual. Walsh (2012) argues that phenomenology involves examining the phenomenon of interest among a group of participants who have encountered the phenomenon. Therefore, it aims to describe the meaning of this experience both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al, 2015).

This research therefore aims to examine what work-life balance experiences the participants have and how they experienced it. For example, data collected during the data collection phase showed that work-life conflict was evident for majority of the participants. However, how they experienced work-life conflict was unique to each participant. That is, participants experienced work-to-life conflict, life-to-work conflict or both, which was caused by one or more of the following: childcare demands, long working hours, unsocial hours, religious activities, cultural background, other family demands. Therefore, adopting phenomenology in this study gives the researcher the opportunity to discover what factors or determinants influenced their work-life balance experiences. Moustakas (1994) argues that the end goal of phenomenological research is to derive the underlying essence of the phenomenon. Furthermore, as with other aspects of this research such as qualitative research design and the interpretivism paradigm, phenomenology aligns with this research's philosophical stance, constructivist philosophy as it is subjective in nature, and it focused on understanding the lived work-life balance experiences of women academics therefore, their experiences can only be understood from the participants perspectives.

According to Reiners (2012), the two main approaches to phenomenological research are descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology. In descriptive phenomenology, experience as perceived by human consciousness has value and should be an object of scientific study (Lopez and Willis, 2004). Husserl (1970) argues that a researcher undertaking descriptive phenomenology must shed all previous experience or personal bias about the phenomenon of interest in order to gain a full understanding of the lived experiences of individuals under study. However, interpretive phenomenology takes a different approach. Heidegger (1962) argues that humans are embedded in their world to

such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked to social, cultural and political contexts. According to Lopez and Willis (2004), it goes beyond the description of concepts to identify meanings embedded in experiences.

Having examined both descriptive and interpretive phenomenology, the most appropriate approach for this research is interpretive phenomenology. This research is highly interpretive in nature and the researcher plays a significant role in the research process. The researcher is focused on understanding the meanings that the women academics hold about their work-life balance experiences which can be influenced by culture, gender and institutional factors. Heidegger (1962) argues that it is impossible to rid the mind of the background of the phenomenon, as it was what informed the researcher to undertake that research. In this research, the review of literature around work-life balance and women academics identified key gaps that needed to be addressed, which instigated the research investigation therefore, the researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon is vital to the investigation. Furthermore, Crotty (1996) points out that it is humanly impossible for qualitative researchers to be completely objective. Although the aim of descriptive phenomenology is to ensure that the researcher's opinions does not affect the findings of the research, it will be impossible in this research to detach oneself however, the reflexivity strategy was applied to ensure that the researcher is aware of how their thoughts and opinions might affect the research.

Reflexivity involves the process in which the research is conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and subject position might impact on the data or the psychological knowledge produced in a study (Langdridge, 2007). There are various

forms of reflexivity such as methodological, contextual, personal and interpersonal reflexivity (Holland, 1999) however, the researcher was focused on personal reflexivity. Personal reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher's experiences, attitudes and emotions will affect the interactions with the participants and subsequent analysis of the data (Patnaik, 2013). In order to apply reflexivity, the researcher addressed specific questions in Table 3.1, based on Hsiung (2008) recommendations. Table 3.1 shows details of the questions answered by the researcher, the stage of the research in which those questions are significant and the researcher's responses. Hanson (1994) suggests that aspects in reflexivity that should be explored include the researcher's reasons for undertaking the research, assumptions regarding gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, the researcher's place in the power hierarchy of the research and the researcher's personal value system.

Table 3.1: Reflexivity in this research. Adopted from Hsuing (2008)

Questions	Stage of research	Response
How has my personal history influenced the choice of the topic?	Pre-data collection	The researcher had no previous personal history regarding the phenomenon of interest. The choice of the research topic was guided by gaps identified in work-life balance literature
What are my personal value systems that may influence the process of the research?	Pre-data collection	Achievement, self-direction, tradition.
How does my gender, culture and professional background influence my positioning in this topic and my relationship with the participants?	During data collection	Being a woman as a researcher, played a role in understanding some of the participants' experiences. The cultural background of the researcher provided an initial expectation of the norms and values that are held in a Nigerian society; however, it had no impact on the UK society
What are the alternate roles I might be called upon to play while interacting with the participant apart from my primary role as a researcher?	Pre-data collection	As a listener because the research involves participants expressing themselves therefore, some questions can be sensitive in nature and would require active listening and support.
What are the possible advantages that I have in terms of personal history and professional competence?	Pre-data collection	The researcher had undergone research training to ensure that they are competent enough to carry out the data collection.
What might be the barriers that my personal history and professional competence can create during data collection?	Pre-data collection and During data collection	The researcher did not identify any barriers that may occur from personal history and professional competence.

How are the emerging data assimilating with my prior knowledge, making me revisit an earlier stance?	Post-data collection	The researcher's prior knowledge was linked to reviewing the work-life balance literature. The emerging data related to past discussions in literature, however, new insights emerged particularly in relation to exploring diverse cultures.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

There are several methods of collecting data in research, ranging from focus groups, observation, questionnaire, survey, interviews, and diary studies (Saunders et al, 2019). For the purpose of this research, three methods, namely interviews, diary studies and participatory visual methods were applied. This section validates the choice of using these three methods to collect data pertaining to the work-life balance of female academics. Additionally, the process through which these methods were applied is detailed comprehensively.

It would be beneficial to discuss the significance of triangulation in relation to this research before exploring the methods. According to Cohen and Manion (2000), triangulation is the attempt to map out, or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying, it from more than one standpoint. In this research, this does not mean that the use of diary studies and participatory visual methods will compensate for the shortcomings of interviews rather, it will strengthen the quality of the data collected due to the different processes and techniques that are involved in each method thereby reinforcing the validity of the data. This is evident in the purpose, the type of questions asked and how the questions are asked.

A common misconception about triangulation is that the aim is to demonstrate that different data sources yield the same results however these sources may yield somewhat different results nonetheless, the inconsistencies in the results should be viewed as an opportunity for deeper insights into the relationship between the inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study (Patton, 1999). Each method will provide in-depth information into the work-life balance experiences of women academics, as they will each produce findings that were unable to be tapped or explored by the other methods. For instance, the questions asked in the interviews are different from those in the diary studies and participatory visual methods. While they are addressing the same research questions, the different questions asked and how the data is collected will provide slightly different responses which is evident in the analysis chapter (chapter 4). Casper et al (2007) argue that there have been methodological deficiencies such as a lack of triangulation, over-reliance on single source of data collection and overemphasis on the individual level of analysis in exploring the work and family domains.

3.6.1 Interviews

This sub-section focuses on the use of interviews as the primary method of data collection in this research. It examines the purpose of using qualitative interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews, and further explains the process in designing the interview format and carrying out the interviews.

The use of interviews as the primary source of data collection in this research was to understand the perceptions, experiences and meanings that women academics attribute to their work-life balance while giving them the opportunity to express themselves in their own

words. According to McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2018), interviews provide an in-depth study to gain valuable insights on the experiences of the participants pertaining to the phenomenon of interest and to discover how their perceptions differ from one another. There are a variety of different interview techniques, with related advantages and disadvantages, for example, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews that will be explored in the next sub-section.

3.6.1.1 Adopted Approach

The aim of this research which is to compare the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria, and to examine the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in promoting gender equality in Higher Education was the major determinant for the chosen approach in carrying out the interviews. Although each approach has its benefits, the use of semi-structured interviews which is also known as general interview guide approach (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003) was adopted in this research.

The use of semi-structured interviews in this research was controlled by an interview guide consisting of questions that were grouped into themes (Appendix 2). According to Qu and Dumay (2011), semi-structured interviews, which is the most common qualitative method, involve the use of prepared interview questions, which were guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner. The use of semi-structured interviews was advantageous to the research because of its flexibility (Bryman and Bell, 2007), which stimulated the discovery of pertinent discussions that emerged which had not yet been considered by the researcher. This further allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions through probing, relating to the research that will not have been possible using structured

interviews. McIntosh and Morse (2015) propose that the questions designed for semi-structured interviews are open-ended which aim to elicit unstructured responses while encouraging a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. For instance, one theme that was explored during the interviews was the availability of work-life balance policies however, participants also expressed their experiences and thoughts not just on the availability of these policies but also on the effectiveness of such policies.

Whereas unstructured interviews do not use predetermined and written down themes or questions to structure or guide the course of the interview (Saunders et al, 2019). However, Creswell (2007) argues that the unstructured interview approach is deemed unstable due to the inconsistency in the interview questions which makes it difficult to code the data. Structured interviews, however, has a high degree of rigidity in the sense that the nature of the questions asked are short and the participants are expected to respond in a way that answers the questions without deviating from the initial topic of discussion (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017). Stuckey (2013) argues that structured interviews are fully controlled by the researcher and the participant is given less room to be flexible and casual. Nonetheless, semi-structured interviews have been linked to several criticisms. For instance, Adams (2015) argues that it is time consuming during the transcription of data. Although the transcription process took about 3-5 hours in this research, the researcher ensured that the interviews were transcribed early to prevent transcribing a large amount of data within a short period of time therefore reducing the impact of time involved in transcribing data.

The interview design will be discussed next, providing details on the interview guide and the steps that were taken during the interview process.

3.6.1.2 Interview Design

McKenna et al (2006) argues that a distinction should be made between the interview schedule and the interview guide as the interview guide adopts a less formal approach to questioning while the interview schedule involves subjecting the participants to pre-determined questions that prohibits exploring different themes outside of the interview schedule. The interview design for this research involved a guide which the researcher used to ask questions that were non-restrictive therefore allowing the researcher to explore various themes and allowed the possibility of probing further without posing leading questions. This helps to draw out a variety of key themes, including unanticipated ones (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). During the process of preparing for the interviews, the researcher designed 6 steps (Table 3.2) that helped frame the interview process from deciding on the type of questions to ask, to the location and duration of the interview. These steps will be discussed independently, starting with step 1, suitability of semi-structured interviews for the research. As discussed in the previous sub-section, semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this research primarily due to its flexibility of being able to stimulate key discussions particularly unforeseen responses that are pertinent to the research.

Stage 2 involved the sampling process; sampling technique and sample size. Section 3.7 discusses these processes in detail. Purposeful sampling was used to identify key informants that will be able to provide important information regarding the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the sample included women academics and individuals linked to the Athena SWAN charter, as they play a significant role in the research process. The sample size involved 30 women academics, 2 Athena SWAN charter team members and 2 HR officials. The purpose of extending the interviews beyond the women academics is to get an

institutional perspective on what has been done and what they intend to do, to promote the work-life balance of women in academia.

The next step was to construct the interview guide. The purpose of the guide was to ensure that the research questions would be addressed through semi-structured interviews. The guide involved themes that emerged from the literature review such as work-life balance, the impact of family, the impact of culture, work flexibility, social support, work-life balance theories and the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter. These 7 themes shaped the structure of the interview in terms of what questions were asked. Once the interview guide was prepared, it was put through a pilot study to ensure that any weakness that has been identified can be addressed and modified before the main interview takes place.

Step 4 involved deciding on the location of the interviews which was completely dependent on the interviewee's choice. Some of the interviews took place in the interviewees' offices while others were conducted online via Microsoft teams due to COVID-19 restrictions. This was an unforeseen circumstance which led to being unable to conduct the interviews face to face however, this unexpected change only affected a small number of interviewees in the UK, as the Nigerian interviews had taken place pre-pandemic. Having addressed the location of the interviews, step 5 involved the interview duration and the use of an audio-recorder.

Each interview lasted between 40-60 minutes and the interviewees chose an interview time that was suitable for them. The researcher informed the interviewees about the purpose of using an audio-recorder to record the interviews which were stated verbally and in the consent form which all the interviewees consented to before the interview commenced. Additionally, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed in the information

sheet and consent forms. The final step involved making the decision on when to carry out the interviews. The decision was made to carry out the interviews before the diaries were distributed to the participants and filled due to the findings of the pilot study. The pilot study showed that participants were less likely to participate in the interviews after filling in the diaries, therefore the decision was made to carry out the interviews first since it was the main data collection method.

Table 3.2: interview stages in this research

Steps	Considerations
1	Suitability of semi-structured interviews for the research
2	Participants: size (34), sampling technique (Snowball and criterion sampling)
3	Interview guide: what type of questions to ask based on the themes that emerged from the literature review
4	Location for the interviews
5	Duration of the interviews: 40-60 minutes. Audio-recording
6	When to carry out interviews: before the diary studies

3.6.2 Diary studies

The previous section detailed the use of semi-structured interviews in this research while taking into consideration the benefits and challenges of using such a method. This section aims to build on the discussion by providing a comprehensive justification for the use of diary study as an additional method of data collection. It examines the purpose of using multiple data collection methods and provides details on the design and implementation of the diary study. It further highlights the challenges that occurred in the process of using the diary study. Following the considerations made from the pilot study, the design and

implementation of the diary study was reviewed. The initial procedures involved in this method will be provided in the pilot study section.

3.6.2.1 Background

Diary studies are increasingly being used in health research to gather data on the behaviors and experiences of individuals however, it remains lacking to a great degree in social research (Bryman, 2008). While it is slowly being adopted, interviews and focus groups remain the primary source of data collection in qualitative research (Bolger et al, 2003). Taking into consideration the numerous benefits of using diary studies such as flexibility and the ability to record variations in daily experiences (Alaszewski, 2006; Ohly et al, 2010), the main purpose of using diary studies in this research is to capture the present-day experiences of participants in order to gain significant information that may not be accessible through interviews. This is particularly of significance to work-life balance research whereby it is not only important to explore the past experiences but also the present-day events as they happen in order to examine the daily changes that occur in relation to their work-life balance. Butler et al (2005) points out that diary studies are consequential in the investigation of work and family domains as they are both dynamic and changing daily.

The use of diary studies in work-life balance research poses other benefits. Firstly, it provides a degree of flexibility that cannot be derived in interviews. The interviews in this research were carried out at a specific location and time that was suitable for the participants however, this does not guarantee that the participants will be comfortable, and this can influence the amount and the type of information they are willing to disclose. Hence, diary

studies pose a better opportunity for convenience with little to no interference in their daily lives. For instance, participants were asked to fill in the diary entry at the end of each day rather than at a certain time of the day. This helped to minimize the pressure that participants may experience during the data collection process. Also, this can influence the data collected, as the diary entry can be recorded in the context that the events took place (Mackrill, 2008). This can provoke feelings and thoughts that can be useful in addressing the research questions particularly linked to working hours, workload and work-life conflict. Furthermore, it helps to minimize researcher's bias as the researcher is not present during the data collection process and therefore, gives control to the participants. George (2006) explains that this enables researchers to collect specific details about events or psychological states of interest over time, without being present to inquire about the phenomena of interest. However, this can restrict the quality of data collected as the researcher cannot ask more questions than what is provided in the diary. This justifies the purpose of using it as an additional method of data collection. An example of this is a question that was asked on spousal support. Based on the responses, the researcher was able to probe further to gain deeper insights into the experiences of the participant. For instance, participants who said that their partners provided support with household chores were further asked how often this support was provided. This helped to know not only the form of support provided but the degree to which this support was available. This therefore helps to validate the data collected through interviews. Lazar, Feng and Hochneiser (2010) state that two or three methods of data collection should be used as it allows for a much better understanding of the phenomena to be obtained rather than relying on one method.

As with every data collection method, the use of diary studies has its challenges that can be detrimental to the quality of data, if they are not addressed adequately. Although the researcher not being present at the time of data collection can be an advantage, it could also be deemed as a significant issue due to the possibility of collecting irrelevant data. As Mackrill (2008) points out that the researcher is not present to put the diarist back on track if they are providing responses that are insignificant to the questions set out in the diaries. In order to minimize the occurrence of this, the best approach would be to provide instructions on what is expected in the diary entry and to address any questions the participants might have about the research. This was addressed during the research, as the researcher had a discussion with the participants before they were given the diaries to fill. This provided an opportunity for the participants to gain clarity on the purpose of the diaries and to ask questions. Instructions were also provided alongside the contact details, on how to fill in the diaries and how to contact the researcher for any enquiries. It would be of little importance to present an overview of the significance of diary studies in this research, without examining the approach taken. The next section aims to discuss this, by reviewing the rationale for the adopted diary approach.

3.6.2.2 Adopted Approach

There are two approaches to diary studies, which are the research driven and non-research driven diaries (Makan, 2014) however this research is focused solely on the research driven diary. Bryman (2008) explains that the non-research driven diary is used by historians to record historical events while the research-driven diary is research oriented and has been used as a method of data collection in both quantitative and qualitative research. Hence, the non-research driven diary will be of no importance to the objectives of this research.

The term 'hybrid' was developed by the researcher to represent the adoption of the feedback diary (Carter and Mankoff, 2005) and the naturalistic diary (Alaszewski, 2006). The hybrid diary constitutes a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions that are qualitative in nature. The adoption of the hybrid diary enabled the researcher to evaluate the frequency of events such as the number of hours spent on work activities daily which instigated close-ended questions and, their experiences and decision-making process. Although the feedback diary allows the researcher to uncover the frequency of events, it has a major limitation, which is the inability of the participants to tell their story and give accounts of their experiences in their own words. Yet, it remains the simplest form that a diary can take as it acts as a log that contains a record of activities without personal comments (Alaszewski, 2006). The naturalistic diary on the other hand, eliminates this limitation by moving beyond the traditional close-ended question format and allowing participants to express themselves. They shift from the simple objective of counting events to focusing on descriptive accounts of activity (Palen and Salzman, 2002).

The discrepancies in both the feedback diary and the naturalistic diary are what led to the creation of the hybrid diary which has the distinctive feature of evaluating the occurrence of events and seeking to understand the dynamics that occur daily in their experiences. Taking this approach was imperative to the nature of the research as it ensured that the questions asked were in line with the research questions, hence it decreased the possibility of collecting unrelated data that are of no use to the research. As this section has established the premise for adopting the hybrid diary approach, the next step is to discuss the diary design. The next sub-section provides details on this, by justifying the type of diary design

appropriate for the research, and the design considerations that were pivotal in shaping the design of the diary study.

3.6.2.3 Diary Design

The adopted diary design was the time-based design which combines the interval-contingent and the event-contingent design. This was formulated by Bolger et al (2003) who coined the term to represent diaries relating to studies that explore daily levels of stress, mood and hourly disparities in specific experiences. While the interval-contingent and the event-contingent designs have their individual strengths, it was of optimal benefit to the research to combine both designs. Originally, Wheeler and Reis (1991) identified the interval-contingent, event-contingent and the signal-contingent designs however, the signal-contingent design was not incorporated into this research as it involved the researcher signaling to the participants at fixed or random points in time when they are expected to describe their experiences. This design impedes the quality of data collected as the researcher has control over the experiences that are recorded. The interval-contingent and event-contingent however curbs this control by ensuring that their experiences are only recorded at certain intervals or when a specific event occurs. Nonetheless, considerations were given during the diary design which include the following: duration, knowledge on use of diaries, method of filling diaries. These considerations will be discussed individually.

One of the challenges of using diary studies was noted by Palen and Salzman (2002) who highlighted that there tends to be a decline in the interest of participants over time during the diary entry process. Using the time-based design ensured that the participants were only expected to fill in the diaries at a specific time each day, which in the case of this research,

was at the end of the day. This also guaranteed that no relevant event or detail was omitted during the diary entry, which could have occurred if it was filled at an earlier point in time therefore overlooking the occurrence of events later. The decision to use time-based design was primarily guided by the pilot study in which participants were given the choice of when to fill in the diaries however, each participant filled the diary entry at the end of the day which was most convenient for them. The key purpose of taking this approach was to ensure that there were no interruptions to their daily activities and to maintain the understanding that the filling of the diary entries was not to be regarded as a burden. Although, it should be noted that this can also be regarded as a drawback to the use of time-based design, as there might be a substantial gap between when the event occurred and when the diary entry is made hence, there is a likelihood that the participants might forget to record the event. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that this will occur considering the participants were expected to complete the entry the same day rather than a few days later.

To further facilitate the motivation of participants, the diary entry was designed to be filled in no more than 6 minutes daily, for a 5-day period. If these factors were not taken into consideration, it would have been negligent on the part of the researcher to play a role in contributing adversely to the experiences of the participants considering it would deviate from the research objectives which is primarily focused on their work-life balance experiences. Although Milligan, Bingley and Gatrell (2005) argue that diary studies should be completed over a 2-4-week period, completing the diary in a shorter amount of time is acceptable if it doesn't exceed 2-3 months in total.

Figure 3.2: Diary Process in this research

Pre-Diary Phase

The purpose of the diary is explained. Details on the expectations for the diary entry are provided to the participants. i.e. amount of detail required, what should be recorded and when the diary should be filled

During Diary Entry

Contact was made with the participants by the researcher at the end of the week, to ensure that the participants had no issue with filling in the diary entries.

Post-Diary Phase

Diaries were collected from the participants and were analyzed.

The use of paper and pencil diary which involves filled a hard copy diary was also a major factor that was considered during the design of the diaries. The pros and cons of this diary format as well as the electronic diaries were examined before a decision was made on the most suitable format for the diaries. The initial decision made was to use paper and pencil diary because it had a significant advantage over the electronic diary format although the electronic diary had more benefits which will be discussed. The key advantage of the paper

and pencil diary is that it requires minimal skills involved during the completion. Ohly et al (2010) notes that there are no preconditions to be met such as Internet access or basic skill in computer use. Furthermore, the paper and pencil diary involved minimal costs as the process of printing the diaries was inexpensive compared to having to build an electronic diary that included features which are not simple in nature. However, the electronic diary format posed substantial benefits, which included reduced risk of data loss and reminder for fill diary entry. While the electronic diary ensures reduced data loss, there is the possibility that data loss can occur in situations where the device is lost or damaged and the diary was not backed up. Nonetheless, it provides a degree of certainty over the paper and pencil diary in which the diary can be easily lost.

The electronic diary can also provide features that remind the participants to fill in the diary entry, which can ensure compliance with the study protocols. While this is a benefit of the electronic diary, the participants can also perceive this as intrusive, as the reminders can be disruptive to their daily activities. And Ohly et al (2010) explains that non-compliance with the study protocols that can involve not filling the diaries at a particular day is a frequent issue, however this does not necessarily invalidate the results in most cases. More so, Green et al (2006) argue that the electronic diary allows participants to delay their entry to a period that would be convenient for them which is still seen as compliance irrespective of the delay therefore, considering electronic diary as the best format to ensure compliance is debatable. Having taken these factors into consideration, the paper and pencil diary was used in the diary design. However, during the process of data collection an unforeseen circumstance occurred whereby the electronic diary had to be adopted. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic which started while data was being collected from the participants in the UK.

Initially, the researcher had concerns regarding the adoption of the electronic diary, which were majorly related to having to adapt to using the two diary formats which was a divergence from the initial decision. This, however, did not incite additional costs as the electronic diary contained all the features of the paper and pencil diary with the exclusion of features that acted as prompts or reminders for the participant. Therefore, the use of both formats was adopted in different phases of the data collection process.

This section has presented the rationale for the use of diary studies as an additional data collection tool. The next section justifies the use of participatory visual methods in this research.

3.6.3 Participatory Visual Methods

This section focuses on the use of participatory visual methods. It examines the purpose of using participatory visual methods, and further discusses the process involved in the design and implementation of the method. There are various forms of visual methods which include the following: photography, film, video, painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, artwork, graffiti, advertising, and cartoons (Glaw et al, 2017). However, this research focuses on the use of drawings as a data collection method.

3.6.3.1 Adopted Approach

The decision to use participatory visual method as an additional method of data collection was not without consideration of its significance to the research. Richards (2011) states that visual methods should be used in research when you want participants to show you how they perceive the world rather than tell you written or verbally. The researcher decided that it was significant to gain insights into the perceptions of women academics regarding their

work-life balance by not just using interviews and diaries but also stimulating reflection that can provoke thoughts and experiences that haven't been considered. According to Gauntlett (2006), visual images act as a metaphor for complex emotions, perceptions and identities.

Spencer (2011) points out that visual methods as with any other research method should not be chosen without considering its significance to the research questions. Taking this into consideration, the researcher considered the benefits of participatory visual methods in addressing the research questions, in a few ways. Firstly, its ability to shed light on the distinct experiences and interpretations held by women academics within cultures. Phoenix (2010) explains that images can act as a powerful indicator of the multiple meanings embedded in our various cultures. An example of this is the drawings done by women academics in Nigeria which showed that despite the high level of patriarchy, they held different meanings about work-life balance. For instance, figure 4.20 showed that work-life balance means career progression to one academic while figure 4.21 revealed that work-life balance means a healthy sleep pattern, feeling happy, and her ability to travel. It was therefore significant for this research to include visual methods as it encourages us to re-assess our understanding of experiences within cultures. As Kamenou (2008) suggests that uniformity in experiences within cultures should not be assumed.

It is important because it stimulates the collection of relevant data from participants involved, about their organizational lives beyond the traditional 'question and answer' techniques and this is significant due to the increasing sensitivity of the ethics involved in Qualitative research (Vince and Warren, 2012). In this research, it created a shift from answering questions based on their work-life balance experiences to building on feelings

that emerged through the process of attributing deeper meanings to images about the phenomena of interest. This visual method was also used to validate findings from semi-structured interviews and diary studies. Barley and Russell (2019) explain that visual methods should be used to elicit other forms of data collection methods such as interviews, in order to produce rich data. This was particularly evident in the research whereby a participant explained during the interview that she wasn't coping well with her work-life balance however during the visual method process, she was able to realize the degree to how much she struggled to achieve work-life balance and what factors were influencing this impediment. In addition to the use of visual methods in validating other data collection methods, there was no immediate response required unlike the interviews, which had a shorter window for their response. During the interviews, participants were asked questions and expected to answer within the timeframe of the interview. However, during the visual method stage, they had more time to reflect on a more extensive representation of their perception.

As with other data collection methods involved in this research, the visual methods have a few limitations that were not overlooked in this research. These were the time involved in analyzing different drawings and the issue of validity in interpreting the data. Although the other methods, particularly interviews, were time consuming during the transcription of data and analysis, the analysis of the visual method would require less time as it has a smaller sample of 11 which was used to manage the time efficiently. As it was not the main method of data collection, there were no requirements to use a large sample size instead, the focus was on corroborating the data that has emerged earlier from the interviews and diary studies. In respect to its validity, Silverman (2001) argues that it is highly interpretive in

nature therefore the validity of this method can be difficult to prove. This shortcoming was resolved by not relying solely on this method as the only method of data collection. Furthermore, after each drawing was made by the participants, they were asked to explain how the drawing made them feel, to understand the meaning that has been ascribed to them. Several of the participants also made indications on the drawings to express their feelings. This eliminated the risk of researcher bias, by preventing the researcher from making their own personal interpretations about the drawings.

3.6.3.2 Participatory visual drawings design

The design of the drawings was primarily dependent on a variety of factors such as the pilot study, time required to complete, and the ease of use. There is relatively little information on how to design drawings when using visual methods. One reason for this has been identified by Glaw et al (2017) who states that visual methodologies are a new and novel approach to qualitative research and are increasingly used in health and illness research.

For those studies that have adopted the use of visual methods in their research, they mostly rely on photography or film. See for example, Wang (2007) and Packard (2008). And for the few who use drawings in qualitative research, it has been mainly with children and youths. For example, Young and Barrett (2001), Gauntlett (2005), Literat (2013). Therefore, their approaches cannot be entirely applicable to this research. The researcher utilized an approach similar to Literat (2013) by asking the participants to make a drawing on their work-life balance. However, the participants were asked to further fill in a description of the image and how they felt about it. This was different to Literat's (2013) approach which involved participants giving a narration. The researcher made the decision to use a textual

description rather than through audio because it was a more effective approach to encouraging the participants to engage after they had completed the diaries. This was because they were given the opportunity to do it in their own time and space, rather than having the researcher there with them. Appendix 5 shows a sample of what the participants were asked to do for the drawing.

3.7 Sampling

This section examines the sampling technique and the sample size that were adopted in this research. It discusses the importance of purposeful sampling in this phenomenological research, and the use of snowball and criterion sampling with the application of an inclusion criteria.

3.7.1 Sampling Technique

According to Patton (1990), there are two major types of sampling techniques namely, the random probability sampling and the purposeful sampling. The random probability sampling involves selecting individuals from the population randomly to be included in the sample (Taherdoost, 2016). Whereas purposeful sampling involves the identification and selection of individuals that are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Etikan, Musa and Aikassim, 2018). However, purposeful sampling was chosen for this research due to its significance to the research aim and questions. Serakan (2003) argues that purposive sampling is limited to a specific group of individuals who have the required information pertinent to the research investigation. Therefore, purposive sampling was appropriate for this research as the participants chosen; women academics, HR officials and Athena SWAN charter team members, are knowledgeable about work-life balance, gender equality and

career progression, and will therefore be able to provide information that will address the overall aim of the research as well as the research questions. Hence, the sample for this study was chosen because they serve a specific purpose to the research.

Once the decision to adopt purposeful sampling was made, the next step was to choose the type of purposeful sampling that is most appropriate for this research. Although there are 16 types of purposeful sampling identified by Patton (1990), this research adopted the use of two types of purposeful sampling: snowball sampling and criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves studying individuals that meet some predetermined criterion of importance whereas snowball sampling involved studying a number of individuals who then identify other information-rich key informants (Patton, 1990). Initially, the researcher intended to use only criterion sampling in this research with the use of the inclusion criteria in table 3.3 however, the snowballing sampling was also adopted as an additional sampling technique following the commencement of the data collection process, to attract more individuals who are important to the research investigation. Suri (2011) suggests that it is crucial to reflect critically and realistically on the criteria being used as very strict criteria can result in the inclusion of such a small sample than what is required for the research. Hence, each criterion was chosen by the researcher after careful consideration, to ensure that key individuals pertinent to the research investigation will not be omitted and, also to reduce the likelihood of including individuals who are not significant to the research.

The purpose of choosing each criterion in table 3.3. will be addressed. The age group 25-65 was chosen based on the OECD's (2021) age groups for labour market participation. The job status includes both lecturers and researchers at all levels to compare their work-life balance

experiences particularly in relation to their work demands. The minimum number of years in academia is 6 months, therefore any potential participant who had been in academia for less than 6 months will be excluded from the study. The reason for this was to ensure that rich data would be collected pertaining to work-life balance and academia. Those with less than 6 months in academia may not have sufficient experience and will therefore produce limited data. The study was restricted to only women in order to effectively address the research aim. Due to the research aim and questions, it is key that the focus remains on women, as it has been from the onset. Including men in this study, will deviate from the initial aim and may therefore lead to the process of collecting insignificant data.

Table 3.3: Inclusion Criteria for this research

Category	Criteria
Age group	25-65
Job status	Lecturers and Researchers in academia in all levels
Number of years in academia	Minimum of 6 months in academia
Gender	Women

During the initial phase, participants who were interviewed were insufficient to meet the proposed sample size. This is where snowball sampling was introduced. These participants were asked if they had contacts that fit the criteria of the research and would be willing to participate. Although, this type of sampling technique might appear to share some qualities to that of convenience sampling, the latter is likely to provide results that are questionable. Convenience sampling selects participants based on convenience, that is, participants that are easily accessible and are inexpensive to the study (Patton, 1990). While accessibility and

cost are important factors in any research, they should not be the rationale for any research as it could yield unreliable and less credible data. Moreover, each potential participant that was identified through snowball sampling went through a screening phase in which a 15–20-minute discussion took place between the researcher and the prospective participant to ensure that they were a right fit for the research.

3.7.2 Sample Size

This section addresses the process involved in selecting the sample size for this research. It discusses the various views of scholars regarding the appropriate sample size for undertaking qualitative research.

A variety of scholars have provided different views on what the appropriate sample size for qualitative research should be. For example, Dworkin (2012) suggests thar a sample size of 5-50 participants is adequate for qualitative research. However, McIntosh and Morse (2015) argue that qualitative research should have a minimum of 30 participants to ensure adequate collection of key data relevant to the research questions. Despite these recommendations by Dworkin (2012) and McIntosh and Morse (2015), Patton (1990) argues that there is no specific number for sample size in qualitative research, rather it depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources. Having considered these arguments, Patton's (1990) argument was taken into account for this research.

The primary determinant of the sample size was the aim of this research in which the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' work-life balance experiences therefore, selecting a sample size which is adequate to examine the extensive perceptions of

women academics was necessary. According to Dworkin (2012), the sample size in qualitative research is relatively small in comparison to quantitative research because qualitative research methods are often concerned with gathering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or focused on a meaning which are often centered on the how and why of a particular issue. Considering this, the researcher decided on a sample size of 40 which was in alignment with Dworkin (2012) and McIntosh and Morse (2015) recommendations for the appropriate sample size. However, this sample size was reduced to 30 for women academics and 4 for HR officials and Athena SWAN self-assessment team, which yielded a sample size of 34 in total.

A significant reason for the decline in sample size from 40 to 34 was that a few participants who initially agreed to participate in the interviews opted out of the research due to personal reasons or unforeseen circumstances. Additionally, the sample size for the diaries and visual drawings was 11 which were chosen out of the women academics who participated in the interviews. The purpose of selecting 11 participants was because the diaries and drawings were used as a supplementary form of data collection therefore, they involved a lesser sample size. Furthermore, not all academics who were interviewed were willing to engage in the diaries and drawings therefore, this was out of the researcher's control and inevitably decreased the sample size.

The timeline, accessibility and proposed cost for the research also played a crucial role in determining the sample size. The duration that was set out for data collection in each country was 3 months, to ensure that adequate time was given to carry out the interviews, allow participants to fill in the diary entry and participatory drawings. Accessibility to the

participants was also a significant criterion especially in Nigeria due to the political instability of the country. The selection of the participants was limited to the western region of the country as it was one of the safest locations to carry out the research due to the insurgence of terrorism in other regions. It was concluded that two universities would be selected in each country, UK and Nigeria in order to avoid exceeding the financial cost of the research. Therefore, restricting the sample to just 4 universities in total ensured that the costs spent on travelling and commuting in each country was reasonable as the research is self-funded.

Table 3.4: Participants Profile

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Country	Job Title	Department	Number of Years in Academia	Marital Status	Number of Children	Age Group	Universities
1	Lilian	UK	Senior Research Associate	Business and Management	7	Married	-	25-54	B
2	Kate	UK	Lecturer	HRM	10	Partner	-	55-64	A
3	Chelsy	UK	Early-Career Researcher	Business and Management	1	Partner	2	25-54	B
4	Amanda	UK	Lecturer	Business Technology	11	Partner	-	25-54	A
5	Tracy	UK	Lecturer	Law	3	Partner	2	25-54	A
6	Amy	UK	Senior Lecturer	Sports	2	Single	-	25-54	A
7	Eleana	UK	Lecturer	Accounting	3	Single	-	25-54	B
8	Elisha	UK	Hourly Paid Lecturer	HRM	4	Married	2	25-54	A
9	Caroline	UK	Lecturer and Director	HRM	15	Married	1	25-54	B
10	Toni	UK	Lecturer	Marketing	14	Married	3	25-54	A

11	Lynn	UK	Lecturer, Module Leader, Programme Leader	HRM	12	Partner	-	25-54	A
12	Christine	UK	Lecturer, Programme Leader	Finance	10	Married	-	25-54	A
13	Jade	UK	Lecturer, Management	Marketing	23	Married	2	55-64	A
14	Sadie	UK	Lecturer	Finance	13	Married	4	55-64	B
15	Bisi	Nigeria	Associate Professor	Political Science	8	Married	2	55-64	C
16	Ronke	Nigeria	Lecturer	HRM	5	Married	2	25-54	C
17	Tinuke	Nigeria	Lecturer, Researcher	Physics	13	Married	2	25-54	D
18	Fisayo	Nigeria	Lecturer	Chemistry	12	Married	2	25-54	D
19	Ada	Nigeria	Lecturer	Mathematics	22	Married	3	25-54	D
20	Amaka	Nigeria	Lecturer	Biochemistry	20	Married	2	55-64	D
21	Nkechi	Nigeria	Lecturer, Researcher	Human Kinetics	10	Married	3	55-64	D
22	Toun	Nigeria	Lecturer	Marketing	18	Married	3	25-54	C
23	Tola	Nigeria	Professor	Physics	29	Married	1	25-54	D
24	Ola	Nigeria	Lecturer	Chemistry	8	Married	2	55-64	C
25	Tope	Nigeria	Senior Lecturer	Economics	27	Married	4	25-54	C
26	Dara	Nigeria	Lecturer	Botany	24	Widow	2	55-64	D
27	Chi	Nigeria	Lecturer	Biology	10	Married	2	25-54	D
28	Lola	Nigeria	Lecturer	Business Management	15	Single	-	25-54	D
29	Tosin	Nigeria	Senior Lecturer, Director	Entrepreneurship	3	Married	2	55-64	C
30	Yemisi	Nigeria	Lecturer	General Studies	12	Married	2	25-54	C
31	Tamara	UK	Senior Lecturer, Athena SWAN	Business and Management	20	-	-	-	B

			self-assessment team						
32	Sara	UK	Inclusion and Diversity	HR	-	-	-	-	A
33	Dupe	Nigeria	HR Manager	HR	-	-	-	-	D
34	Ope	Nigeria	Head of HR	HR	-	-	-	-	C

3.7.3 Research Context

This section provides a brief background of the research context, UK and Nigeria. The purpose of focusing on the north-west, UK and South-west Nigeria is due to the following reasons: political instability, funding, timeframe. The political instability in Nigeria was considered for safety reasons. The south-west was relatively safer than the North, therefore the research was limited to the south-west. In relation to funding, this research was self-funded by the researcher therefore, finance was a determinant of the research context. The researcher also intended to collect data from both countries in 3 months each therefore, this restricted the data collection to one region in each country.

3.7.3.1 Brief Background of UK

The United Kingdom is made up of mainland Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland) and the northern part of the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland) (The Commonwealth, 2021). According to the World Bank (2021) there are 67.2 million people in the UK with a labour force of 34.7 million people. In 2019/2020, 11.7 million people were in relative low income before housing cost and 14.5 million were in relative low income after housing cost in the UK (Francis-Devine, 2021).

The UK's GDP accounted for 2.831 trillion US dollars in 2019 in comparison to its GDP in 2009 which accounted for 2.412 trillion US dollars (World Bank, 2021). Its GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.4% in August 2021 although it continues to remain 0.8% below its pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic level in February 2020 (ONS, 2021). The 4 main sectors thar feed into the UK's GDP are agriculture, construction, production and services (ONS, 2013). However, the services sector is the largest part of the economy making up 79% of output in 2019 (Booth, 2021).

Figure 3.3: Map of the UK (Nations Online, 2021)

3.7.3.2 Brief Background of Nigeria

Nigeria is a large, densely populated west African country on the Gulf of Guinea with its capital being Abuja and its neighboring countries, Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (The Commonwealth, 2021). Initially, Nigeria was part of the British colony until her independence in 1960 (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Nigeria, shown in Figure 3.4, is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federation of 36 autonomous states and the Federal Capital Territory (World Bank, 2021).

It has a population of roughly 200 million people however, its unemployment rate was 27% in 2020, with unemployed people aged 15-24 accounting for 14% which is an increase from 9.8% in 1997 (World Economic Forum, 2021). Despite its huge population and multiple resources, 4 in 10 Nigerians are living below the poverty line with 39.1 percent living below the international poverty line of $1.90 per person per day (World Bank, 2021). Oil accounted for 9.25% of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2021 which is an increase from 5.8% recorded in the fourth quarter of 2020 (International Trade Administration, 2021)

Figure 3.4: Map of Nigeria (United Nations, 2021)

Table 3.5: Universities Profile

Institutions	Brief Description
University A	A public university located in North-west, UK. Holds the Athena SWAN Bronze award. The university's schools include Arts and Media, Science, Engineering and Environment, Health and Society, Business School. Number of staff ranges between 2000-3000
University B	A public university located in North-west, UK. Holds the Athena SWAN Bronze award. The university's schools include Arts and Humanities, Business and Law, Health and Education, Science and Engineering. Number of staff ranges between 4800-5000
University C	Faith-based private university which dedicates its mission, values and policies around Christianity, is located in South-west, Nigeria. Offers both undergraduate and postgraduate course in Arts, Management, Social Science, Science & Technology. Number of staff ranges between 250-700.
University D	A public university located in South-west, Nigeria. It is a state government-owned university. Offers both undergraduate and postgraduate course in STEM and Arts, Humanities. Number of staff ranges between 1000-1499

3.8 Data analysis

This section discusses the two main approaches to data analysis; qualitative and quantitative data analysis and further provides a justification for the chosen data analysis method applied to this research. Furthermore, it discusses the process of analysis and the use of thematic analysis which involves the identification of themes in the data.

3.8.1 Approaches to Data Analysis

There are two main approaches to data analysis (Rugg and Petre, 2007; Oates, 2009; Saunders et al 2009; Denscombe, 2010) which are the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis methods. This section explains the justification for using qualitative data analysis for this research and discusses each of these approaches before identifying the adopted approach.

3.8.1.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

Qualitative and Quantitative data analysis have been identified as the two main approaches to carrying out data analysis in research (Rugg and Petre, 2007; Oates, 2009; Denscombe, 2010; Saunders et al 2019). According to Descombe (2010), qualitative data analysis involves the process of analyzing data that is derived from words and images whereas, quantitative data analysis is associated with numbers. The applicability of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis to this research was taken into consideration in order to decide on the most appropriate approach. The type of data was the key element in adopting qualitative data analysis as the data gathered through the interviews, diary studies and participatory visual method primarily involves words and images therefore, it is highly qualitative in nature. However, Saunders (2019) points out that the differences between

quantitative and qualitative data analysis are not only evident in the type of data but also in range of techniques, as quantitative data analysis relies on indices, tables, graphs and correlation between variables while qualitative data analysis relies primarily on techniques such as thematic analysis, template analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory method and data display and analysis. The next section evaluates the chosen qualitative data analysis approach for the research.

3.8.2 Adopted Approach

Saunders et al (2019) recommends that specific considerations should be made in deciding on the appropriate approach while undertaking qualitative research; the methodological and philosophical basis of the research, the approach to theory and development used in the research and the analytical approach used in the technique. The latter was the core consideration that was made in choosing the primary technique of qualitative data analysis for this research. The researcher decided on data fragmentation and reduction which involves simplifying and reducing the data by summarizing the meanings in order to understand and undertake further analysis, rather than maintaining data integrity which involves neither fragmentation nor rearrangement (Saunders et al, 2019). The rationale for the data analysis of this research is to identify patterns in the data that are related to the research question therefore the researcher made the decision to fragment and reduce the data through thematic analysis. Despite the diversity in techniques used to fragment and reduce data; template analysis, Data display and analysis and grounded theory method (Saunders et al, 2019), the benefits of using thematic analysis in this research ousted the other techniques. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that one of the benefits of using thematic analysis in analyzing qualitative data is for investigating different perspectives

amongst participants by highlighting similarities and differences, which generates deeper insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In addition to this, King (2004) points out that it is used for summarizing significant features of large data sets as it encourages the researcher to use a systematized approach in handling the data, which helps to produce a clear and structured report. Therefore, thematic analysis was adopted in this research to identify patterns and relationships within the data in a clear and structured manner. However, data preparation has to be undertaken before the data analysis process begins. The next section provides details on the procedures involved in the data preparation phase

3.8.3 Data Preparation

The preparation of the data preceded the data analysis phase in this research, through a variety of approaches that are specific to qualitative data; Data cleaning, safely storing the data and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. This section describes how the data was prepared for the analysis phase in each of the data collection methods, Interviews, diary studies and participatory visual methods. The discussion begins with the interviews through the transcription of the audio-recordings, creating codes to identify the participants and the secure storage of the files. Thereafter, the diary studies provide information on the use of pseudonyms, reviewing the diary documents and storing the documents securely. The participatory visual methods take a similar approach to that of the diary studies.

3.8.3.1 Interviews

The process of data cleaning was applied to the interviews. This was undertaken after the interviews had been transcribed in order to provide the researcher with an opportunity to identify errors that were made during the transcription process (Broeck, Cunningham,

Eeckels and Herbst, 2005). The data cleaning was addressed by replaying the audio recordings whilst the researcher reviewed the transcripts. This took a significantly faster time to accomplish compared to the transcription of the data. The errors that were identified by the researcher included omitted data and typographical errors which went through a correction phase. Once the data cleaning had been completed, the electronic and hardcopies of the transcripts were stored securely. The researcher produced hardcopies of the transcription in order to be able to make manual notes and codes about each interview. The transcribed interviews were catalogued using participants pseudonym and numbering systems so that the researcher can return to specific areas in the transcript. This was done using 4 components: the type of data collection method, the participant's pseudonym, the page and the paragraph. For instance, using the code for Kate, I.Kate.1.4, tells the researcher that it is the interview transcript, Kate's data, page 1 and paragraph 4.

Once the data has undergone the data cleaning process, the analysis of the data was carried out next. The next sections explain this based on the six-phase analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.8.3.1.1 Implemented process

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for doing thematic analysis was applied to carry out the analysis effectively. These steps included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and write up. The first step, becoming familiar with the data involved the researcher immersing themselves in the interview data by reading the transcripts. This took a relatively short period of time due to the initial data cleaning process which involved the researcher

replaying and listening to the audio-recordings. Step 2, generating initial codes involved introducing the use of the NVivo software. According to Dollah, Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2017), NVivo software assists with managing a large amount of data, helps the researcher to identify themes and create the relationship among generated themes. The process of using the NVivo software in this research commenced with uploaded the interview transcripts into the application, thereafter the researcher went through each transcript identifying codes based on recurring keywords. Following this, similar codes were grouped into themes which was stage 3. For example, codes such as the academic year and the significance of publishing research papers for promotion were grouped under the theme of pressure points. Similarly, codes relating to mental health and physical health were grouped under health.

In stages 4 and 5, the themes were then reviewed and defined. The researcher reviewed each theme to ensure that they are clear, meaningful and related to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that when the themes are reviewed, it becomes evident that some themes are either too diverse, don't have enough data to support them, or two apparently separate themes might form one theme. The latter was the case in this research. Initially, 15 themes were developed however, they were reviewed and themes that seem to relate to another theme were joined together, streamlining it down to 9 themes in total from the interviews with women academics, while 1 major theme was developed from the interviews with HR officials and members of the Athena SWAN self-assessment team. Once the themes were reviewed, the themes were defined by identifying the story that each theme is telling, to ensure that it addresses the research questions and doesn't overlap with other themes. The final stage, 6, involved the write up which was done by presenting the identified themes in a structured way using key extracts from the transcripts. Braun and Clarke (2006)

mention that it is important that the write-up provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell within and across themes.

This sub-section has discussed the process of data cleaning and the steps taken using Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6 steps of undertaking thematic analysis. The next sub-section focuses on the data analysis of the diary studies.

3.8.3.2 Diary Studies

To begin the data preparation, the researcher undertook data cleaning which involves the process of identifying errors that were made during the diary entry (Saunder et al, 2019). The researcher reviewed each document after they were returned by the participants in order to identify any mistake or questions that were disregarded in the documents. Some of the errors that the researcher identified were unanswered questions/entries and incomplete responses. An example of this was where one participant filled diary entries for day 1,2 and 5 and forgot to fill entries 3 and 4. Once the data cleaning had been completed, pseudonyms were created to identify the participants on the cover of the diary documents. For example, the diary filled by one participant was labelled as Christine and the country, that is, Christine UK. This helped the researcher to easily identify each participant's diary while ensuring that there was no identifiable information about the participant. The researcher took precautions in order to avoid data loss by creating duplicate copies through scanning of the diary documents and storing them on an encrypted drive. The hard copies were also stored in a safe location that was accessible only by the researcher. Having completed this process, the data analysis of the diaries will be discussed next.

3.8.3.2.1 Implemented process

A different approach was taken towards analyzing the diaries. Saldana (2009) suggests that analyzing data manually is an intensive process, however it ensures that the researcher is immersed in the data. The interviews involved a large amount of data hence, the NVivo software was used to aid data analysis. However, the diaries involve a lesser amount of data which could be managed manually by the researcher therefore, the use of NVivo software was not required for the diaries. The data analysis of the diaries began with being familiar with the data by reading the diary entries of each participant and becoming immersed in what the participants experienced, what daily decisions were made and why these decisions were made. Once this had been completed, the next step was to decide on what would be coded. For instance, coding specific words, events, decisions and phrases. An example of this is 'feelings' such as stress, frustration, tiredness, unhealthy sleeping patterns were identified as codes. Thereafter, the codes were grouped into various themes. Using the previous example, those feelings were grouped into health. Similarly, decisions that were made to prioritize family responsibilities over work demands were coded and grouped into the theme of family life. This was done through the manual process of making notes on the diaries. A similar process to the interviews which involved reviewing and defining the themes were undertaken for the diaries. Once this process was completed, the next step involved writing up the themes by presenting each theme with key extracts from the diaries. Although there were similar steps taken to that of the interviews, the significant factor that differentiates the data analysis of the diaries with that of the interviews, was the manual coding of the diaries. Nonetheless, each data analysis procedure was significant to each method of data collection.

The next sub-section discusses the process involved in the data analysis of the participatory visual drawings.

3.8.3.3 Participatory visual drawings

The process of data cleaning for the visual drawings was a relatively quick process, as the data was minimal in comparison to the interviews and the diaries nonetheless the data from the drawings were still significant to this research. The data cleaning process commenced by going through the drawings section to ensure that it had been completed. Furthermore, the short description of the image was reviewed to ensure that it was filled after the drawing was made. This was important, as the description ensured that the researcher was able to interpret the drawings in the exact words of the participants. It was unnecessary to label the drawings using the participant's pseudonyms as they were attached to the diaries, which were already labelled. Due to the drawings being attached to the diaries, they were stored safely using the same process as the diaries.

3.8.3.3.1 Implemented process

The drawings were analyzed using key words by adapting Glaw et al's (2017) 8 step analytic approach for visual methods. According to Glaw et al (2017) the steps include the data collection, organizing the data, coding the data, structured analysis, detailed analysis, interpretive analysis, creating themes and the write-up of the findings. Step 1 which involves the data collection process had been undertaken by asking the participants to fill in the drawings section after they had completed the diary entries. Once the drawings had been returned to the researcher, the next step was to organize the data. This was done by numbering each drawing using Figures and using pseudonyms. For example, the first

drawing was identified by the pseudonym of the participant and a number, e.g., Figure 4.22: Christine's Drawing. Step 3 involved coding the data which was done using key words that the researcher was able to identify in the short description of the drawings filled by the participants. Steps 4 and 5 which involve structured and detailed analysis were carried out by presenting in table 4.1 the key words that emerged from the data and how often they occurred in each drawing.

Step 6 involved interpreting the data by understanding the participant's perceptions about their work-life balance. This process includes reviewing the drawings and the descriptions provided by the participant before returning to their interview transcripts in order to make sense of their meanings and perceptions. Having completed this process, steps 7 and 8 involved arranging the keywords in order of the most recurring and then presenting and writing up the findings in a coherent way.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study is one of the most important stages in research, and it involves a small study that is used to test the research questions, methods of data collection, sample recruitment techniques and other research techniques in order to identify deficiencies prior to the main study (Schattner and Mazza, 2006). Saunders et al (2012) points out that the initial findings from a pilot study can facilitate further development of the questions and the design of new questions where appropriate. A pilot study was carried out in this research for a variety of reasons which were identified by Teijlingen and Hundley (2001): To develop and test the adequacy of the research instrument, assess the proposed data analysis techniques, collecting preliminary data, assessing the likely success of proposed recruitment

approaches, assessing the likely success of proposed recruitment approaches, assessing whether the research protocol is realistic and workable, determining the resources needed. The next sections provide details on the pilot study process including the findings and the re-design considerations post-pilot analysis.

3.9.1 Adopted Approach

This sub-section discusses the processes involved in the pilot study. It provides details on the participants, the data collection tools and process, questions and the duration.

3.9.1.1 Participants

The pilot study involved 4 participants, 2 from each country (UK and Nigeria). The pilot participants were recruited through the intended process for the final study; that is, they were recruited from the same universities that were selected for the research. This ensured accessibility and saved time. As stated by Turner (2010), the participants selected for the pilot study, should share similar characteristics with the participants selected for the main study. However, these pilot participants were not included in the main research in order to avoid disinterest amongst the participants, by taking them through a repetitive process.

3.9.1.2 Process

The pilot study began with the participants from Nigeria. They were given the diary study and participatory visual method before the interviews were carried out. This led to a delay in the agreed date for the interviews hence, it was switched in the Uk to carrying out the interview first before the diary study and participatory visual method in order to see if it will produce a different outcome. The outcome of the pilot study in the UK showed that the

participants were still interested in the research after the interviews. Therefore, this order of process was adopted to the final study.

3.9.1.3 Questions

The number of questions asked in the three data collection methods was reduced. Majority of the questions were also reworded, and several questions were excluded due to the realization that some questions were worded differently but were the same therefore leading to repetitive responses from the participants. Also, considerations were made after a few questions were identified as invasive such as asking about their age. This was particularly prominent in Nigeria, where the participants felt uncomfortable disclosing their age but were willing to identify themselves in a specific age group. This had to do with the norms of the culture whereby it is deemed as a form of disrespect to ask individuals, especially older people about their age. Therefore, this was redesigned to focus on age groups rather than their age. The question had to be restructured in a way that gave the participants the opportunity to identify if they fall into any of the three age groups identified by OECD (2020); 15-24 (those who are just entering into the labour force), 25-54 (those in their prime working lives), and 55-64 (those who are at the peak of their career and are approaching retirement).

The pilot study provided insights on how to structure the questions to ensure that they were designed in a way that will provide rich data for the purpose of the research. Firstly, doing a pilot study with 4 women academics helped the researcher to become more familiar with the interview questions. This helped to elicit rich responses from the participants by making

it more of a conversation about their experiences rather than rigid questions where the participants will not be able to answer comfortably and flexibly.

3.9.1.4 Duration

During the pilot study, the participants perceived the data collection process to be relatively long, particularly the interviews. The interviews lasted between 1 hour-1 hour 30 minutes due to the number of questions asked by the researcher. However, the decision was made by the researcher to reduce the interview duration to 40 minutes – 1 hour. Similarly with the diaries which were initially over a two-week period. It was observed that the participants were less interested in filling out the diaries after about 4 days, with some of them not completing their diary entries. Hence, the design of the data collection tools had to be revisited to ensure that the process was easier for the participants. Additionally, the drawings were asked to be done separately a few days after the diaries. Th purpose of this was to give the participants time to reflect on their experiences, however, this strategy proved to be ineffective and had to be revisited.

Figure 3.5: Re-design considerations post-pilot analysis

Data Collection Process

Interviews were carried out before the diaries and visual drawings. Drawings were requested to be done alongside the diaries

Questions

Questions were re-designed to avoid repetition and to address questions relating to age

Duration

Diaries were reduced to a 5-day period
Interviews were reduced to 40-60 minutes (1 Hour)
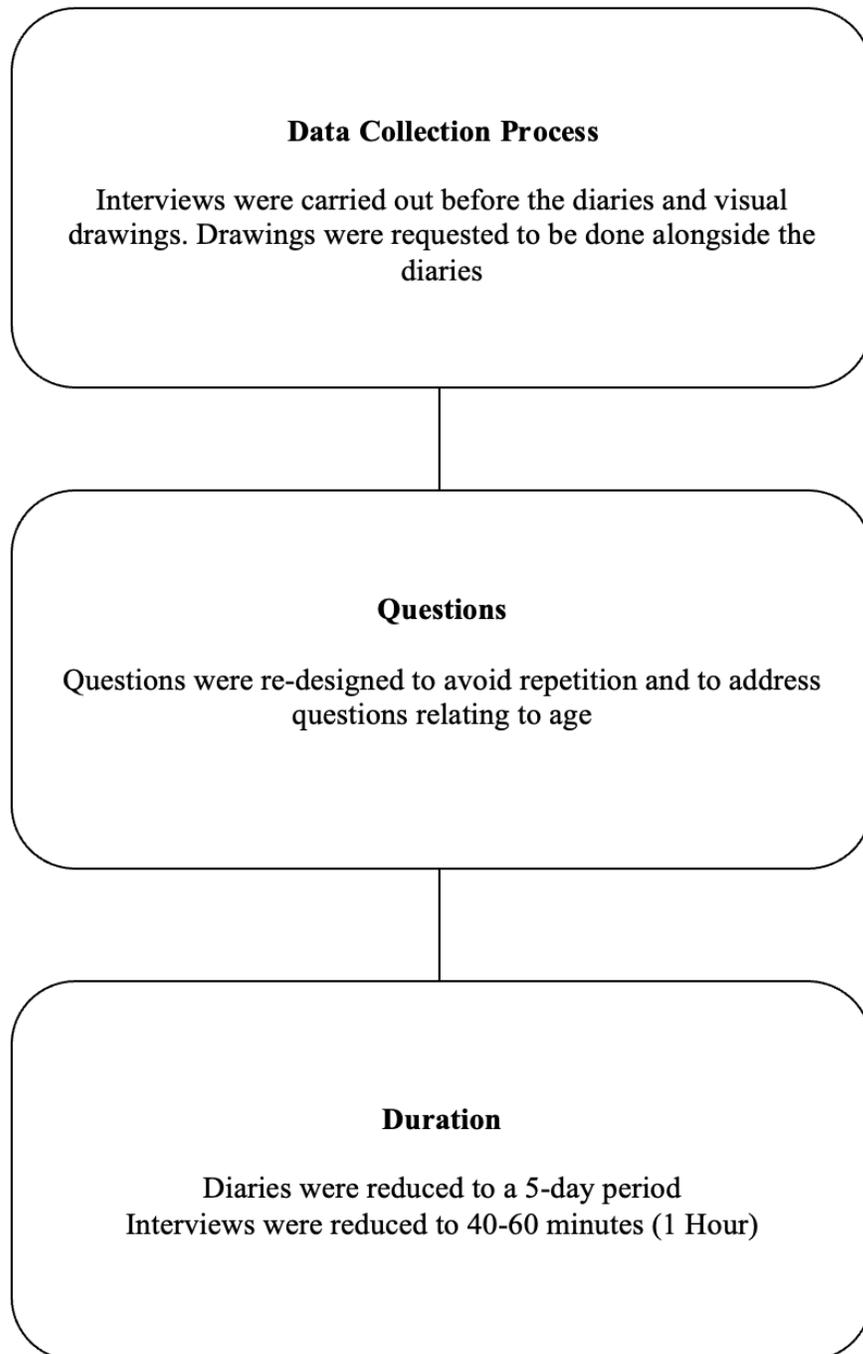
3.9.2 Findings of Pilot Study

This section presents the findings of the pilot study in relation to the interviews, diaries and visual drawings carried out on women academics in the UK and Nigeria. The data from the pilot study was analyzed using the same process identified in section 3.8 above.

Table 3.6: Participant Profile – Pilot Study

Participants	Country	Job Title	Number of years in academia	Marital Status	Number of Children
Amber	UK	Senior Lecturer	22	Married	2
Charlie	UK	Reader	30	Married	2
Funmi	Nigeria	Lecturer and Researcher	19	Married	1
Jenny	Nigeria	Lecturer	15	Single	-

3.9.2.1 Interviews

Three major themes emerged from the interviews namely, flexible workplace, family life and anchors.

3.9.2.1.1 Flexible Workplace

2 sub-themes emerged from the flexible workplace namely, working time and workload. These sub-themes will be discussed individually. It commences with the working time which examines the long working hours and unsocial hours linked to the workplace.

3.9.2.1.1.1 Working Time

Participants discussed the long hours and unsocial hours associated with academia. This was consistent with all 4 participants in the UK and Nigeria. They cited situations where they

occasionally worked long hours in the workplace and still worked on evenings and weekends. This was particularly prevalent for women academics in senior positions. For instance, Amber who is a senior academic in the UK shares her experience on this:

"Before I got a promotion recently, I would always leave work quite late but it's worse now that I have even more responsibilities. There is always something that needs to be done. Thankfully, my children are grown up and can take care of themselves, so I don't have to worry about that. When I get home later in the day, I usually just go straight to my office which is a little room set up for my spouse and I, and just do some work usually until 1am" (Amber, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly, Funmi, who is a lecturer and researcher, shares her opinion on this:

"Being an academic is not easy especially for a woman. I do not think that anyone in academia will tell you that it is not hectic, because it is. I work late hours nearly every day because I have to prepare for my lectures, mark assignments, research, and do some administrative work. It is not something that can be avoided, especially if you want a successful career in this field. Even more so for women, who have to put in more work to compete with the men at work" (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

3.9.2.1.1.2 Workload

Participants admitted that they all had heavy workloads which consisted of marking, teaching, administrative work, writing papers, supervising and attending to students. For the Nigerian participants, they also acted as invigilators and had relatively more workload due to having fewer academic staff in their departments therefore, increasing their workload. For instance, Jenny explains that:

"I take 4 modules and out of those 4 modules, I take 2 by myself which is quite hectic. It is really hard on some days when I feel overwhelmed with work, and I just need a break.

Aside from this, I have 2 PhD students that I supervise, and I am also a course leader".
(Jenny, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

Similarly, Funmi narrated that:

"I am a PhD student, and I am also teaching, so you can imagine what it's like for me. I work day and night. I barely sleep and when I sleep, it's only for a short while because I am always thinking about my workload." (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria).

Participants in the UK had a similar experience to that of those in Nigeria. They had heavy workloads due to their multiple roles linked with being an academic. The next section presents the findings relating to family life.

3.9.2.1.2 Family Life

The previous section presented the findings relating to the working time and workload. This section presents the findings relating to childcare demands.

3.9.2.1.2.1 Childcare demands

Participants who have children experienced life to work conflict in which their childcare demands often conflicted with their work demands. For instance, Funmi who has a daughter narrates her ordeal:

"I didn't have my daughter early because I was studying and was focused on my career. When I finally had her, I thought I would have everything under control, but I don't. It is difficult having to focus on your child while also trying to focus on work. My daughter will always be my priority. Honestly, I have made compromises which may have affected my career in a certain way. For example, not being able to take up certain positions at work because it would demand more of my time, which I can't give right now." (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

For Charlie who has 2 children, she explains that she is still responsible for her daughter who is over 18 years old. According to her:

> *"I have 2 kids, but my son is 24. My daughter who is a lot younger lives at home with me. She can do most things by herself, but she still depends on us. It hasn't been particularly difficult for me because she is quite independent, however, there have been a few times where there was an emergency and I had to leave work. Once, she was quite sick and had to be taken to the hospital, so I had to leave work immediately." (Charlie, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

3.9.2.1.3 Anchors

This section presents the findings relating to the support received from family and in the workplace. It discusses the provision of support in two themes namely, work-anchor and family-anchor.

3.9.2.1.3.1 Work-Anchors

Participants stated that they had support in the workplace although this wasn't the case for all participants. Nigerian women academics explained that they had supportive managers and colleagues who were willing to help whenever they required assistance. For example, Funmi spoke about her line manager:

> *"I have been in situations where I couldn't attend a meeting, or I struggled to meet up with deadlines because of my family responsibilities. My line manager has been very supportive and understanding. He always says that he has a wife, so he understands our struggles" (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)*

For Jenny, who has no childcare demands, she explains that:

> *"I would say that it depends on what department you are in. In my department, my colleagues are males and are really nice. I haven't had a situation where I really needed*

assistance, but I know that if I ever find myself in such a situation, they will be there for
me." (Jenny, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

For women academics in the UK, they stated that their colleagues and managers were quite supportive. Amber narrated her experience:

"I love catching up with my colleagues, we chat about our struggles and support each other. We are mostly women in my department so, it's nice having someone that understands what you are going through" (Amber, Married, 2 Children, UK)

3.9.2.1.3.2 Family-Anchors

Support from spouse and parents was significant to the participants. They mentioned having instrumental and emotional support in the form of helping with household and childcare responsibilities. Also, being understanding and providing motivation was positively related to their work-life balance experiences. Charlie explains that:

"My husband helps out a lot. I honestly can't remember that last time I went grocery shopping. He does that every week and assists me with cooking. We are a team, so we work together. I never really have to worry about household responsibilities because he is always willing to help" (Charlie, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly, Jenny explains that her mum is quite important to her:

"My mum is amazing. She is always there for me. She is an academic, so she understands my experiences and is always there to support and encourage me. I speak to her nearly every day just to stay sane. I am not sure what I would do without her." (Jenny, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

The next section presents the findings from the diaries which discuss flexible workplace and family life.

3.9.2.2 Diary Studies

Data collected relating to the diaries included the following themes: flexible workplace and family life. Participants provided information regarding their daily experiences and the decisions they made between their work and non-work domains.

3.9.2.2.1 Flexible workplace

Discussions relating to flexible workplace were primarily related to working time. Participants mentioned situations where they worked long hours due to their work demands. Furthermore, entries relating to workload showed that the participants had heavy workloads due to their multiple roles. The next sub-sections will discuss these two themes in detail.

3.9.2.2.1.1 Working Time

Consistent with the findings from the interviews, participants worked long hours during the week. They also worked in the evenings and at weekends. This negatively affected the time with family and other personal activities. Charlie writes about her working time:

> *"I am acting as an examiner for 2 Viva's coming up in a few weeks, so I have to read their thesis. I am so busy during the week that I barely have time to look at their thesis. So, I spend my weekends reading through. It's like every day of my life involves some element of work." (Charlie, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

Similarly, Funmi explains that:

> *"I think I worked for up to 12 hours today. Working on my thesis and also, preparing lecture materials. It's been quite a long day and I am looking forward to the weekend when I will try my possible best not to do any work." (Funmi, Married, 1 child, Nigeria)*

3.9.2.2.1.2 Workload

All participants had heavy workloads and quite busy schedules during the period of filling in the diary entries. For instance, on Tuesday, Funmi wrote that:

"I got to work almost 8 this morning. That means I had to leave home by 6:30. I have 2 classes in the morning and one in the afternoon. I also had to drive down to see my supervisor who works in another university." (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

For Amber, she explains that:

"I had about 5 meetings today and I have 2 more tomorrow. I can tell you that I am not looking forward to that." I also spent some time reviewing my student's draft." (Amber, Married, 2 Children, UK)

3.9.2.2.2 Family Life

Discussions relating to family life primarily involved childcare responsibilities. The majority of the participants with children often prioritized their children over work demands. Their daily decisions will be discussed below.

3.9.2.2.2.1 Childcare Demands

Women academics in the UK and Nigeria cited situations in which they occasionally had to forego their work responsibilities. This was particularly prevalent for Nigerian women academics. For instance, Funmi writes that:

"Today was quite busy for me. My niece who was helping out, recently left. So, I have no one to look after my daughter while she is on holiday. I worked from home because of her and honestly, I wasn't able to do much because she needed my attention almost all day" (Funmi, Married, 1 Child, UK)

For Charlie:

"I went into work quite early today and left a few hours later because I had to drive my daughter to an open day. My husband wasn't available to take her there. I think today went well, it's just that I would have to spend some time tonight catching up on work" (Charlie, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Having discussed the findings from the diaries, the participatory visual drawings will be discussed next.

3.9.2.3 Participatory visual drawings

This section presents the findings from the visual drawings in the pilot study. It also includes the interpretation of the drawings and the description provided by the participants.

Figure 3.6: Amber's Drawing (UK)
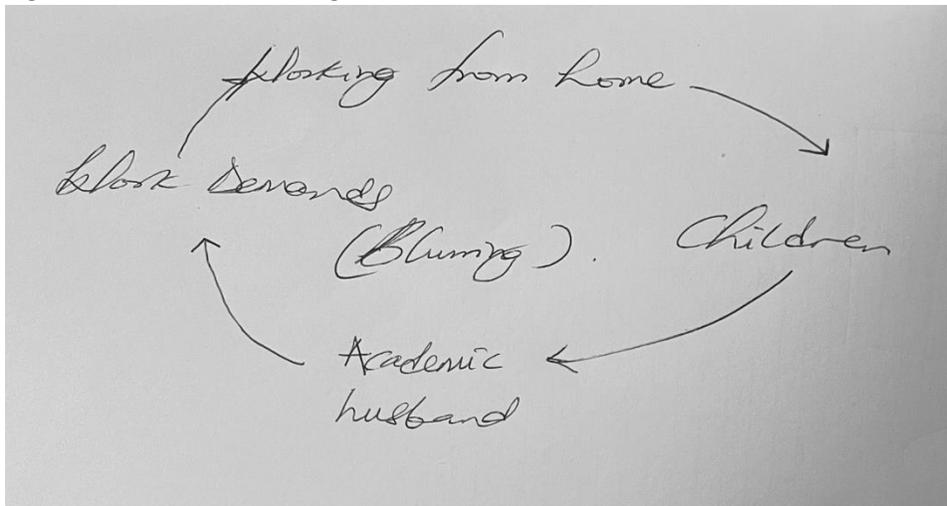
Amber explains that she experiences a blurring of boundaries between her work and non-work domains. She has support from her spouse who is an academic, so he understands the nature of her children. Having to work at home occasionally due to work demands leads to work-life conflict. Having children who are adults has made it easier for her to manage her work-life balance.

Figure 3.7: Jenny's Drawing (UK)
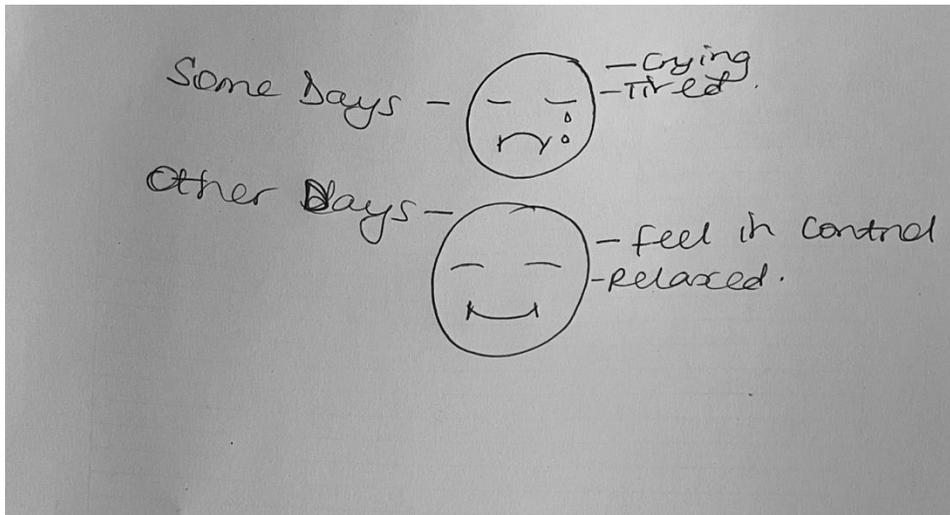
Jenny feels like she works a lot more than she should be. On some days, she feels like she has no control over her work-life balance which makes her feel stressed and adversely affects her mental health. On other days, particularly when she isn't engaging in work activities, she feels in control and relaxed which is primarily due to engaging in leisure activities.

Figure 3.8: Funmi's Drawing (Nigeria)
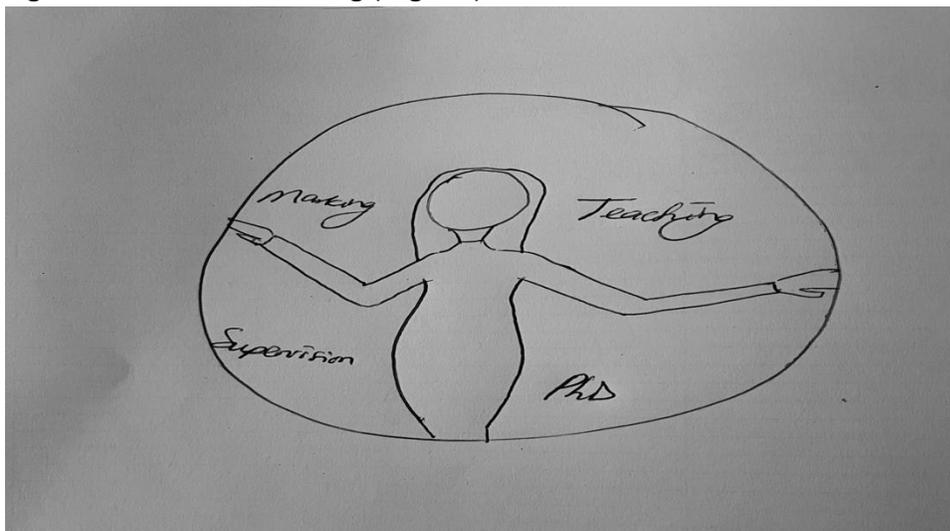
Funmi who is presently a PhD student struggles to maintain a healthy work-life balance. She desires balance and admits that she doesn't have her life under control at the moment. She feels stuck in a bubble which she can't seem to get out of.

Figure 3.9: Charlie's Drawing (UK)
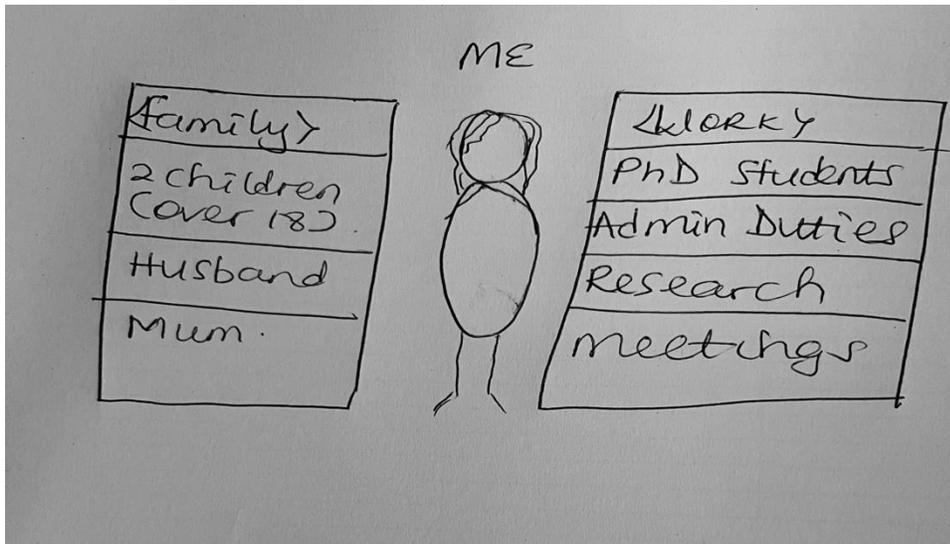
Charlie explains that she has a heavy workload due to her rank in the workplace. However, she feels confident about her ability to manage her work-life balance. She enjoys relaxing with her family and attending church services with her mum on some Sundays.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011), research ethics is essential in the process of carrying out research because it acts as a guide to ensure that the dignity of the participants is protected, and that they are not susceptible to any form of harm. This research investigation research investigation was primarily guided by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESCR) six key principles for ethical research; research should aim to maximize benefit for individuals and society and minimize risk and harm, the rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected, wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed research should be conducted with integrity and transparency, Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly

defined, Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided, they should be made explicit.

Prior to the data collection process, ethical approval was gained by the researcher, from the University of Salford's ethics panel by meeting all the requirements set out in the application process which included, an application form, consent form, participant information sheet, and inclusion of the intended questions that would aid the data collection. It was necessary to obtain approval as it was necessary to ensure that the intended research would not pose any risks to the participants. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggest that ethical issues such as reducing the risk of unanticipated harm, protecting the interviewee's information, effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study and reducing the risk of exploitation should all be considered. Furthermore, Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) state that human research ethical approval should be obtained before the commencement of data gathering as undertaking research without approval from the ethics committee would imply that the researcher did not comply with the institutions code of conduct.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the cornerstone of ethical research is 'informed consent' which should provide information on who the researcher is, what data will be collected from the participants and how it will be collected, how the data will be used and the potential risks of taking part in the research. In this research, informed consent was of utmost importance therefore the researcher collected data from each participant only after consent was obtained. In line with this research, after the approval by the ethics board committee, participants were recruited through recruitment letters after the universities involved in the research approved the proposed research and a consent form was sent to the

participants alongside an information sheet that provided a description of the nature and purpose of the research, protection of data in relation to confidentiality and anonymity, and the right to decline or withdraw from the study at any given point in time. Once the consent forms were signed by the participants, they received a copy of this form. The rights of the participants were observed through anonymity by ensuring that names and other forms of identification were not specified, pseudonyms were used in the form of participant identification. Once the relevant data was obtained, transcripts were securely stored on the NVivo software and were password protected which was only accessible by the researcher. Other important documents such as the consent forms, hard copies of the data collected were scanned, stored and encrypted while the hard copies were destroyed.

3.11 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has justified the study's philosophical stance, research paradigm, research design and data collection methods. Furthermore, it has addressed the sampling technique, sample size and justification of the research context. Additionally, it discussed the data analysis process, pilot study and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings of this research following the data collection process and analysis.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter presents the main findings from UK and Nigeria following the thematic analysis of the interviews, diary studies and participatory visual method with the use of the NVivo Software and manual data analysis. The aim of this chapter is to provide key insights into the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria. It further includes interviews with HR professionals and the Athena SWAN self-assessment team. The review of past literature has shown evidence of a growing concern regarding the work-life balance experiences of women academics in both developed and developing countries therefore, this chapter will address these concerns and the gaps identified in relation to this research topic. In order to effectively address these aims, the following research questions guided this research:

1. To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance?

2. How do women academics in the UK and Nigeria perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?

3. What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?

4. What are the strategies adopted by universities in the UK and Nigeria to improve the work-life balance experiences of women academics?

This chapter consists of 4 sections which address the findings from the following: Interviews, Diary studies, Participatory visual methods and the interviews with HR professionals and the Athena SWAN self-assessment team (SAT). The first section which examines the 30 interviews carried out in UK and Nigeria focuses on 9 main themes: Flexible Workplace, Working Policies, Pressure Points, Health, Family life, Impact of Covid-19, Coping Strategies, Anchors, The Role of Culture. The second section examines the findings from the 11 diary studies, which have been categorized into 4 Themes: Flexible Workplace, Health, Family life and Anchors while the third section identifies the themes that emerged from the 11 participatory visual drawings. The last section explores the role of work-life balance policies and the Athena SWAN charter in improving the work-life balance experiences of women academics.

4.1 Interviews

This section will address the research questions 1, 2 and 3 by examining the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews amongst women academics in UK and Nigeria. The interviews were carried out in Manchester (Northwest) UK, and Lagos (Southwest) Nigeria respectively. This section will discuss the Work and Self categories which have been identified in Figure 4.1 below. It further discusses the overlapping categories which represent both the work and self-categories.

Figure 4.1: Interviews (Coding Category)
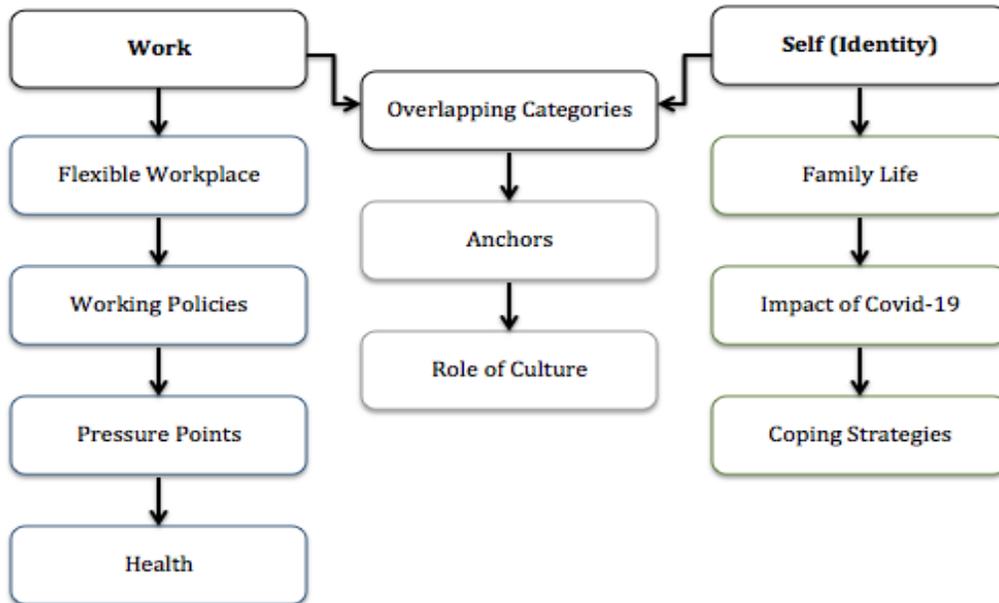
4.1.1 Work Category

This section aims to address the following themes identified in the work category in Figure 4.1 above. These themes include Flexible workplace, Working Policies, Pressure Points and Health. Each theme will be discussed in relation to the impact of work on the family and personal domains of the participants. The next sub-section begins with the flexible workplace, which focuses on the working time and workload of female academics in the UK and Nigeria.

4.1.1.1 Flexible workplace

The perception that academia is flexible, was one of the main reasons why several participants in the UK and Nigeria made the decision to be an academic. Although each

participant had distinct motivations for being an academic, it was pinned down to one or more of the following: passion, job security, the inability to get another job. Nonetheless, the perception that academia was quite flexible, remained the principal theme among their responses. It became a recurring theme particularly for those who had children, because majority of the participants held the belief that it would provide them with the opportunity to have time for their family. However, this perception of academia, was later perceived as problematic by majority of the participants who referred to the blurring of boundaries between the work and the non-work domains. They cited past experiences where they were unable to effectively confine the demands from work without having the occurrence of a spillover into the time for family. For instance, one participant who has been in academia for 13 years, stated that:

> "*I decided to become an academic because I'm passionate about teaching however it was mainly because of the flexibility of the profession. I was quite young when I started applying for jobs and I needed a job that I could do long-term, which would also give me the opportunity to start a family and have the time for my children. I admit that it has indeed given me some flexibility which wouldn't be available in some other professions like a banking job, but it is not as easy as it seems. The responsibilities of being an academic will always outweigh the benefits of having a flexible job. No one really tells you that you will work late hours or even during the weekend, it's something I had to experience*". (*Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria*).

For Christine who is a programme leader for two programmes at a UK University, she explains that flexibility was her motivation to become an academic however, her assumption about academia being flexible was mistaken:

> "*I considered being an accountant, but I decided to become an academic instead because I thought it would give me flexibility, but I was wrong. I have thought about having kids*

someday, but it would be difficult for me to create a boundary between my work life and my family life. Even when you are not teaching, you have other responsibilities that come with deadlines, so it is not like a regular 8-5 office-based job. In academia, you take your work with you wherever you go. Even sometimes, when I go to the coffee shop with my husband, I take my laptop with me. We have our emails on our phone, so I tend to check my phone even when I'm taking a break for an hour because I tell myself that the response won't take long. It is exhausting and I know that I work more than 8 hours a day". (Christine, Married, No Children, UK).

Figure 4.2: Flexible Workplace (Coding Category)
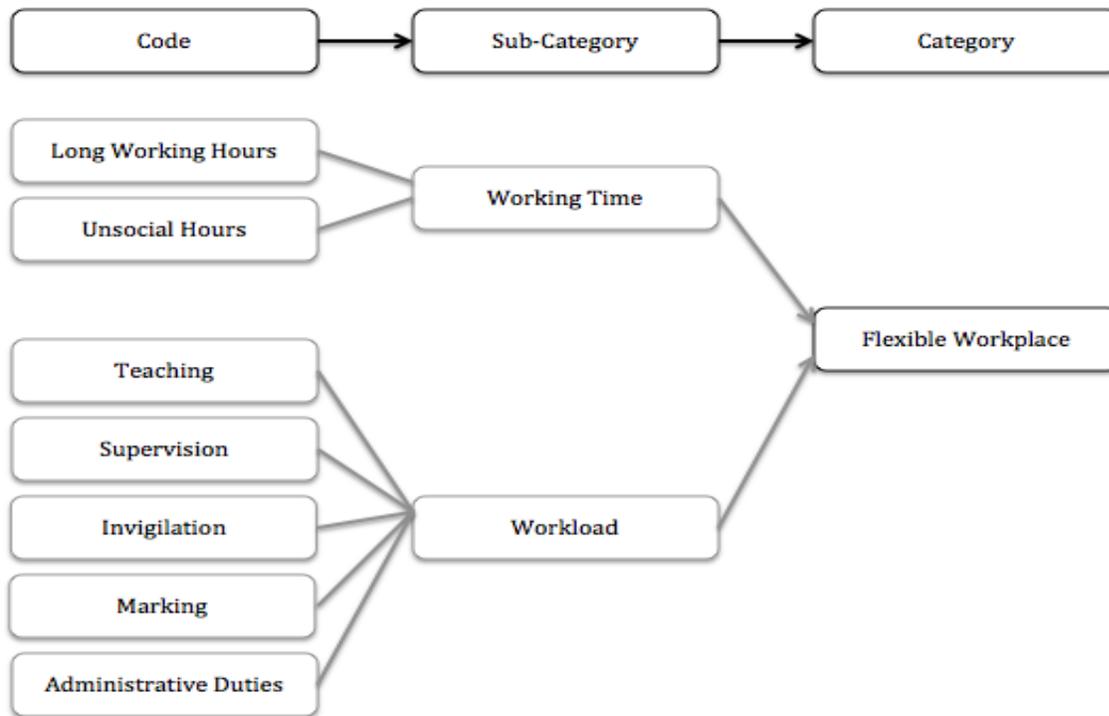
There were various responses from the participants with regards to flexible workplace however, in order to effectively examine the participant's responses, this section has been categorized into two sub-themes: working time and workload, which is shown in figure 4.2 above. The participant's experiences in relation to working time, describes the number of hours spent on work demands during office hours as well as unsocial hours whereas,

workload provides details on the participant's experiences regarding the amount of work that they engaged in during the working time. There is a significant relationship between working time and workload as it shows that they influence each other interchangeably, in which an increase in workload will lead to an increase in the number of hours spent on work activities, and vice versa. These sub-themes will be addressed individually in order to explore each of them without one overlapping the other.

4.2.1.1.1 Working Time

There was a consensus amongst majority of the participants that working long hours and during unsocial hours.i.e., evenings and weekends, was prevalent for academics. This was particularly linked to having multiple roles as participants explained that as an academic, they were expected to undertake the following roles: lecture, supervise, research, invigilate and attend meetings which as a result, adversely affected their working time. For instance, Nkechi describes her experience with working long hours:

> *"I am usually here before 8 because most of my lectures start by 8. And after the lectures, I come to my office to attend to students. But once it is 4 o clock, I focus on doing some of my own work in the office like research, and then I leave work around 6 or 7 pm. When I get home, I cook, and after cooking I usually get tired. I can wake up around 2 or 3 am to do some work. But ideally, I feel like I shouldn't take work home so that I can have time for my family". (Nkechi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Similarly, Kate reflects on her previous role as an hourly paid academic and her present role as a full-time academic:

> *"As an hourly paid academic, it worked out well in terms of timetable but if I had a free day, it would be taken up with preparation, marking, answering emails. And I think I was lucky in terms of that, because I didn't have any children to worry about taking to*

school, I could fill my time with those things. But then, that meant that I filled more of my time with work. Now coming into full time, there's lots of admin and more meetings, you need to make sure that you do your office hours but as an hourly paid, you didn't necessarily have to have office hours as you weren't paid for them but if you did need to see a student then you will have to sort of try to squeeze that into your schedule. Which I don't mind doing but sometimes you had to have a balance and think, am I being paid for this? Coming into the full-time role, it's been interesting on the basis that the first semester was based on really heavy teaching, and I did in semester one, spend every weekend working and that's not an exaggeration. It was definitely one day on the weekend but most days it was two days on the weekend". (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

The findings revealed that working long hours and during unsocial hours had an adverse effect on the work-life balance of married as well as single women academics. Although married participants cited instances where work impeded the time spent with their spouses and children, it was also a concern for those with no childcare responsibilities as they wanted to have some personal time or engage in other activities outside work such as spending time with family, partners and friends. For Amy, who is a senior lecturer and has no partner or children, she describes her working time arrangement:

"If I am not lecturing face to face, I get up, have a coffee and open my laptop about 8am. I allocate myself some time off on Mondays to write papers and books, to do some research. I am currently co-editing 2 books. For days when I am lecturing, I get on the train about 8 and get to the office at quarter past 9. Then I go through emails and admin work. I lecture between 11 and 1 and then I have meetings after. I often work on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Not a lot but a couple of hours because I have multiple projects going on and different deadlines, so I think it's almost expected in academia that you work outside working hours. And it's not a great work-life balance, you can be flexible in a lot of ways; it is just about how you manage your time. If you want to switch

off your laptop at 3pm on a Friday for instance, technically you can. It is flexible but you have so much work to do that sometimes you can't really be flexible. (Amy, Single, No Children, UK)

One finding that was revealed was that long working hours was more prominent for women academics in the UK than in Nigeria. Participants in Nigeria explained that while they often worked on evenings and weekends, they were able to leave the workplace at any point in time during the day. The findings implies that participants in the UK have more responsibilities than those in Nigeria and therefore work longer hours, as they described having regular meetings, teaching on more than one module, and partaking in other administrative work. An example of this is Eleana, who describes her typical working day:

"On a Tuesday, I have 8 hours of back-to-back teaching, so I teach from 9-5:30 without any break. I love teaching but it's really difficult. All of my teaching hours are on Tuesdays even though I have a whole week where they could have separated my teaching hours. On Mondays, I have meetings in the morning and then I have another class in the afternoon, it's a bit more laid back. And then Friday, I look at my materials for the following week. I also have meetings. Aside from teaching, I run the program hour which helps with the retention of students. It is taught to every student at level 4 in the business school. I mark on weekends and sometimes do some prep work on Sunday evening; I don't have to do that but sometimes I do". (Eleana, Partner, No Children, UK).

Similarly, Caroline explains the intensity of her workload which adversely influences her working hours. She describes her schedule for academic and other administrative duties, as well as working during weekends:

"This semester, all my teaching is on Monday and my other role takes my other days. On a Monday, I deliver teaching 9-11am then I have student appointments 11-4pm. I have a seminar from 4-6pm on Thursday. On other days I do admin, preparing materials, organizing staff for recruitment events. I try to have 1-2 days working from home where

I prepare materials. I do find myself working at weekends, but that has slowly reduced this weekend as I am not doing much teaching this semester. I usually go to bed by 11pm but the time I get up varies really depending on my schedule for that day. I get up at 5: 30 when I have to be in early because of the distance and the commute because of how unreliable the trains are. If I am working until 6pm, I won't get home until around 8pm". (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)

The analysis showed that a minority of the participants did not work during unsocial hours, as they had developed strategies to ensure that they were able to effectively create a boundary between their work and non-work domains, however all participants in the UK and Nigeria admitted that they worked long hours which was an adverse effect of their heavy workload. Interestingly, a comparison of the data amongst different academic ranks showed that those who are early career academics and mid-career academics, worked longer hours than those who are at the top of their career irrespective of their numerous roles. This was particularly linked to having a lower number of years in academia or at the university, thereby leading to a desire to meet up with deadlines and impress the line manager. For instance, Kate who recently became a full-time permanent academic acknowledges the relationship between her new role and working long hours:

"If I finish teaching by 4 pm, I will go home from there and I will start checking emails. I hope I get out of this bad habit because I don't need to do that, but I have this obsession with making sure that I do everything on time. I'm new to the full-time role so I'm really conscious as I feel that I need to be on top of everything. It's just about wanting the university to be sure that they made the right decision with me". (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

Amanda who has been at the university for less than a year is intent on effectively carrying out her work demands having previously worked at another university for 6 years as a teaching assistant without being promoted. She explains that:

> *"So, I will sit on the train and do some work as well, usually I don't get back home until 9:30 pm at night and I will be working the whole time on the train and sometimes I still work when I get home. I am hoping it will get easier once I get all my teaching material done. Because I am writing all my teaching material from scratch, so I have got all the pressures from academic life plus that on top. Ideally, on most occasions I cook and eat and watch 30 mins of telly before going to bed when I get home but sometimes, I switch on my computer to do some work such as responding to student emails, marking, updating blackboard". (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK).*

Tinuke however, who is a senior lecturer and has been in academia for 13 years stated that she once worked long and unsocial hours however, there has been a reduction in time spent on work activities over time. According to her:

> *"Before I got married, I attended a seminar where a man gave a talk about work-life balance and how your work should stay in the workplace and should not be brought home. Initially, I did it before I got married but once I started having children, I stopped taking work home. I would try to do all my work in the office but if I can't finish it, I would have to attend to it on the next day when I resume work in the morning". (Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Having discussed working time in relation to work-life balance, the next sub-section aims to discuss workload to explore its relationship with working time as well as the role it plays in the work-life balance experiences of women academics.

4.2.1.1.2 Workload

There were various views from the participants in the UK and Nigeria, regarding the influence of workload on their work-life balance experiences which was significantly linked to having multiple roles as an academic. During the interviews, participants explained their daily work demands which varied across departments and ranks at the universities often conflicted with their non-work demands. For some participants who are in the Business and Management department, they engage in teaching, supervision, publishing and meetings while those in the STEM departments do the aforementioned, as well as carrying out experiments in the laboratory. For instance, Elisha, who is in Business and Management, describes her work demands:

> *"I have to prepare my lecture notes, I do a lot of research for the topic I am teaching. I will go through the recommended textbooks and journals and then prepare my slides and then go to class to deliver. After lectures, sometimes I have meetings with students sometimes they come to the office unexpected. When I am not teaching, I am doing research, reading (revising) for the next lecture. Sometimes I take work home, although not so often". (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

Whereas Dara who is a lecturer in Botany explains that:

> *"I have lectures, in the morning and in the afternoon and I spend most of my time in the laboratory. Apart from that, I also oversee dissertations for undergraduate and postgraduate students. I have faculty and departmental meetings and sometimes senate meeting as a head of department (HOD). It is quite a lot for one person to be honest, but I am aware that I am not the only one who has so many responsibilities". (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Participants who struggled with creating a boundary due to their heavy workload expressed their dissatisfaction with their present situation. They described situations where it

impacted their time with their children, spouses and partners. While it was usually the partners who complained that they weren't spending enough time with the family, in certain situations the children also voiced their concerns. Hence, stimulating the participants to have a rethink about their priorities. Caroline, who lectures and has administrative duties, commented that:

> *"Because of the nature of the job, I am constantly preparing materials and answering emails when I shouldn't be, after office hours and during weekends. It sometimes conflicts with my personal life. Often, I will get home, my daughter will be there, and I will be on my laptop, and will not be able to give her as much attention as I should do. It has been an issue that has come up in our conversations and I am working on it." (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)*

Similarly, Toni explains that even though she works part-time, her struggles are no less than those working full-time:

> *"I've had instances of people calling from work, ignore the call and they keep calling so I answer and tell them I'm busy, but they go; oh, I just need to talk to you about this. This makes things quite hard, especially when there are little children around. The thing about work-life balance is that you can have it all but everything you choose to do has to take away from another aspect of your life. I think about it all the time and I think it would be easier to be working full-time because your workload doesn't decrease as a part-timer, you still have to attend the same meeting and on days when you are at home, you have to clean and cook. People have the perception that you have it easy compared to them, which isn't true." (Toni, Married, 3 Children, UK)*

While for those who do not have children but still struggle, they projected how they would be able to cope if they had children. For instance, Kate mentions that she had a discussion with her partner a few times:

"I think it is difficult at certain times in the year to have a good work-life balance. My partner and I have had a conversation about how I would handle it if we had kids. My tendency is to work first and everything follows later and maybe that's a luxury I have because I don't have dependents. If things change in the future and I have kids, I will have to rethink my priorities and hope that I do not to put my work first, before my family." (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

One significant finding that was revealed during the interviews was the relationship between the inadequate number of academics and the increase in workload although, this finding only emerged amongst the interviews with the Nigerian participants. However, this was more evident amongst the discussions with several of the participants from University C as no participant in University D commented on it during the interviews. Participants from University C explained that the low number of academics resulted in them being allocated to more work than they should have. This was unfolded in Tosin's work-life experiences, she is over 60 years old and lectures in Business management:

"I mark assignments until 2 am because there are always deadlines to be met and I lecture 650 students in general studies, 102 in management and about 20 students in MBA so the workload is quite a lot. I only became an academic a few years ago so I guess the motivation is still there and it is the only thing that drives me now, if not I will feel drained all the time. At this age, I shouldn't be doing that much work because it isn't good for my health, you know the older you get, the more susceptible you are to illnesses." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Yemisi, who is also an academic at University D, explains the impact of heavy workload on her work-life balance:

"I can say that I do not have a good work-life balance, I have been trying to create a balance, so my family life and my work life don't clash. I try to make time for my family however, my work-life balance isn't great because this is a private institution and we do

not have a lot of employees like you would see in some public universities also, we have a high number of students, so this increases the workload for us thereby causing a lot of stress. A lot of times, I take my work home because I can never really finish the work I have to do in the office, a lot of academics do it and we don't get extra pay for doing work outside the normal office hours. I guess as an academic, you're always expected to be working even outside work." (Yemisi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria).

Furthermore, participants from both universities explained that the student intake and attrition per year influenced the number of academics at their universities. Majority of the participants from University C and University D outlined the reason for the impact. It was understood that universities have greater financial resources to recruit and retain a higher number of academics, depending on a high student intake and a lower student attrition for the academic year. The participants were further questioned to rationalize the disparities between the number of academics in both universities. They perceived that it was due to lower tuition fees at the public university, University D, which attracted a higher number of students and reduced the attrition rate.

4.1.1.2 Working Policies

This section focuses on the policies that have been implemented by the Universities to promote healthy work-life balance experiences. It examines flexible working policies such as remote working and reduced hours, and focuses on workplace policies such as annual leaves, maternity leaves and provision of childcare facilities. It begins with the discussions around flexible working policies which involve formal and informal options.

Figure 4.3: Working Policies (Coding Category)
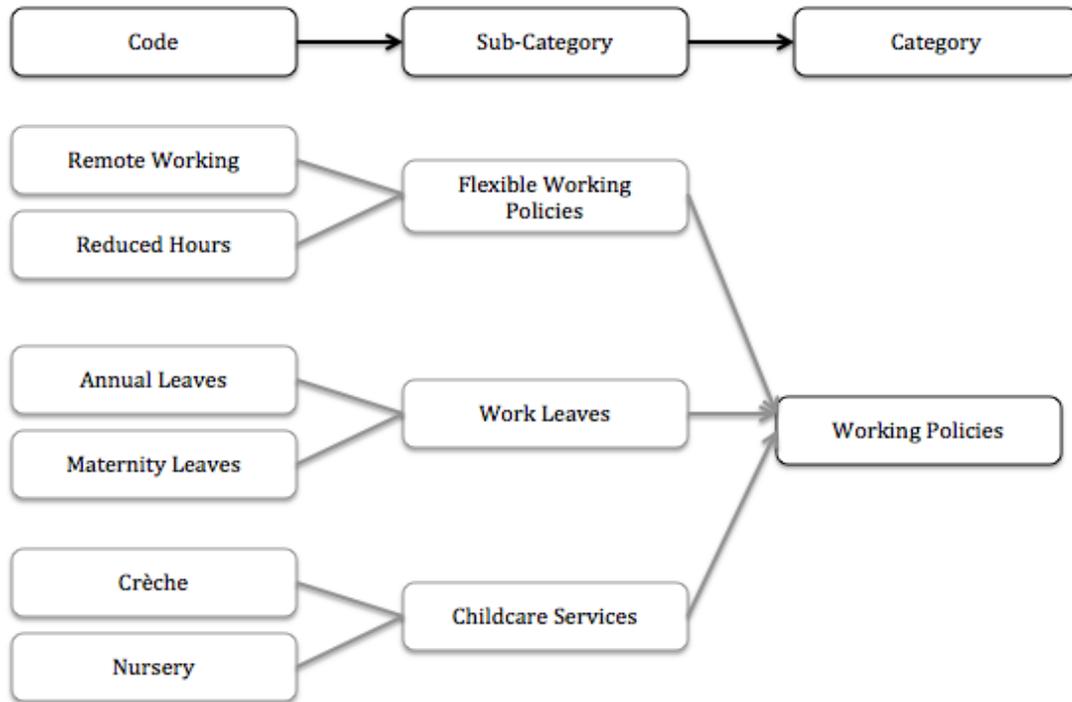
4.2.2.1 Flexible Working Policies

There were distinct responses regarding flexible working options amongst the participants in the UK and Nigeria, which showed that participants in the UK received formal and informal flexible working option whereas in Nigeria, participants received informal flexible working options. During the interviews, majority of the participants in Nigeria asserted that there were no formal flexible working options available to them, at both universities. The Nigerian participants perceived that the universities wouldn't see the need to provide these options for them due to the flexible nature of academia. Particularly, Ronke stated that she doesn't think flexible working options will be considered in Nigeria:

> "I don't think any of that will apply here in Nigeria. Maybe overseas but not here. We do not have any formal flexible option available to us and I believe that even if the

institutions attempt to introduce these flexible options, it wouldn't be sustainable. There are so many other things that should be considered first, before we become confident enough to start creating flexible working options. We are still behind in a lot of ways." (Ronke, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

Dara also shared a similar response to Ronke:

"This is Nigeria, I don't think we have reached that level. However, being an academic is quite flexible, so you don't have to be at work every day. So, you can say that there is no official flexible working policy however, there are unofficial flexible options." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)

In the UK, majority of the participants in both universities had perceived that there are possibly flexible working options in their workplace however, they were unable to identify the specific flexible working options that the university had implemented. Only one participant Tracy, was able to identify some of the flexible working options such as part-time working and reduced hours, due to having her induction recently. Participants mentioned that they were aware of less formal strategies implemented by the universities to encourage flexibility and work-life balance which include, discussions about work allocations, reminders about avoiding sending and responding to emails after office hours. For instance, Lilian states that:

"I think there are flexible working policies available at the university, but I currently do not know of any at the moment. Although I know that the management encourages staff to try not to send emails outside the working hours. Also, while I was doing my PhD, I was doing 4 days a week and only moved to working 5 days a week after my PhD. So, I know that it is possible to reduce your hours as well." (Lilian, Married, No Children, UK)

Similarly, Jade shares her opinion on this while reflecting on her experience as an academic over the years:

"When I first started out in academia, it was a lot less flexible working for women generally, but it has changed, there is a lot more flexibility for both men and women now. The opportunity to apply for flexible working is much more accepted. I think when my kids were younger, I worked full-time instead of part-time because I saw plenty of women working part-time and basically, they did full-time jobs, but we were paid part-time salary. Usually, it just meant that they had one day at home, but they were still taking calls and emails. (Jade, Married, 2 Children, UK)

During the interviews, it was revealed that some Nigerian participants expressed their ability to schedule their lecture time based on their preference, which is an informal form of flexibility that the university provides to them. However, this informal option was not available to all participants in Nigeria, it was only available to participants in University D, which is a public university. Participants in University D explained that having the control to schedule their lectures has helped them to ensure that they have time for other responsibilities such as carrying out research and other administrative duties. For instance, Ada rescheduled her lectures in order to have time to work on journal papers:

"I do not go to work on Fridays because I was able to fit in all my lectures for Monday and Tuesday while other activities are for Wednesdays and Thursdays so I can use Fridays to write papers that would help in my promotion. But also, because I need to rest." (Ada, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Similarly, Caroline explains that:

"To be honest there is a lot more work than anything else, but the good thing is that I love my job. It can be stressful but majority of the time I do enjoy what I am doing, and I like doing research. I guess if I had more time with my family, it would give me a better work-life balance. I haven't taken advantage of the university's flexible policy, but I know that if I let them know that I am having issues with childcare, they will arrange my teaching and seminars later in the morning and earlier in the evening. So, it's

something that I will look into in the next year. I have knowledge from other members of staff that have used some of the flexible working options, but I haven't really looked into it myself." (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)

There were further dissimilarities between the participants in the UK and Nigeria regarding flexible working policies specifically on the discussion of remote working. The Nigerian participants expressed their need for being able to work from home a few days a week, although they explained that they did it unofficially yet, formalizing it would have made them more comfortable about it. For instance, Bisi mentions that:

"One policy, which the University lacks, that would have been very useful is the opportunity to let academics work from home at least one day a week. Yes, academics don't come to work sometimes on days they are not teaching but it isn't official. So, you see a lot of people still come to work every day of the week because they might have an impromptu meeting. That's why it should become official to avoid situations like this." (Bisi, Married, 3 Children, Nigeria)

On the other hand, participants in the UK stated that they had the opportunity to work from home a few times a week, however, there were differences between the excerpts of full-time researchers and academics. For instance, academics explained that remote working was a formal policy provided by the institution. Elisha explains:

"I think the university promotes work-life balance. You have one day to work from home a week. It is a standard university policy which is good, because this helps us to manage our time and helps to reduce burnout however, as an academic, you are more than likely still going to be stressed, even while working from home." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

For the full-time researchers, they explained that they were not aware if it was a formal policy, but they were able to engage in remote working due to the nature of their job in which

they could undertake work demands effectively, irrespective of the location. For Lilian, she presently works from home 2 days a week:

> *"Yes, the job is super flexible. I work 5 days a week, but I probably work from home about 2 days a week. Some people might think you need to come in every single day, so I haven't been told that I can't work from home based on my contract, but I am not sure if it is entirely official." (Lilian, Married, No Children, UK)*

Similarly, Chelsy mentions that she also works from home on some days due to the flexible nature of the role:

> *"I work Monday to Friday but there's some form of flexibility so I can work from home on some days. I work from home half of the time although my job is quite demanding, it is flexible. For example, if my mum is very ill, she lives in London so I know that I can travel to London with my laptop and still work rather than taking an official day off. I can visit my parents and still do my work." (Chelsy, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

4.2.2.2 Work Leave

Work leave was an important theme that developed during the research investigation. The responses from the interviewees that were related to this theme addressed sub-themes such as annual leave and maternity leave. When participants were asked about their annual leave, they had different responses relating to whether they often take their annual leave or not. They explained that it was significantly dependent on the time of the intended leave, because it was quite difficult to take leave during term time especially when they have a heavy workload, therefore making it nearly impossible to take some or all of their annual leave entitlement. Christine shares her perception on this:

> *"During term time, I personally think that it is difficult to take annual leave. If it is related to teaching, I can swap with other lecturers based on their availability. And then*

I can take some days off, but I have other responsibilities like being the programme leader for students' level 4 to 6, so if they need help, they come to me. Let's say I have 600 students, at least 10% of them email me every day. So, if I want to take some days off, I am making my life worse because I have to respond to their emails, sometimes when I go into a two-hour meeting, by the time I am out I already have about 40-50 emails. Last year, I had about one week of annual leave but for two days, it felt like I was working full-time. While it is true for some academics, that they don't check their emails during annual leave, I think it mostly applied to those who only teach and don't have any management or administrative responsibilities." (Christine, Married, No Children, UK)

Similarly, Eleana narrates her experience:

"I haven't taken my annual leave because I have only worked full-time for a year and this year happened to coincide with covid, so it's been quite hectic. I intend to take all of my annual leave next year because the management has strongly encouraged us to take it since no one was, so they sent us emails about it." (Eleana, Partner, No Children, UK)

Toni on the other hand, explains that the management actively encourages staff to take their annual leave while also encouraging work-life balance through setting boundaries. According to her:

"I have had emails from the associate dean stating that if you have holidays, you must take them and saying don't check your emails, and don't send emails between Christmas and new year. Also, I didn't take all my leave days last year so my line manager emailed me about it and said that I must take all my leaves this year." (Toni, Married, 3 Children, UK)

For participants in Nigeria, majority of them stated that they regularly took their annual leave although they occasionally felt like it was the same situation as working from home since they still engaged in work responsibilities and responded to work emails. Particularly, Nkechi expresses her thoughts about this:

"Well, I think I always take most of my annual leaves. It's hard to take them sometimes, especially when there is a lot going on at the department and the workload is a bit much but I try to take them when I can. It doesn't really make a difference though, because I am still working during my leave. If I don't work while on leave, when I get back, I always have so much work to do that it becomes overwhelming. I think it's quite a complicated thing to discuss because when I am on my leave, I should feel relaxed, spending time with my family but I am always worried about work. (Nkechi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

All participants who had young children, those who were no longer of childbearing age and those who had no children, all acknowledged that they were aware of the maternity leave which was statutory 3 months paid. However, paid maternity leave in University C in Nigeria, was only offered to those who were married. For those who were single and requested for maternity leave, it was approved without pay. A few of the participants explained that it was because the university is Faith-based therefore, the university will only be willing to offer paid maternity leave if the women is married. Fisayo, explains that:

"If you are a single parent, you can take maternity leave but it is not paid. Academics are aware of this before they start working at the university to avoid disapprovals in the future." (Fisayo, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

For some participants who had the opportunity to take their paid maternity leave in the past, they made the decision not to, for reasons relating to the impact it would have on their career. For instance, Nkechi explained that she couldn't imagine staying at home for 3 months without doing any work. Amaka had a similar response while justifying her decision to not take her maternity leave:

"When I gave birth a few years ago, I did not take maternity leave because 3 months was too long for me to stay at home considering that I had specific career goals. If you take

your maternity leave and extend it after three months, when the promotion time comes and you have not published the expected number of journal papers, the management wouldn't take into consideration, the maternity leave." (Amaka, Married, 3 Children, Nigeria)

4.2.2.3 Childcare Services

The provision of childcare services was least discussed by the participants, which was either due to lack of knowledge about the availability of childcare services or based on participants not utilizing the services. There were inconsistencies in the responses given by the participants regarding the availability of childcare facilities. While some of the participants in University D acknowledged that there were creche's available at the university, several other participants in the same university stated that there were no creche's or other childcare facilities provided by the university. Dara who is an academic in University B explained that:

> *"We have a crèche in the university where you can put your child while you are at work, at a reduced fee but back in my days when my children were young, we had nothing like that. We also have nursery, primary and secondary schools here." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

This indicates that the university has implemented childcare facilities yet, they did not efficiently disseminate information about these facilities. For participants who had knowledge about the childcare facilities and had used them, Lola complained about the poor quality of the facilities:

> *"There is a crèche here available for both academic and non-academic staff however, the quality can be improved in terms of the classrooms and the environment." (Lola, Single, No Children, Nigeria)*

Majority of the participants in University C who had dependent children explained that there were no childcare facilities available at the university, despite it being a need for them. Fisayo who has two children, expressed her feelings about the lack of childcare facilities:

"When my children aren't taken care of, I don't consider myself sufficient. If the university has a standard crèche that isn't too far away, that would be helpful, as it would give me the opportunity to check on my child and it would also make life easier for me." (Fisayo, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

In the UK, majority of the participants stated that they had knowledge about the Nursery in the Universities campuses. It was primarily those with young children that were aware of the presence of the nursery at the university. For instance, Toni explains that:

"I know about the Nursery that is close by however I don't really know the details about it since none of my children go there but I think it is really good and it encourages a better working environment for women who require having a nursery close to their workplace. I think it makes it easier and accessible for them to drop their child in the morning and pick them up later in the day without having to worry about a long commute." (Toni, Married, 3 Children, UK)

The next section aims to discuss the pressures faced by women academics in relation to the academic year and the requirement to publish papers for promotion.

4.1.1.3 Pressure point

The intensity of pressure in the workplace was a major determinant of conflict for the participants in the UK and Nigeria. Participants narrated experiences where they consistently experience pressure to publish papers for promotion as well as a high level of pressure during the examination period, which led to an increase in workload. The various forms of pressure that were identified by the participants were categorized into promotion

and academic year. Responses relating to the academic year represent the semester that was deemed to be more stressful than the other, due to having numerous teaching demands. It also discusses the examination period which participants believed to be hectic, as they had to grade examination papers. Furthermore, for those participants in Nigeria, it was also a period where they undertook invigilation activities. Promotion on the other hand, represents the pressure for academics to publish papers in order to qualify for promotion. The next two sub-sections will focus on these categories.

Figure 4.4: Pressure Points (Coding Category)
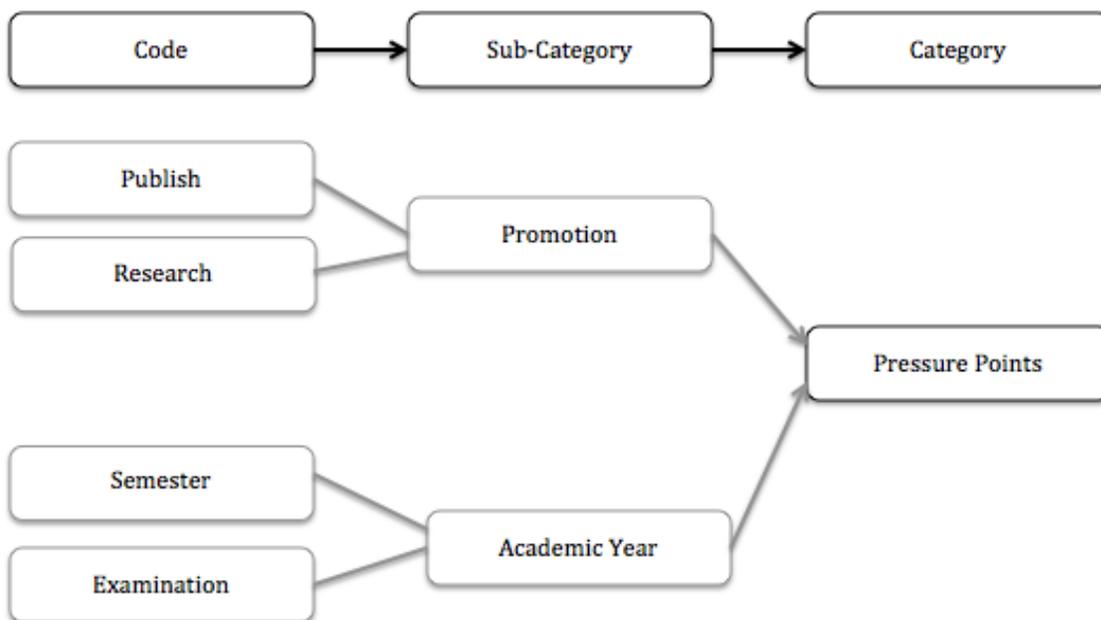
4.1.1.3.1 Promotion

There were discussions regarding the significance of publishing papers as a requirement for promotion. It was understood that this led to an increase in the work intensity and workload. It was confirmed that it was a matter of choice to publish papers, however participants were aware that it was a prerequisite for career advancement in these universities. Nonetheless,

this was only a major concern for Nigerian academics, as the UK academics explained that they had allocation for research however, it was not perceived to be a prerequisite for career advancement although, they admitted that it would be a contributing factor. Majority of the Nigerian participants explained that they had to publish a certain number of journal articles every three years, to be considered for promotion. Participants further described experiences where they worked at home during unsocial hours, particularly on evenings and weekends in order to carry out research and write papers. For Bisi, who is at the peak of her career, she explained that she will not have to publish papers anymore as a requirement for climbing up the career ladder, once she receives her final promotion:

> *"I work until 1am, writing papers and doing research. Remember there is a slogan in academia that says If you don't publish, you perish. So, I'm always writing papers for my promotion which is every three years, if not I won't get promoted. I am currently not satisfied with my work-life balance, but I know this phase will end shortly because I won't need to write papers anymore, once I get my final promotion. I have one more promotion, so I know that once I get it, I will have a better work-life balance." (Bisi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria).*

Similarly, Ada admits that her work-life balance hasn't been good because:

> *"I have to take care of my family while writing papers after the regular working hours because the management's approach to gender equality is ensuring that female academics receive the same level of treatment with their male counterparts in all aspects including the expectation to publish 6-7 articles by the maturation stage for promotion which is every three years. They do not consider the possibility of females having greater household responsibilities than males." (Ada, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

The difference between the necessity to publish papers for promotion for both Nigerian and UK participants, can be seen in the excerpts below from UK women academics. Kate for instance, explains that she has an allocation for research. However, she presently doesn't have the time for research due to the pressure from her teaching and administrative duties. She explains that:

"I think it is important that the business school is under review. We just had a new dean introduced and a new research allocation for researchers. So, I think it is important, but I don't know what that means going forward. I only have a small research allocation and that could change but I'm not sure that even if I was able to publish, that will necessarily lead to a promotion for senior lecturer potentially at this point and, it will take me 12-18 months to get a single paper published because that seems to be the timeline." (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

Similarly, Amanda explains that:

"I am counting down the days until Christmas. Even now as we are talking about the interview, I am sitting here thinking oh I have got to write three lectures for next week. So, as I said, it will change with time. I would like to think that this time next year it will be easier as the lecture materials will already be written. I also have responsibilities for research so I believe that I will have more time for that when my teaching workload is reduced, and it becomes easier." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

4.1.1.3.2 Academic Year

The academic calendar had a significant role to play in academics experiencing burnout and working during unsocial hours. Majority of the participants in UK and Nigeria explained that the volume of work fluctuates between each semester, with the first semester usually being more demanding. It was revealed during the interviews that the modules taught are much

lower in semester two while the third semester was for re-sits. Amanda describes her present situation regarding semester 1, explaining that her ability to effectively manage her work-life balance fluctuates:

"Currently I am working every day during the week and on weekends. At the weekends, I try to work for half the day and then use the other half of the day not really to relax but doing something practical like we have been renovating our garden, so it is still very tiring, but it seems to take my mind off work for a very short period. If I try to relax, maybe do something fun, I will not be able to stop thinking about work. It is difficult at the moment to create a boundary between the two. This has to do with my workload. My semester 1 workload is very heavy so it should be easier in January when I have less teaching hours and I would have some of the session materials prepared already. I had a conversation with my partner last week about this when I was complaining about work and he said I am putting too much effort in and I don't know if that is a characteristic of my gender or just me, but I know that if I want to do something, I want to do it well to the best of my ability." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

Tinuke also narrates her experiences during the examination period, where it impedes the time spent with family:

"It depends on the timing. when exams are on, it's satisfying because I don't do a lot apart from invigilate but when exams are over, having to mark and meet up with certain deadlines is when the difficulties arise. For instance, when marking, sometimes at home, when I should be spending time with your husband, I would have to leave the bedroom to go to the work area to focus and to ensure that the exam answer sheets are not damaged in any way." (Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

It was intriguing to find out during the interviews that, academics at both universities in Nigeria took on the role of invigilators during examinations which wasn't the same situation for academics in the UK. Having to mark examination papers as well as act as invigilators,

194

intensified the pressure for Nigerian academics. Dara, a widow who has been in academia for 24 years shared her experience on this:

"It is tough trying to balance my work and my home. But I think I'm getting better at it since I have been doing it for a while now. I am mainly stressed during the examination period when we are assigned to invigilate specific courses and we must mark examination papers for our course which takes a lot of time so I would sometimes have to take scripts home to mark. But I think that the fact that I don't have any young child again, whilst being a widow has given me more time to be efficient during examinations." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)"

Ronke on the other hand, who is married and has 2 children with the youngest being 6 years old, expressed that taking examination scripts home conflicted with her family demands:

"When marking at home during the exam period, I wouldn't have time to spend with my husband and this often upsets him. I have one deadline today and another one next week. But when the pressure isn't much, I usually avoid taking work home." (Ronke, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

4.1.1.4 Health

Health became an overarching theme during the research investigation, as some participants explained how their mental and physical health were affected negatively due to the work pressure of being an academic. However, this permeated amongst the UK participants in comparison to the Nigerian participants. While both Uk and Nigerian participants complained about experiencing stress during the academic year, a concern for their physical health only came up for participants in Nigeria. A key finding from the analysis showed that all participants who mentioned health as a concern, perceived that the workload for semester one was a lot more hectic than semester two as they found it most difficult to create

a boundary during the first semester. The next two sub-sections will focus on mental health and physical health, in order to examine the impact of the work domain.

Figure 4.5: Health (Coding Category)
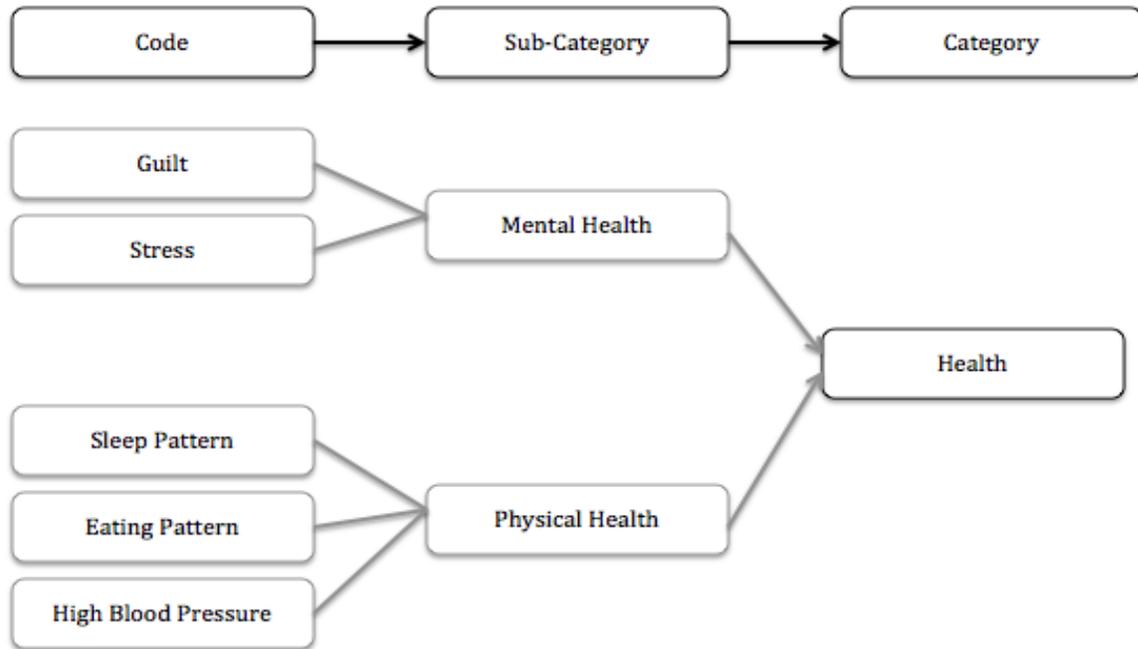
4.1.1.4.1 Mental Health

Stress was a major factor that led to a decline in mental health for the participants in UK and Nigeria, which was linked to one or more of the following; long working hours, work intensity and workload. For Amanda, who is 35, she explains that feelings of guilt have led to a downturn in her mental health:

> *"My working day isn't healthy, and I am not sleeping well. I wake up around 4am and then I start to feel so guilty and stressed about work that I am usually on my laptop by 5:30 am, doing administrative work and preparing for lectures or marking assignments.*

I live 100 miles away from the university so it is a long commute on the train and COVID-19 has made it difficult to buy a house so I will probably still be stuck with a 3 hour journey each way until things return to normal which will take a while. I don't feel like I am doing a very good job at managing my work-life balance. Before august, I tried to create a boundary by not going into the separate room which is now my office when it is not working hours but at the moment, there is so much pressure from work that I am constantly checking my emails. I feel like my work is being prioritized over my personal life which shouldn't be, and I feel like I am at the edge of a breakdown" (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

Similarly, for Tola who feels that the university should provide women academics with the opportunity to work from home once or twice a week in order to reduce their level of stress, she narrates her experience:

"They should let women academics have one or two days off a week because they are the core managers of the home, therefore have a lot of responsibilities. I feel stressed, when I'm not at work, I can sleep for more than 12 hours because of all the stress I've gone through during the week. It was different back then when a man would go to work while the woman will take care of the home, but now due to the economic situation of the country, both the man and woman have to go to work" (Tola, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

For Toni, who has 3 children, she explains that her mental health will always be her priority because she has previously suffered from stress and although she has considered taking some time off from work for a few months, she is unable to do that because she believes that her job might no longer be available by the time she decides to return:

"I put in a 100 percent at work, but I can't go beyond that because of my mental health as I have suffered from stress in the past so the best thing to do is to accept that you can't do everything. I think what happened after having my first two children is that I lost a lot of professional confidence because your life changes so much and it's hard to

keep on top of everything and that slows you down and you need a very supportive work environment to help you through that. But it's great having children and a family and I don't want to miss that, but I can't really leave my job for a long time because if I left to take care of my children and came back, I probably won't be able to get this same job. I was advised by my supervisor to not work at home. Keep it separate. Last summer I took 4 whole weeks off, I felt bad thinking it was too long, but it was good for me because it helped me to prepare for my PhD internal evaluation and I came back to work feeling refreshed. I think taking longer breaks at once works better for me than periodic breaks at irregular intervals." (Toni, Married, 3 Children, UK)

Having examined work demands and its effect on the mental health of women academics, the next sub-section focuses on the impact of work demands on their physical health.

4.1.1.4.2 Physical Health

Discussions amongst the participants relating to physical health were lesser in comparison to mental health, nonetheless physical health remains consequential in the discussions around work-life balance. The impact of heavy workload and long working hours were so severe for some participants that the state of their physical health was a cause of concern. Christine's narrative of her work-life balance experience was quite compelling as she explained that on most days, she rarely had the time to rest during working hours and that led to changes in her eating habits:

"My working days are so busy that sometimes, I need to decide between going to the toilet and eating my lunch, before I need to go to my next lecture. Sometimes, I will go and get a sandwich from Subway but when I get to my office and there is a student there waiting, I cannot tell them to give me a couple of minutes, so I agree to meet with them. And I will end up taking my sandwich home and have it with my husband in the evening at 7pm. Most times, I have to end up taking a banana, apple or water before my lecture

commences, just to give myself some energy. I know that it is not good for my health but what can I do?" (Christine, Married, No Children, UK)

Changes to sleeping patterns was also an adverse effect of work demands for a few of the participants. They cited experiences where they had few hours of sleep due to their workload thereby causing them to work long hours and have shorter rest periods. For instance, Fisayo explains that:

"I decided to focus more on my health recently. In the past, I always took my work home, but it was stressful for me particularly because I am a woman. I would get home after 6 pm and I would still have to cook meals before doing work. It has affected my health because I wouldn't sleep until 1 or 2 am and would still wake up early by 5:30 am to make breakfast and get my children ready for school." (Fisayo, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Similarly, Amanda describes the changes to her sleeping pattern:

"My typical working day has changed dramatically since January. I had a healthier working pattern in the first trimester. My working day isn't healthy, I am not sleeping well. I wake up about 4 o'clock in the morning and then because I feel so stressed and guilty about the work, I need to do I am usually on my laptop at 5:30 in the morning, doing admin, lecture prep, marking all sorts of things." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

The negative changes to the sleeping patterns were acute for one participant who had high blood pressure due to an increase in stress level. According to Ada:

"I always spent my nights preparing for lectures and marking assignments or examination papers until my stress level increased so much that I had high blood pressure. Since then, I have made conscious efforts to stop working when I am at home." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)

4.2.2 Self (Identity) Category

This section aims to address the following themes identified in the self(identity) category in Figure 4.1. These themes include Family Life, Impact of Covid-19 and Coping Strategies. Each theme will be discussed in relation to the impact of family and personal life on the work life of the participants. The next sub-section begins with Family Life, which focuses on childcare responsibilities and ageing parents.

4.2.2.1 Family Life

Work to life conflict was not the only form of conflict that the participants experienced as academics. Participants also described experiences in relation to life to work conflict which involves the impact of childcare responsibilities and ageing parents. The discussions on the spill-over of family life into work life was not as recurrent as the demands of work life spill-over into family life. However, it provided significant contributions to the discussions around work-life conflict through the insights on how demands from family and childcare responsibilities influenced the career progression of women academics. Which were linked to one or more of the following: the decision to extend the duration of their PhD programme, the inability to occasionally carry out field work for research and the inability to go for academic conferences that would have been of utmost value to their career. This section aims to elaborate on the influence of childcare and ageing parents, by examining their impact on the work-life balance experiences of the participants.

Figure 4.6: Family Life (Coding Category)
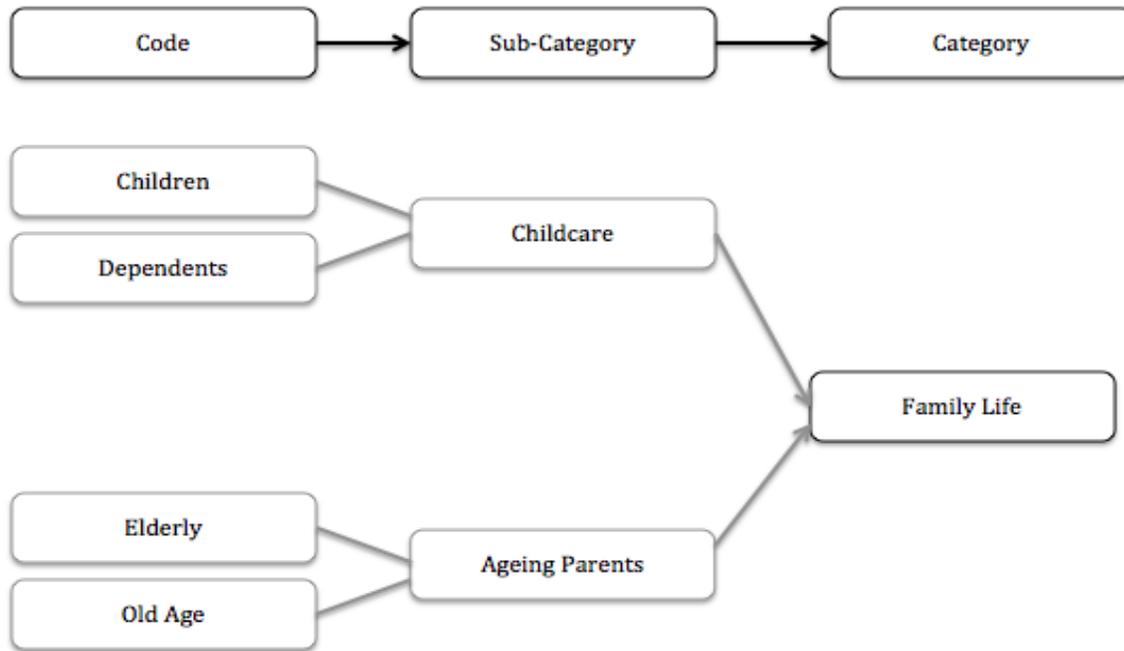
4.2.2.1.1 Childcare

The presence of children remained the dominating factor for life to work conflict in participants who had dependent children. Majority of the participants with children described experiences where they decided to prioritize their children over their work demands and this influenced some choices made by the participants such as having to do their PhD part-time, postponing further study, occasionally opting out of work meetings, being a part-time academic and working from home a few days a week. There was a consensus amongst majority of the participants who mentioned that passion wasn't the only reason why they decided to be an academic, it was primarily due to the assumption that academia is flexible, which was required because of their childcare responsibilities. For one

participant Toni, it was the reason why she decided to be a part-time academic after having her first child:

> *"I am married, and I have 3 children, 11, 7 and 2. And I have had all my children while I had this job, so I have had 3 maternity leaves in this role. I started off as a full time academic and then moved to part time after having my first child. Now that I am part-time, I guess I am progressing at half the pace." (Toni, Married, 3 Children, UK)*

Similarly, Chi spoke about her life to work conflict experiences regarding the role of childcare in the progression of her career overtime:

> *"My career advancement has been quite slow because of the sacrifices I have made. Mostly during my PhD, it was difficult to do it while taking care of my children. Even when I had to do field work for research, I was usually hesitant to go because my children were always on my mind. I'm glad that I was able to spend time with my children while they were growing up, but I sometimes compare myself to colleagues who are not married and don't have any children because they seem to have a more successful career." (Chi, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

An interesting finding that was revealed during the interviews was the strong influence of family responsibilities not just on participants who are married, but on those who were also single. While it is understood that family responsibilities do not inherently apply to only married individuals, it was profound to find out the depth to which single academics can also be affected by this. There was only one participant, Lola who was single in the Nigeria nonetheless, her contribution to the discussion was not overlooked. She explained that a major aspect of her work-life conflict is due to her family who are her dependents:

> *"Sometimes I feel like it isn't necessarily a good thing to be the most successful in the family. My parents and my siblings as well as a few of my nieces and nephews live with me. I cook for them, take care of them and provide for them financially. There are a few*

disadvantages to being the breadwinner in your family. Thinking back, I can say that it has slowed down my career progression due to financial constraints. For instance, when I have a conference, I may not be able to attend because I will decide to use the money that is meant for the conference fee as school fees for one of my nieces or nephews and all I can say is that it has indirectly affected my career because most of these conferences are important for my career profile." (Lola, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

This shows that while childcare responsibilities can interfere with work responsibilities for those who have dependent children, it is still much of a concern for those who do not have children but have family responsibilities. For instance, Amy, who is 35 years old and assists with taking care of her nieces, explains that she has to work late on days where she looks after her niece:

"I have a young niece who I look after on Wednesday mornings and Friday mornings. And I drop her off to my brothers later. I still work during those days, but I get up early at 5:30. I think it's just about being organized, and I try to take as much responsibility off my mum by taking care of my niece when I can. My mum is on her own with no partner, so we try to handle responsibilities on our own; me and my brother. Because I take care of my niece on those days, I tend to go to work until around 10 pm because I have to make up for the time spent with my niece." (Amy, Single, No Children, UK)

Further investigation into life to work conflict during the interviews revealed that the role of the child's age is a determinant of life to work conflict. Several participants explained that achieving work-life balance was a lot more difficult when their children were younger. They reflected on their past experiences in which they performed multiple roles such as cooking for them, taking them to school and helping with their assignments. Tosin expressed her thoughts on her work-life balance experiences when her children were much younger:

"When I was younger with young children, I will pick them up from their school by 4pm, assist them with their homework, prepare their meal and get them ready for church in the evening which was from 6-7pm and in the morning, I would wake up early to prepare them for school. Back then I was a pastor, so it wasn't easy being an academic, a lecturer and a pastor, but I did my best to balance these responsibilities." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

During the interview, Chelsy, who is a full-time researcher, reflected on her past experiences where she always prioritized her children over work and ensured that any decision regarding work, was based on the needs of her children during that period:

"Certainly, when they were younger, I made compromises like working part-time although I wasn't an academic back then. Just 3 or 4 days a week. So, I made a career compromise to do that, because when you're working part-time, your chances of being promoted are reduced. I always think that your kids don't ask to be born, so you owe them the responsibility of being there for them. At the same time, I have had a good and rewarding career, but I probably have prioritized them. Back then, I also made choices not to apply to jobs such as academia that I may have desired or jobs far away because of my children." (Chelsy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly, Jade commented on her own experiences with prioritizing her children:

"When you have kids, you will prioritize them over work, but it is a decision around how much of time your family needs vs your job. So, I have changed jobs over time because the job was maybe closer to home. Years ago, when my children were a bit older, I worked in London 3 days a week which meant I would have to be away from home a few days a week. It's sometimes a difficult thing when you always prioritize the kids but at the same time, you want some form of balance. Some people work just to pay the mortgage but a lot of people in academia work for a lot more than that; it is because they value what they contribute to higher education and what that means in terms of helping others. I think I've always been rubbish at work-life balance because I work too much, and I always have. But I think that's because I enjoy it but that's a personal choice.

And there are times where I have had to make decisions or compromises because of my kids. E.g. I had to leave meetings when my kid is sick, and I felt bad for leaving but my kid is my priority." (Jade, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Elisha explains that her children will always be her priority:

"I had my kids before my masters and my PhD however, it was still challenging because I had to make sure that my work didn't overcome the time spent with family. I had to be able to monitor my children while they were growing up, probably why I even took this career due to flexibility. And yes, I have had several situations when I have always put my children first. Once, there was an issue with one of my sons who got into a disagreement with his classmate and I was called in, so I had to leave work. The truth is that you can't put your work above your children, work can come and go but your children are priceless. I can't trade my children for anything." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

A vast majority of responses from participants who were married revealed that their children were always their priority regardless of the impact it would have on making certain decisions regarding their career. Several participants believed that prioritizing their children over work demands would not necessarily have a positive effect on work-life balance however they expressed that it could however be a major determinant of life to work conflict because they hold the perception that a female is unable to have it all and will therefore have to prioritize one domain over the other. Tinuke who is married and has 2 children, stated that:

"I believe that a female academic can never have a good work-life balance, its either you want a family or a career. As for me, I give 40 percent of my time to work and 60 percent for my family and personal life. I have left work early on several occasions because of my children, they come first and then my work comes second. Admittedly I have left work because I wanted to help them prepare for a major examination, and sometimes, when

they fell ill. I believe that my decision to extend my PhD programme was because I knew that I wasn't going to complete it within the initial timeframe. How could I, when I always leave every other thing to focus on my children?" (Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Tola, made an interesting commentary regarding the possibility of a female academic achieving a good work-life balance:

"Family should always be your priority if you want to have a good work-life balance. It is easier for males than females to climb the career ladder because females take care of the family. It is what we are expected to do so, putting any other thing before family will ultimately have a negative impact on our work-life balance. It is hard to change the perspective when the norm is unfavorable for women." (Tola, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

4.2.2.1.2 Ageing Parents

A recurrent concern for the participants was having ageing parents who had health complications which has impacted their work life occasionally by having to work from home on certain days and in some cases, having to travel. A finding that emerged in all the interviews with participants who had ageing parents was the emotional impact of their health status. This shows that the influence of ageing parents was as important as having dependent children although, it wasn't as recurrent as childcare nonetheless, it was evident from the analysis that their family responsibilities will always be prioritized over their work life. For those participants who had ageing parents whose health was not a concern at the moment, they still worried about not always being physically present with their parents. Kate shared her thoughts about this:

"My partner's parents and mine both live in the midlands so, they don't live close by. My mum has a bit of ill health but nothing that requires constant care although she did go into the hospital early last semester. So, I was travelling down there and then coming

206

back in the evening and then coming to work the next day, so that added to the pressure in semester one. My brother has a more flexible job so he can go down during the weekdays, so he has been very good at taking some of that on. She is okay, she lives on her own. It is not serious at this time, but it could get serious at some point. I feel bad that I haven't spent enough time with her, as I probably should have." (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

Yemisi also narrates her life to work conflict experience in which the decline in her father's health had a daily impact on her work:

"My dad's health has worsened since 2018, and I worry about him every time. I live in a different city so that means that I have to regularly travel 4 hours on the road, just to see him. In the past, I would travel to see him during the week, but I realized that it affects my focus on work demands even on days when I wasn't teaching. I couldn't mark assignments and it was occasionally difficult to even respond to work emails which made it even more difficult for me to meet up with deadlines. So, I changed my travel days, I only travel during the week when it is necessary otherwise, I travel during the weekends." (Yemisi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

The current situation of COVID-19 has also had a major impact on the ability of a few of the participants to provide support to their parents. It has led to difficulties for participants to physically see their parents due to the restrictions set out by the government. The current guidelines set out by the UK government, states that "every individual is expected to stay at home and should not visit other households". The exceptions to this rule have been identified on the official UK government website. For Amanda, whose father had health problems, the current situation with the pandemic was overwhelming for her:

"My parents are elderly, and my mum is okay, but my dad is not so well, he has respiratory problems and other problems involving his bones, so he has osteopenia, and he has been told to shield by the government due to covid. I live in Wales, but I haven't

been able to visit my parents because of covid as I don't want to give them anything, so it has been quite emotional for me and the pressure there is more emotional than having caring responsibilities." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK).

4.2.2.2 Impact of COVID-19

During the research investigation, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, which led to academics having to work remotely from home. As the data collection was ongoing during the pandemic, data regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their work-life balance was collected from a small number of participants towards the end of the data collection process. However, this data was only collected from participants in the UK as the data collection in Nigeria had already been completed. This section will therefore be relatively small compared to other sections that include data from the start of the data collection process. This section aims to examine the effects of the pandemic such as changes in lifestyle and work intensity.

Figure 4.7: Impact of COVID-19 (Coding Category)
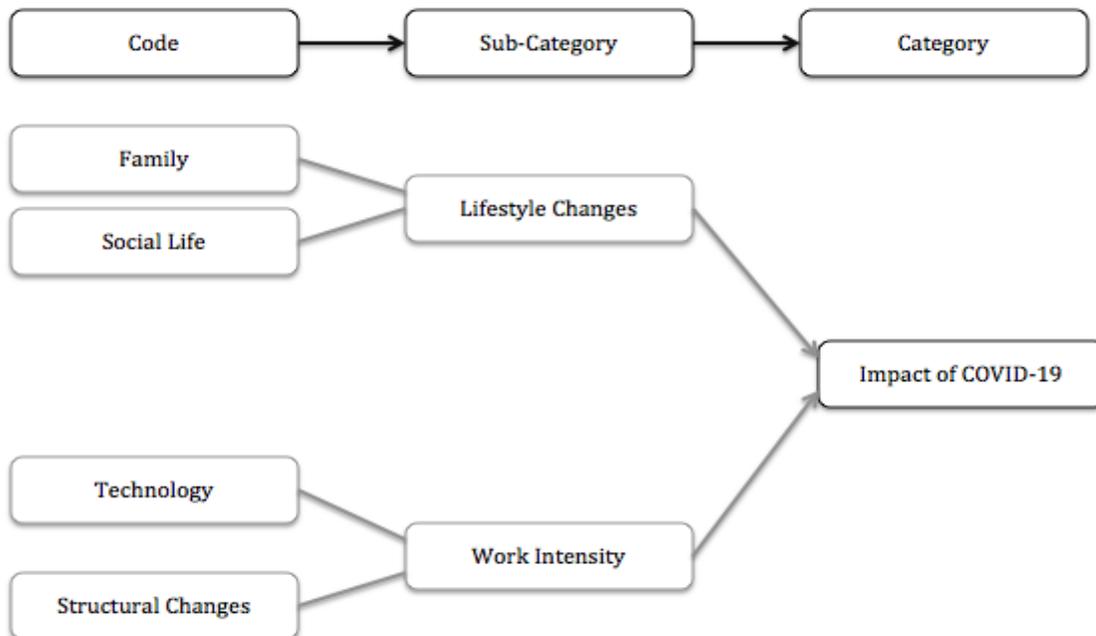
4.2.2.2.1 Lifestyle Changes

The pandemic restricted the ability of participants to see their family and friends regardless of whether they lived in the same city or not. They explained that the rules relating to COVID-19 meant that they couldn't visit anyone during that time. This led to difficulties for some of the participants who struggled mentally as they couldn't see their parents and did not have assistance from their parents during that period, who regularly helped in taking care of their children. Amanda describes her present experience with the pandemic:

> *"I live about 100 miles away from the university so it's a long distance, the train journey is long. Covid has made it difficult to buy a house, so I'm stuck with a 3 hour journey each way. I am hoping that once things start to go back to normal, I will finally be able to move closer to the university and my family. I think this pandemic has made me realize how much I miss them" (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)*

Similarly, for Sadie, being away from family has been difficult:

> *"I haven't been able to see my parents for some time now, due to the pandemic. I have even seen my siblings in a while although we have regular video calls every week where the whole family gets on the call, and we chat for a while. It hasn't been easy, but we know that it is what we must do to stay safe. My children miss seeing their grandparents because they were so used to seeing them regularly and now, they don't really understand why they can't anymore." (Sadie, Married, 4 Children, UK)*

Participants also spoke about the adverse effects of the pandemic on their work and social life, which has been detrimental to their mental health. For instance, Sadie discussed this in relation to her work and home responsibilities. According to her:

> *"I have 4 children so you can imagine how difficult it is for me particularly now that I have to work from home during the pandemic. No one ever expected this to happen, it*

came suddenly, and I am still figuring out how to manage this new phase of my life. I was still trying to figure out ways to create that boundary between work and home, while I was going to university but now that I work from home, I don't even know how to do that. (Sadie, Married, 4 Children, UK)

For Amanda, she reflects on her life before the pandemic:

"I miss going out with friends to watch a movie or just go out for food in town. It was nice back then when we could do so many things, things I probably took for granted. Thankfully I live with my partner, so I don't have to be at home alone during these times, but I do miss meeting up with other people. I try to actively do things just so this situation doesn't really affect my mental health. So, I do things like going on a walk or run, or even things around the house like diy." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

4.2.2.2.2 Work Intensity

The work demands for the participants were intensified during the pandemic due to the changes in the way work was done. The unexpected shift from being physically present in the workplace to homeworking led to difficulties in using technologies for teaching, lectures and meetings. Participants also discussed pressure from the management on deadlines for teaching materials and changes to the structure for assessments.

Elisha describes her experience with learning how to use technologies:

"Everything moved from face to face to being online. I think the university did a good job of providing tutorials and training on how to use such technologies like Microsoft teams and even blackboard collaborate but not everyone is technologically savvy. So, of course I had a few challenges along the way in the learning process, but it was good to always get access to support, to clarify questions I had. Also, there were a few times where I had issues logging in before a class, or even issues with sound when teaching. That's the difference, these things were never problems before the pandemic." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

As for Amanda, she had less difficulties in learning how to use the various technologies although she experienced work intensity. She explains that:

"Oh, I think I was fine using blackboard collaborate, but I did experience a few bumps during this COVID experience. With the changes, there was pressure on when to complete all teaching materials which was a bit difficult at first, particularly because I am teaching a good number of modules. At some point, it was too much for me because I had to speed up the rate at which I completed my work." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

Sadie on the other hand, spoke about the changes to the structure of assessments:

"Things were a lot easier when marking assignments because it was a structure that we were familiar with. Now, everything is done on collaborate which could sometimes pose as a challenge with marking although the grading criteria helps, but when students have issues uploading their assignments, it causes issues for us. For instance, students once had to do a video presentation and upload It, and some of the presentations had issues with the audio or even cases where the presentation didn't play at all. That then led to chasing the students up, which delayed the intended completion time for marking the assignments." (Sadie, Married, 4 Children, UK)

4.2.2.3 Coping Strategies

This section explores the strategies employed by women academics to manage their work-life balance. It focuses on the participant's abilities to effectively create boundaries between their work and their non-work domains while also discussing the leisure activities that they engage in, in order to detach from work activities. Some of these strategies include attending church services, travelling, not responding to emails during unsocial hours, exercising and spending time with family. This section will therefore examine two sub-themes: creating boundaries and leisure activities.

Figure 4.8: Coping Strategies (Coding Categories)
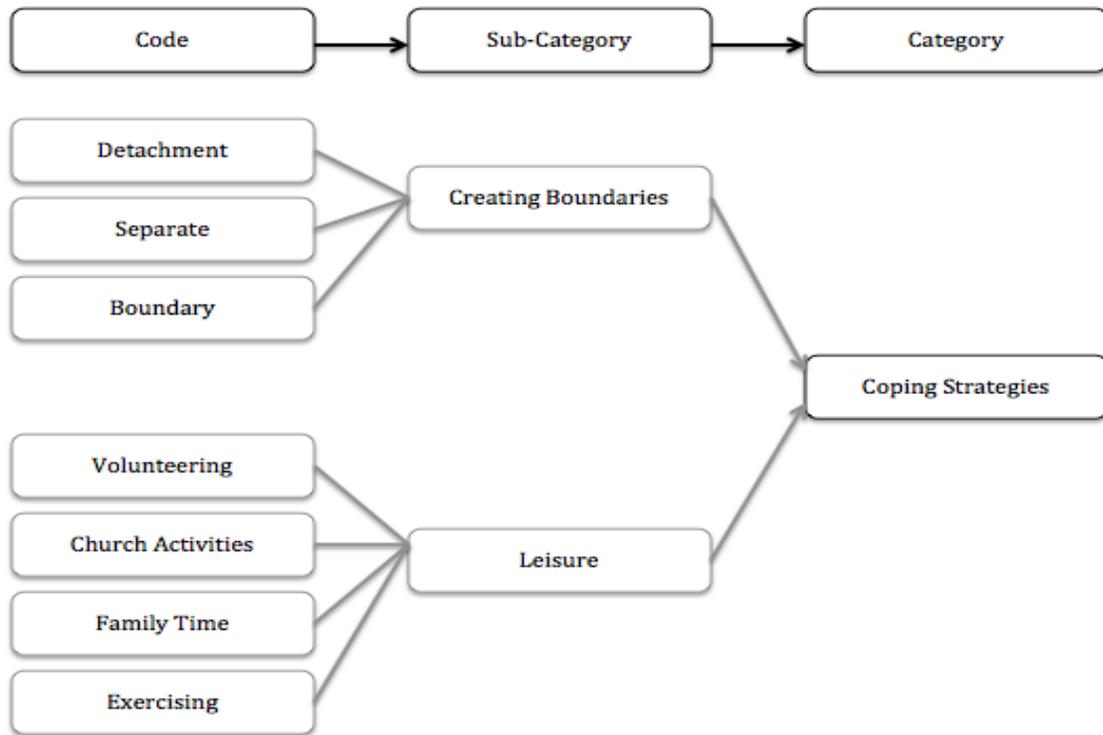
4.2.2.3.1 Creating Boundaries

Findings from the work and self-categories discussed in previous sections shows the evidence of conflict and spillover between the work and non-work domains. Despite these experiences regarding struggles to create boundaries, a few of the participants stated that they were able to effectively establish a boundary between their work and non-work domains for the following reasons: health, unstable power supply, political instability of the country and leisure activities, which took precedence over any work activity that demanded working on evenings and weekends. This is as a result of having no childcare responsibilities or either making a conscious effort to separate the work and non-work domains. Nonetheless, it was established during the interviews that deciding to intentionally avoid

working during unsocial hours was not always effective as there are periods where the workload could not remain unaddressed. Lynn, who is 40 and a module leader, shares her strategies on how she has been able to create a boundary between both domains over the last 12 years:

"I get to work around 6-7am and leave around 5:30-6pm because I have so much work to do, and I don't have childcare responsibilities and I like to work quite early in the morning. I try not to take work home. My partner has a job but once he is done with work for the day, he doesn't take any work home and doesn't have to think about his job until the next day. So, I try to understand that work is work and home is home. Sometimes, this means that I would have to leave work an hour later than take work home. There are times when there is an extremely busy marking period where I would do some marking at home but for the most part, I tend to structure my day that I get to work early and do what I need to do. When I take a bus or train home, it is my detachment from work, so I do not check work emails unless it is during assessment periods, and I am pretty strict on that." (Lynn, Partner, No Children, UK)

Several other participants indicated that they made conscious efforts to separate their work from their family and personal lives. The range of strategies that were implemented include switching off devices after office hours, not responding to emails, and making the decision not to work beyond a certain time in the evening. Tracy, who is separated from her spouse and has two boys aged 8 and 12 years of age, admitted that she must take the necessary steps to avoid the possibility of work spilling over into her family time:

"I think I have reached a stage in my life where I have found all the tricks that I need to be efficient. I don't work beyond 6 o clock but if I'm doing research, I might do a bit of work in the evening. However, that's because I find it interesting, and I don't work at the weekends. I ensure that boundaries are made, and I meet all my deadlines. I do keep very strict office hours, so I sit at my desk between the core hours of 9 and 5 the least if not

more. I set strict markers that help me to manage my time efficiently. I don't download any apps with emails from work unto personal devices so I can't access them, and I make it clear to other colleagues that I will not respond to after office hours however I'm still sent emails around 9 or 10 pm." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

In her interview, Ada explained that she always spent her weekends preparing for her lectures and marking examination papers until 6-7 years ago when her stress level increased, and she had high blood pressure. Ada explains that:

"I had high blood pressure about 6-7 years ago and that was a wakeup call for me. Yes, sometimes although it is rare, I work on weekends, but I do not do it frequently anymore. I was so stressed in the past and it affected my health, so I had to decide to put myself first before work and that meant having to enforce that boundary between my work and personal life. I got so obsessed with work and it did not have a good impact on my health. The truth is that I am replaceable, everyone is so why would I put work before my health. I think it is hard but once you figure out a way to create that boundary, you become the one in control." (Ada, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

In contrast, Amaka's decision to avoid working during unsocial hours was due to the unstable power supply in the country although she admitted that occasionally, she would work until very early in the morning:

"Honestly, it is difficult for me to take work home because we do not have good electricity and I am usually very tired after coming back from work and cooking, but I still do some work at home occasionally when I have a lot of work to do which usually keeps me up till 3 am. And I have to say that this sometimes makes me feel uncomfortable because it doesn't give me enough time to spend with my family." (Amaka, Married, 3 Children, Nigeria)

The unstable power supply and health did not emerge as the only factors that ensured that some of the participants refrained from working during unsocial hours. The political

instability of the country was also a determinant, as participants expressed their concerns about the risk of harm due to the high rate of crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery and terrorism. Often, they would intentionally leave work early in order to avoid the possibility of being a victim of these crimes. Dara shared her ordeal:

"Several organizations and schools are closed right now because of the elections going on in the country. Unfortunately, we are still expected to come to work as academics, to attend meetings and training, which is unreasonable. I have decided to leave work once it is 3pm regardless of the work I need to do, to avoid the usual crimes that go on during the election. I can't take confidential documents home from the university because anything could happen to them if I am attacked on my way home. Two weeks ago, I was heading home from work and around chevron road, there were people being burnt alive because they supported an opposing party. It is scary, I just want my family and I to be safe." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)

4.2.2.3.2 Leisure

Finding ways to detach from work on evenings and weekends was a priority for the participants because it played a key role in enabling them to feel like they had the ability to effectively manage their work-life balance. Several participants explained that it helped to relieve the stress from work by focusing on other productive activities, some of which include Watching tv, going out with their friends or partners, visiting family, travelling, cooking, volunteering, going to the gym and doing other forms of exercise like running, swimming and yoga. For Lynn, she shared that volunteering as well as travelling helps her to detach from work:

"I volunteer in Swinton, in a group about supporting women returning to work who are either victims of domestic violence or for whatever reason they have found themselves in unfortunate circumstances. Helping them to build their confidence, preparing them

for interviews, how they might present themselves. Also, my partner and I have busy social lives. It tends to be that we are at home on Friday, and then we do something with friends or family on Saturday. We go away a lot and we try to travel to other parts of the cities and Europe once every 6 weeks. We spend one day a weekend with my partner's mother, checking her health because it is an ongoing concern. I exercise, I run once every weekend, I also swim, cook and I also do the washing. I don't check my emails because nothing I read at 4pm on a Sunday, cannot be read at 10 minutes to 9 on a Monday unless there is something specific going on, I don't do it." (Lynn, Partner, No Children, UK)

As for Elisha who is a Christian, she has a different approach to detaching from work:

"Most of the time, we have a family day out or I just chill at home especially on Saturdays after cleaning the house. On Sundays, I go to church. I go to a Pentecostal church, and it takes long hours. By the time we get home, we have lunch, and the day is gone, then I start preparing for the next working day, Monday." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Several participants in Nigeria described how activities such as listening to sermons, attending church services, watching television, attending weddings or birthday parties, and spending time on social media was of upmost importance to them. They indicated that it helped them to refrain from engaging in work responsibilities thereby reducing stress and encouraging them to relax. For some participants, having an important relationship with God by regularly attending church services and listening to sermons, aided relaxation. For instance, Tosin who is a Christian stated that:

"I am a pastor, so I go to church on Wednesdays and Sundays because I have to preach sometimes, and God is the most important person in my life. I cannot compromise my relationship with God for my work therefore, I do not work on Wednesday evenings and on Sundays because it is a holy day. I also use my Saturdays to read and prepare for my sermons." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

For several of the other participants, they had similar responses such as going to the gym, spending time with friends and family. Kate said that she was so overwhelmed with work that she had to start exercising and going to the gym, regardless of whether she enjoyed it or not. In Kate's words:

"I also have a friend that I have been training at gym with and we had specific days when we would train so that really helped me rather than going home and straight back to the computer. I don't really like going to the gym because I don't enjoy it but it is better than working. Interestingly, this semester my training partner is having a baby so neither of us is going to the gym now. I run with a friend on weekends as well, and that was important last semester and when I was doing my PhD. We sometimes chat about work but usually about anything other than that and that helped me get through, so I'm trying to keep up with that now." (Kate, Partner, No Children, UK)

4.2.3 Overlapping Categories

This section explores the overlapping categories which consist of the Anchors and the Role of Culture. It examines the impact of these themes on both the work and the non-work domains of women academics. These themes are distinct from the work and self-category as they each affect one domain whereas, the overlapping categories affect each domain interchangeably.

4.2.3.1 Anchors

Another significant theme that emerged is the anchors that participants had, which played a key role in their work-life balance experiences. There were discussions during the interviews, regarding the support received from their family and organizations, or the lack thereof. During the analysis of the interviews, responses related to anchors were categorized into two: family-anchors and work-anchors. Family-anchors represent emotional and

instrumental support received from spouses or partners and family whereas work-anchors represent support from their colleagues, line managers and the availability of flexible working arrangements. This section will address these categories of anchors with regards to the perceptions held by the participants.

Figure 4.9: Anchors (Coding Category)
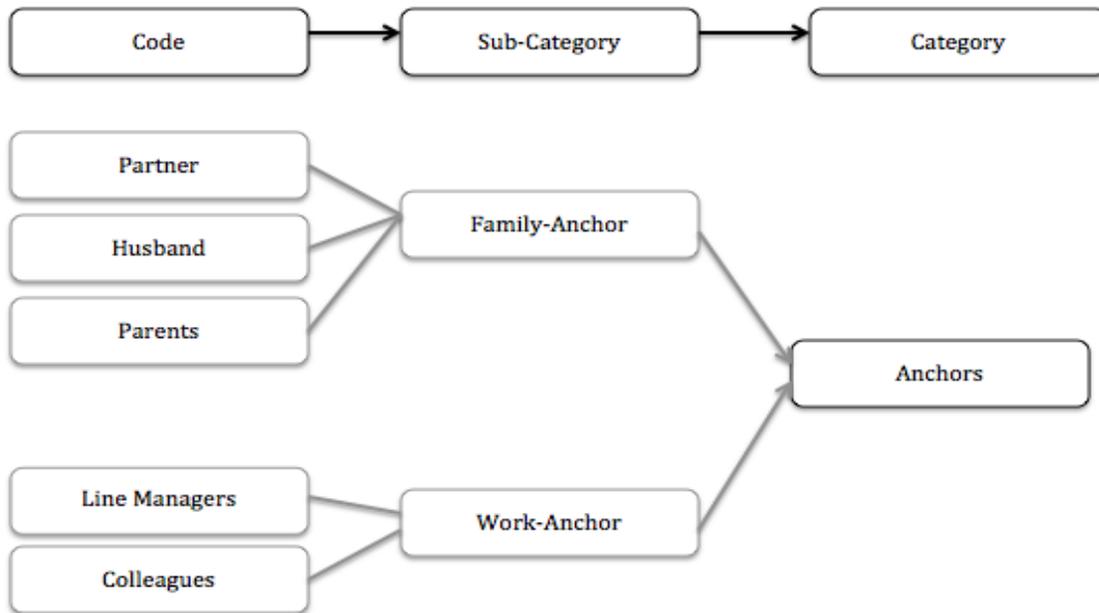
4.2.3.1.1 Family-Anchor

This section focuses on the discussions around the support received from spouses, partners and family members. During the analysis, findings showed that this form of support had a significant impact on the work-life balance experiences of the women academics in the UK and Nigeria. Participants described their experiences whereby their spouses or partners aided with family and household responsibilities, while also providing emotional support through encouragement and being understanding. Furthermore, majority of the participants narrated their past and present experiences about receiving support from other family

members, specifically their parents, who assisted with childcare responsibilities occasionally. Several of the participants discussed the role of their husbands, parents, paid staff and neighbors in influencing their ability to successfully manage their work-life balance.

During the interviews, participants perceived emotional and instrumental support from their spouses to have the most significant impact in comparison to other forms of support. Emotional support describes the caring abilities and active listening provided by their spouse whereas instrumental support describes the ways in which the spouses helped regarding childcare responsibilities and household chores. In most cases, the participants expressed that their spouses exhibited both types of support. However, it was indicated that one type of support was more dominant than the other, which varied amongst different spouses. For instance, Yemisi expressed that her husband conveyed both types of support:

> *"Thankfully, I have a husband who is very understanding because there have been so many situations where I would leave work at 9pm because of my workload but my husband doesn't get upset, he is so supportive and it's unbelievable! And in the morning, I take my children to school, but my husband leaves work early to pick up the children in the afternoon which is very helpful considering my schedule." (Yemisi, Married, 2 Children Nigeria)*

Similarly, Ronke and Toun, whose husbands are academics, explain that having similar professions have aided understanding and support from their spouses. Specifically, Ronke states that:

> *"I am so lucky to have my husband, he is an academic so he understands how busy my work life is and he tries as much as possible to assist me in any way that he can. He encourages me when I feel frustrated, and he reminds me not to do any work past a certain time at night. He also does this very nice gesture where he brings me snacks*

whenever I'm working at home, I think it is his way of reminding me that he is always there for me." (Ronke, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

With regards to the support received from their spouses and partners, majority of the participants expressed that they had supportive partners. For Chelsy, who has two children and previously worked part-time, she explained that her husband assisted with the childcare and household responsibilities. However, there were certain situations where she had to be the one to compromise:

"I think we are 50:50 even though, sometimes we are a bit gender in terms of the responsibilities. He can do the diy, the cooking was 50:50 and over the years it would always be me that helped with dressing up the kids or organizing the kids' parties. He continued to work full-time even though his job was quite flexible that he could work from home. I made that choice to work part-time, when we had the discussion to work part-time, he said yeah it was a good idea, but he didn't end up doing it. I had to compromise. And working part-time makes no difference to your workload" (Chelsy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly, Chi expressed that having a spouse who is a professor doesn't necessarily mean that he understands her present difficulties with achieving a healthy work-life balance. She explains that the lack of spousal support has been problematic in relation to managing her childcare responsibilities:

"My husband is a professor, so I know that he understands the nature of my job, but he doesn't seem to provide the support I need. I'll give an example; two months ago, I had an academic conference that I needed to attend outside the country for a week and I told my husband about it. I explained to him that I would require him to take care of the children while I was away, but he was hesitant even though that was going to be one of his less busy weeks. He told me that he just didn't have the time to do that, and it made me upset because I had to figure out who would be available to take care of the children.

Unfortunately, everyone I contacted had some commitments so, I had to stay at home, and I couldn't go to the conference" (Chi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

The severity of lack of support was revealed to be more prominent for women academics in Nigeria even though some participants in the UK expressed occasionally receiving no form of support from their spouses. Tope emphasized how she struggled to manage her work-life balance:

"I have no support, not even from family because they all have their own families and are busy taking of them and it has been really difficult for me because it's so hard trying to have a work-life balance without any form of support. It is particularly difficult when my children are on term breaks and I don't want to leave them alone, but I have to go to work. So, most times, I would take them to work with me and leave them in the care of a non-academic staff who wasn't busy and is also someone I could trust." (Tope, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

A minority of the Nigerian participants described the demanding nature of their spouse's jobs and they explained that while their spouses provide emotional and instrumental support, it is occasionally hindered by the work demands of their job roles. The participants narrated situations where their spouses worked long hours or were expatriates and they were unable to see them often. Ope who has 2 children with the youngest being 11 years old, emphasized that:

"To be honest, having a good work-life balance is not easy but thankfully, I have a supportive husband who understands me. He really helped with taking care of the children and picking them up from school while I was doing my masters. He would also wake up early to get them ready for school. But now he is currently working in South Africa, so we are only able to see him when he is on annual leave and to be honest, it's just not enough" (Tope, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Several participants who had spouses and partners that were supportive expressed that they were grateful because they realized that it wasn't the same experiences for everyone. For instance, Kate and Lilian narrated how their husband and partner provided assistance in the form of washing, cleaning, cooking and providing them with hot drinks and snacks when they were working and felt stressed. Particularly, Lilian explained that she was aware that not all men are supportive:

"My husband does all the chores; it was a decision that we made when we got together because he understood that it isn't something that I really do. And I think it is quite surprising because I have friends whose husbands or partners do not help at all with household chores." (Lilian, Married, No Children, UK)

Having their spouses and partners as anchors was not perceived to be the only significant form of support to the participants. Participants described numerous situations where they had their parents assisting them with their childcare responsibilities due to their busy work schedule and that of their partners or spouses. For those participants who had no childcare responsibilities, having assistance from their family was still a necessity for them because their parents were able to provide them with the necessary emotional support that they require. While several of the participants still received support from their parents, a few of them explained that they no longer receive instrumental support from their parents in the form of picking their children up from school, because their parents have reached a certain age where they are the ones who require constant care and support. Tracy reflects on the support she constantly received from her parents:

"I was and I am still fortunate to have my parents for support, taking the children to school when I couldn't go. Looking after them when I had to attend various lectures and appointments, at one stage I was working at Leeds university. Picking up the children

when I was ill. Also, there were arrangements in place for my ex-husband to see the children but on many occasions, he disappointed them and didn't turn up, so it was good to have my parents support by being there for my children." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly, Jade commented that:

"I was lucky because my mum lived down the road once they started secondary school so most of the help that I have ever had probably for the last 10 years has been my mum and she is always on call if I am going to be late getting back home or if there's an emergency at home. They knew that their grandma was always there, and I couldn't have done it without her." (Jade, Married, 2 Children, UK)

Nonetheless, not all participants shared similar experiences. For Christine, who explains that she isn't satisfied with her work-life balance, she mentions that having support from family is very important however, she doesn't have that support available to her for the following reason:

"I am married but no kids at the moment. It is still hard because I don't have my family around to support us. We are just a young couple, and we are left to do everything and manage every aspect of our lives by ourselves." (Christine, Married, No Children, UK)

The support from paid staff were also mentioned by participants, to be an integral part of their work-life balance however, this form of support was only mentioned by participants in Nigeria. Participants cited instances where they had nannies, cleaners and gardeners who assisted with their household and child-care responsibilities. Majority of the participants highlighted that having paid support is very important to achieving a good work-life balance. For those participants in Nigeria who had no form of paid support, it was either due to a lack of adequate finance or the inability to trust non-family members. Trust played a key role in the decision to get any form of paid support because majority of the participants were

223

uncomfortable with someone who they knew very little about, having access to their home and children. While most of the participants eventually took the decision to get paid support, it was still an ongoing concern for them, especially when they had to leave their children with a babysitter. The intensity of their fear and worry was not without cause, because the participants described instances where they had heard stories of how babysitters and sometimes, cleaners or personal drivers kidnapped children and stole items from their homes. Bisi, who is an associate professor explained that she has a personal assistant who helps to reduce her workload:

> *"I am an academic, I have administrative duties and I also act as the dean of student affair so having a personal assistant is a necessity for me. I hired a personal assistant without any financial support from the university, so I pay my assistant through my salary which isn't a lot. However, I know that it is worth it because I have so many responsibilities and it has been impossible to handle them by myself. My assistant is very efficient in helping me meet up with deadlines and working on numerous tasks." (Bisi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Having explored family-anchors which represents the support received from parents, spouses and partners and their significance to the work-life balance experiences of the female academics, the next sub-section aims to explore the formal and informal support received through the organizations.

4.2.3.1.2 Work-Anchor

Work-Anchors as a theme was discussed by majority of the participants, however, this form of support was less discussed than Family-Anchors. Participants explained that the support they received in the workplace was primarily through informal support from their department heads and colleagues who they had formed good relationships with, rather than

through formal support. Participants described certain situations where their childcare responsibilities conflicted with their work demands and they had colleagues who stepped in to provide support. For instance, Tinuke describes her thoughts about her colleagues:

"My colleagues are very supportive because there have been a few situations where I was unable to lecture, like when I received a call that my child was ill, and I had to leave work. Fortunately, I had colleagues who decided to cover for me and teach my classes that day and my colleagues but in situations where there was no one available to cover for me due to their own responsibilities, I just reschedule the class." (Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Further to this, it was revealed during the interviews that the support that was received from colleagues was significantly dependent on the individual's personality. Not all colleagues were supportive, and it was acknowledged by the participants that this was partly influenced by the gender of their colleagues. Dara explains that she believes male colleagues provided more support than her female colleagues:

"I have a good relationship with my colleagues, but I believe that some are more supportive than others. Male colleagues are usually more supportive than female colleagues. This may not be the same for everyone but in my experience, my male colleagues are usually willing to assist me with any issue I have however, my female colleagues do not really care if I am struggling or not. This is quite surprising and disappointing at the same time because you would think that females would be more understanding since some of them are probably going through or have gone through something similar to your current situation." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Similarly, Tosin describes her experiences with her colleagues:

"I would say that my male colleagues are more supportive than my female colleagues. I have had a few situations where there was an emergency at home regarding my family

and I needed someone to invigilate for me. It is usually my male colleagues who will be willing to invigilate for me during the examination" (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Interestingly, further investigation revealed that majority of the participants in the UK had contradictory beliefs as they perceived their female colleagues to be more supportive than their male colleagues. They explained that it is because their female colleagues can relate to their current struggles and experiences whereas their male colleagues may be unable to understand the depth of their challenges. Lynn shares her opinion on this:

"Women tend to be more supportive. So, I work in a team, and we have a full room of women, and we support each other. There was a period a couple of years ago, my dad was having treatment; chemotherapy and radiotherapy for leukemia and it was ongoing. So, I used to swap a seminar with a colleague every other week so I could return to Ireland, nothing was formalized but our line manager at the time agreed it was okay, as long as the teaching was covered". (Lynn, Partner, No children, UK)

Similarly, Caroline comments on her experience with a female colleague:

"I have had a situation because of my commute. I tried to drive in once, I was stuck in traffic so I had to call a colleague to go into my lecture class to let them know that I would be 15 mins late. She did and I was very grateful." (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)

Majority of the participants described experiences where they had line managers who were approachable and regularly checked up on them with regards to their well-being, especially since they began working from home due to COVID-19. For instance, Amanda explains that:

"My line manager has been very good at managing us as a team ever since the lockdown started, we have had a weekly team meeting via Microsoft teams. If you email him with any issues or concerns, he will respond as soon as he can. For example, we had a team meeting today. And I raised some issues and asked if I could meet with him and now, I

will be having a meeting with him right after I have spoken to you." (Amanda, Partner, No Children, UK)

There were further discussions with regards to the support they received from their colleagues. Participants explained that they had colleagues that were always willing to help them with any issue they had, particularly those who were relatively new staff and needed someone to provide guidance about a few things. While not all, some participants mentioned that their colleagues were respectful and consideration, that they occasionally avoided sending out emails during unsocial hours. Lilian describes her colleagues as considerate and has the confidence that they are always there to provide support:

"I think my colleagues are supportive particularly the senior colleagues. I think they are mindful of the fact that work-life balance is important to everyone, so they respect people's time, for example when to send out emails and setting up deadlines." (Lilian, Married, No Children, UK)

4.2.3.2 The Role of Culture

This section focuses on the impact of the patriarchal system and religion on the work-life balance experiences of the participants. It examines the norms and expectations of the different cultures and how they affect the perceptions and experiences of the women academics.

4.2.3.2.1 Patriarchal System

Patriarchal system in the context of this research refers to the societal system in which greater power has been assigned to the males thereby giving them dominance over the females which has been evident in the following domains: cooking, cleaning, childcare, and in some cases, their working time. Patriarchy is deeply embedded in the culture which relates to the norms and expectations, and is apparent in many cultures although, the level

of dominance differs across cultures. Findings from the analysis show that patriarchy has the strongest level of dominance in Nigeria in comparison to the UK. Majority of the participants in Nigeria explained that being a woman in Nigeria can pose as a difficulty because they are expected to oversee the household responsibilities while also contributing to the household income. The participants gave instances of how they cooked regularly for their family even when they were strained, regardless of whether they were married or single. However, there were disparities in the number of times they cooked in a week. Some participants' responses showed that they cooked once a day while for majority of the participants, they cooked at least twice a day. For those participants who mentioned that they cooked once a week, this was because they were either single, widowed or no longer had young children, therefore, they had less pressure to fulfil household duties. One participant Ronke mentioned that she has a supportive husband yet there are times when he seems to be inconsiderate:

> "I have to prepare my husband's breakfast in the morning before I go to work, and when I get back home from work, I drop my handbag in the living room and go straight to the kitchen. I do not even sit down or go to the bedroom to relax for a while because his food has to be ready by the time he gets home, and I do this every day. I think that my husband is quite supportive, but he sometimes seems to be inconsiderate when it comes to his meals. Even when he knows I am tired, he has never told me not to bother about cooking." (Ronke, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria)

Similarly, Tope expressed her concerns about the expectations of females in the Nigerian society:

> "Usually, I wouldn't talk about this because the belief is that females shouldn't complain but rather accept their responsibilities, but it is difficult. This is Nigeria and Nigerian men believe that females must do all the household work even while they are working. Like cooking, I cook before I go to work and once, I get back from work. My husband

takes his meals very seriously and when my children were younger, it wasn't easy because I would prepare their breakfasts, lunch for school and dinner. But as I said, this is what you are expected to do as a Nigerian woman, no one cares if you're working or stressed. At least my children are grown now so I cook less, and this has made a huge difference in my life." (Tope, Married, 4 Children, Nigeria)

Christine on the other hand, who has an Asian background yet lives in the UK, explains that her husband provides support yet, she feels like the norms and expectations of her culture, have influenced her thoughts about not fulfilling her duties as a woman who is married:

"My husband leaves home for work around 11am because that is when his shift starts, but he makes sure that he cooks for me before leaving for work. He is such a good support system, he doesn't bother if I have cooked or not, or if the home is messy, he just wants me to rest when I can. He helps a lot, but it comes with a sense of guilt for me. Because based on how I grew up, although I think it's not right, but my body and mind make me feel uncomfortable because it's the expectation of the woman to do the chores at home. Sometimes I feel bad because after working for 8-10 hours he comes home and there is no dinner because both of us are tired. I mean if I can't even take care of me and my husband because I don't have the time, then how can I even have a child? If one day I decide to have a kid it will be difficult to have a work-life balance." (Christine, Married, No Children, UK)

The excerpt from Christine's transcript evidently shows the influence of culture on her thoughts regarding household responsibilities. A similar experience was shared by Elisha who is an academic with an African background, she explains that if she was living in her home country, she would be the only one doing all the household chores and childcare responsibilities because that is what she is expected to do as a woman however, it is a very different experience living in the UK:

"It is quite interesting now that I think of it, because I would be saying an entirely different thing If my family and I were back home. My husband helps a lot. When he is bathing the kids, I will be in the kitchen making breakfast. I can't do all the work on my own. It is a shared responsibility. Sometimes, my husband picks them up from school and when he is busy, I pick them up. This is a totally different experience for those women living back home, you would probably never hear of a marriage where the husband helps with all these responsibilities. People will start talking and saying that the woman is controlling the man." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

For those participants who had a British background, their experiences were quite different from those with Asian or African backgrounds. While majority of the participants explained that their partners provided some form of support, the differences in their experiences had to do with cultural expectations. For those with a British background, they perceived that they would not receive any form of backlash if they shared responsibilities with their partners however majority of the household and childcare responsibilities still fell on them. For Lynn, she explained that she does most of the household responsibilities because she wanted things to be done in a certain way:

"The household responsibilities fall to me. Number 1 because I am massively controlling and number 2, he is like a child in the nicest possible way. So, I will go wash, arrange, write the shopping week but he goes into a room and think, 'I just might make a cup of tea' rather than 'it seems there is a lot to do, maybe I should help'. He does try, last Friday, I got home, and he had hovered, it was quite a surprise. If I ask him, he will do things, but then i get a little bit cross because I will have to ask." (Lynn, Partner, No Children, UK)

The severity of the patriarchal system is further evident in the work life of the participants as it adversely affects the ability to create a work-life boundary. Participants described experiences where they were dutiful to their spouses, and it indirectly impacted their ability

to handle work demands and meet up with deadlines. For instance, Ada explains her situation:

> "My husband is supportive and never really complains about what I decide to cook as long as it is the most convenient food for me to cook but I would like to have some days where I don't actually have to cook. He also told me that once it's 6pm, I shouldn't pick up any calls again, most especially from work colleagues. While this can be good sometimes, because it helps me to have that boundary between home and work, sometimes, it is necessary for me to have those calls although it only happens on a few occasions where there have been unforeseen circumstances. I was once on a call with a colleague in the evening, and the conversation started with a discussion about work, but we ended up chatting about other things. Once the call ended, my husband mildly told me that he felt disrespected as I didn't adhere to his rule." (Ada, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Dara on the other hand, explains that being primarily in charge of the household responsibilities has impacted her ability to focus on work:

> "This is Nigeria and Nigerian men believe that females have to do all the household work. Like cooking, I cook before I go to work and after I get home from work. My husband takes his breakfast seriously and when my children were younger it was difficult. I would prepare breakfast for them too and prepare their meals for lunch. But now, my children are grown up, so I do less even though I still struggle. Having to cook every morning and evening makes my life so stressful because by the time I get to work, there will be a lack of motivation. Occasionally I would be at work and will spend about 45 minutes to an hour reading 1 page of a research paper just because I am constantly thinking about what I need to get from the market and what I am going to cook. I can't even catch a break." (Dara, Married, 1 Children, Nigeria)

The forementioned excerpts have identified the impact of spouses and household responsibilities on the work life of participants, evidence from the analysis shows that

patriarchy is present in the workplace. Although this presence in the workplace is subtle in comparison to the home, it has been mentioned to be problematic. Amaka talks about her experience of patriarchy in the workplace:

> *"There is an unofficial rule at the University which states that personal consideration to females shouldn't be given, since females have requested for equality in the workplace. It is like we are indirectly being reprimanded for speaking up and this has caused a lot of issues now because in circumstances where considerations should be given specifically to women, it is wavered, and they continue to refer back to that rule. For instance, my husband also lectures here. We go home together but as a man, he just sits down and waits for his food, while I have to go into the kitchen and cook. Once he is done with his 9 pm news, he goes straight to bed. While I would go to bed later than him because I would still have some work to do, and I still have to wake up before him. And we can't really talk to the management because if we do, when it comes to promotion and we don't get promoted, they will say why should they consider lesser published articles for us compared to men." (Amaka, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Patriarchy in the workplace was also seen in the UK, in which one participant talks about her experience on having male and female bosses in which the male bosses tend to be more dominating than the females. According to her:

> *"I'm lucky that for the past 10 years, I have worked for female bosses who have been more flexible and understanding as long as you get the job done. In academia, it is not always like that, but I think people are generally understanding, it really just depends on the organization and the gender. I have seen situations where women are being put under a lot of pressure by their male bosses as they expect them to imitate their approach to working such as working long hours. This clearly wouldn't work for a lot of female academics because they already work long hours even after the official working time but expecting more from them without even considering their home and personal responsibilities is not exactly fair." (Jade, Married, 2 Children, UK)*

4.2.3.2.2 Religion

Religion had a crucial impact on the work-life balance experiences of the participants. However, there was no evidence of its role amongst participants in the UK even though there were a few religious participants particularly Christians whereas in Nigeria, there was a strong correlation between religion and the work-life balance experiences of the participants. All Nigerian participants involved in the study were predominantly Christians except for two participants who were Muslims. Evidence from the analysis shows that the participants in the UK who are Christians were not as religious as those in Nigeria, that is, they went to church periodically in comparison to Nigerian participants who went on Sundays and during the mid-week. Religion as a theme in this research was evident in both their work and personal life. This sub-section will therefore discuss these aspects in relation to religion.

An interesting finding emanated during the interviews with the Nigerian participants which was highlighted as a significant difference between the participants in the private and public universities. Participants in the private university, University C, which is a Chrisitan-based University, mentioned that the University provides paid maternity leave for females who are pregnant and married. Being married was a significant factor in being paid during the maternity leave therefore in cases where females were unmarried and pregnant, they were able to go on maternity leave without pay. For Instance, Ronke talks about her knowledge regarding the University's policy:

> *"We have the maternity leave which every woman probably knows about but there is one condition to getting paid maternity leave at this University, and the condition is that you have to be married. Remember that this university is based on the teachings of*

Deeper Life Church, so they follow the Church's principles. If it is a single female, she can go on maternity leave if she wants to, but she will be made aware that it will be unpaid. I joined this University as a divorcee with a child, so I know how difficult it was for me until I remarried. Those single females who are pregnant probably feel the same way, alone and judged." (Ronke, Married, 1 Child, Nigeria).

For both universities in Nigeria, participants shared similar experiences regarding the Universities policy which requires staff to attend weekly prayer sessions at work. They explained that it impeded their work activities and, led to a negative spillover of work into family life. For instance, Lola explains that:

"We have prayer sessions on Wednesday and Friday afternoons which is compulsory for academic and non-academic staffs regardless of your religion. It is usually around 2pm and attendance is always recorded. Personally, I have been in situations where I need to get my work done before the end of the day but spending 1 hour during the prayer session takes into my time and that makes me stay at work longer than I intend to, just so I can catch up with work. It also means that I would get home quite late and wouldn't be able to spend enough time with my parents before I have to go to bed." (Lola, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

Religion also played a role in the non-work domains of the female academics which led to a spill-over of time and emotions in their work domains. Participants described experiences where they prioritized their religious activities over their work responsibilities which resulted in both positive and negative spill-over. Tosin who is a pastor at her church explains that:

"I have some free time, because I no longer take care of my children since I am now about 60 years of age. I am also a pastor, so I go to church on Sundays and mid-week for bible study. On Wednesdays I would have to leave work earlier than usual, so that I can avoid traffic and get to church early for Bible Study. My line manager is aware of this however

it does have an impact on my work because I have to leave work around 2:30. So that means I would spend longer hours on Thursdays and Fridays trying to catch up on my work. I think I'm sort of okay with that, because I already spend so many days at work, so I might as well dedicate a few days to God." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Chi on the other hand, explains that she experiences a positive spill-over of emotions from her personal life into her work-life. According to her:

"I don't leave my bed on weekends, I use it to relax. I'm still in bed at 9am on a Saturday but on Sundays, I go to church because I'm a Christian and also, because it gives me this unexplainable level of satisfaction. Academia can be quite stressful especially during busy periods, so going to church sometimes helps to relive that stress, and by the time I commence work on Monday, I feel so much better." (Chi, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

4.2 Diary Studies

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to explore the past work-life balance experiences of the participants, in their own words and the meanings they attribute to their experiences however, it is unable to uncover their present day to day experiences and the daily decisions that are made in relation to their work and non-work domains. These present-day experiences will be revealed through the 11 diaries that were completed after the interviews were carried out.

Figure 4.10: Diary Studies (Coding Category)
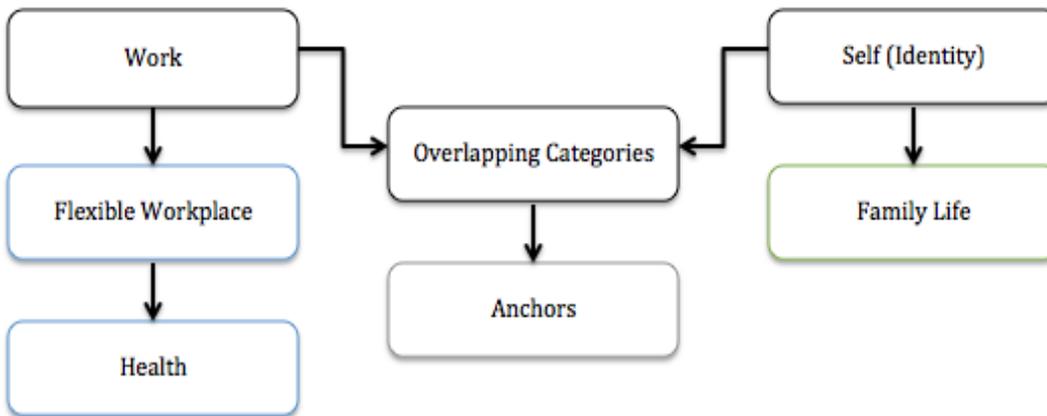
4.2.1 Work Categories

This section examines the work categories identified in figure 4.10 which are flexible workplace and health. Each category will be discussed independently, beginning with flexible workplace.

4.2.1.1 Flexible Workplace

This section will explore the experiences of the participants in both the UK and Nigeria, in relation to the working time and workload. Similarly, to the interviews, the findings from the diary studies showed that working time was much more discussed than workload nonetheless, they affected each other interchangeably.

4.2.1.1.1 Working Time

Findings from the analysis of the diary entries indicated that on average, participants spend 13 hours on work-related activities a day, including during unsocial hours. Majority of the participants explained that they experienced work to life conflict where their working hours negatively impacted the time spent with family thereby leading to a work-life spillover. For

instance, Lynn said that she was having a relaxed weekend until she unexpectedly decided to do some work on Sunday afternoon:

> *"I spent my Saturday relaxing, which was good but today, I suddenly remembered that it was the beginning of the term so, I spent a few hours sorting through my emails in preparation for the working week. I can tell you that I wasn't exactly happy about this. I am aware that I really shouldn't be working on the weekend but sometimes, it is inevitable." (Lynn, Partner, No Children, UK)*

Similarly, Tosin's long working hours spilled over into the time meant for other activities like her ability to spend time with her family and go to church. She said that she was unhappy because she believed that she was prioritizing her work over her religion, which was one of the most important aspects of her life. On day 5, Tosin explains that:

> *"I had a deadline to complete marking, so I had to wake up early and go to work, and I got home around 8pm. I couldn't go to church with my family today unfortunately, which made me feel bad because I feel like I am neglecting my relationship with God. I honestly wish I could go to church more, and I don't want to always feel like I am prioritizing my work over God." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Eleana on the other hand, complained about feeling burnt-out during certain days of the week when her working hours were intense:

> *"Thankfully, I didn't have to make a decision between my work and my personal life today because I simply can't accommodate that today. I teach for 8 hours straight on a Tuesday with a 30-minute break between 1 and 1:30. The whole day is very demanding. On top of the teaching (between 9 – 17.30) I keep on top of my emails and spend between 8-9 and 5.30-6.30 catching up on anything urgent which may have come into my inbox while I was teaching. It's just an exhausting day." (Eleana, Partner, No Children, UK)*

Several of the participants felt in control of their work-life balance when they were able to effectively create a boundary between their work and non-work domains. Although this was difficult to do on some days, participants expressed a feeling of achievement on those days where there was no work to life conflict. Tracy shares her experience on this:

"I made the decision to stop work at 5.30pm and to pick up on priority tasks the following day as I had left my fiancée to care for my youngest child who is currently self-isolating from school for most of the day as I was engaged in meetings for most of the working day. I feel good and I know it was the right decision to direct my attention towards my youngest child and to relieve my fiancée from looking after him on his own so that he could attend to work-related matters." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

4.2.1.1.2 Workload

The work to life conflict experiences that were identified by the participants in the diary entries were distinct nonetheless, their experiences were related to the workload from their work responsibilities. Some of the participants described experiences where their work demands conflicted with their family responsibilities and religious activities. In situations where their work demands were prioritized over other family or personal demands, participants expressed feelings of guilt and the perception that they lack the ability to control their work-life balance. When Dara was asked about how she felt on Wednesday, she stated that she had mixed feelings about her day. She further mentioned that there was a point during the day where she had to make a decision between work and her family responsibilities. She explains that:

"I'm not sure how I feel today. I decided to leave work early, to buy a few things for my kids. Even though I was able to do a lot of work before leaving, it feels like my workload hasn't reduced. I should be resting and watching tv after cooking this evening, but I'm sat on the table trying to get more work done. Sometimes I wonder if this is how my life

is going to be for the next 15 years. It is definitely not what I expected. How can I spend so much time responding to emails, doing research, preparing lecture notes and at the end of the day, it feels like that is only 20 percent of my workload?" (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)

For Lola, she was unable to have time for non-work activities due to her heavy workload. She mentions that:

"My workload has been so much recently, particularly today and I'm not happy about it. I rarely get the time to rest and spend time with my parents who are quite old at the moment. It's a daily challenge for me and I have to figure out a way soon, to deal with this if I ever want to have a good work-life balance." (Lola, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

4.2.1.2 Health

This section focuses on the diary entries relating to the mental health of the participants which was influenced by work demands. There were no entries relating to physical health in the diaries, in comparison to the interviews which included discussions relating to high blood pressure.

4.2.1.2.1 Mental Health

The participants described days where they felt a variety of negative emotions, particularly feelings of guilt, which was due to prioritizing their work-life over their family and personal life. For each participant, there were fluctuations in their daily work-life balance experience. However, it was prominent for those who had childcare responsibilities and other family demands. Caroline felt particularly guilty because she believed that she lacked good parenting skills. She had this feeling of guilt for 3 out of 5 days during the week. Specifically on Monday and Tuesday, she explained that:

"I feel guilty because of the lack of time spent with my daughter. I was unable to take my daughter to school and to swimming after school which makes me feel like I lack good parenting skills. I had to work until 6 pm on Tuesday so I missed my mother's birthday celebrations, and it makes me feel guilty that I am not around as much." (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)

Similarly, Eleana expressed feelings of guilt when she made a decision to prioritize a meeting over a family-related demand during a specific period:

"I was asked to pick my partner up from work as he had not been feeling well. I was in a meeting at the time, so I had to ask him to wait until the meeting was over to pick him up. I felt a bit guilty because I normally have the flexibility to be able to accommodate things like this but, ultimately, I don't see it as my responsibility to accommodate this request when I am unable to." (Eleana, Partner, No Children, UK)

Working long hours was also revealed as a concern for majority of the participants who explained that they sometimes worked until 5:30 or 6:30 pm, and the only reason why they were able to close no later than that time, was because they had to make a conscious decision to postpone other work demands until the next day. For some participants, it affected their sleeping patterns and also, led to stress. For instance, Sadie expressed that:

"I had a bad night sleep as I was worried that I haven't done enough preparation for a workshop I had organized. This constantly happens when I feel like I have so much work to do, and I am not doing enough. I always feel tired from a lack of sleep. Also, today felt like 2 days in 1. I was so relieved when I had a few minutes to sit down and have a cup of tea." (Sadie, Married, 2 Children, UK)

For Tinuke, she mentioned that she was stressed when describing her feelings:

"I just feel like I have a lot going on at the moment, and things aren't exactly under control. I am trying to meet up with the deadline for when I must complete marking and my child is sick so, it's hard. I know that my child is my priority but, in this situation, I

have to finish marking, I am under a lot of pressure at the moment. I feel drained and I need a break. My work-life balance isn't exactly good right now, and I have felt like I couldn't breathe at certain times. Maybe I need someone to assist me around the house."
(Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

Furthermore, Tracy also mentions that her mood had impacted her ability to focus on work, which was because of a personal situation that made her feel constantly worried and anxious. Tracy was not the only participant who had a spill-over of negative emotions from her personal life to her work life. Similarly, Caroline explained that when she felt a sense of guilt over the last two days because she wasn't spending enough time with her daughter, she felt like she struggled to concentrate on her work. Hence, she made the decision to take her daughter to work the next day in order to feel like she had more control over her work-life balance. Caroline states that:

"It was half term, so I brought my daughter in to work with me. I found it difficult to concentrate on work while she was there, but I was a lot happier because I could spend time with her." (Caroline, Married, 1 Child, UK)

4.2.2 Self Categories

This section discusses family life which relates to childcare demands and ageing parents. It discusses the occurrence of life to work conflict in which the demands of life led to the inability to effectively engage in work responsibilities.

4.2.2.1 Family Life

The presence of childcare and family demands were identified by the participants as determinants of life to work conflict. Participants described experiences `where they prioritized their family over their work demands. The trade-off between the work and the

non-work domains led to the inability to effectively undertake work responsibilities such as attending meetings and workshops, having to work shorter hours. This section therefore aims to explore these life to work conflict experiences in relation to childcare and other family responsibilities.

4.2.2.1.1 Childcare

Participants who had children shared their experiences of having to stay home with their children who were sick, therefore leading to shorter hours spent on work responsibilities. For instance, Dara, who has two children, felt like she was unable to manage her work-life balance. She spent shorter hours during the week on work activities, in order to have time for her children and inevitably spent Saturday and Sunday working in order to meet up with her work responsibilities. In her diary entry, she explained that:

> *"To be honest, I was really stressed this week. The workload was heavy, but I had to take care of my children by myself because my husband is currently away and will be back in two weeks. I feel tired most days because I don't feel like I have been productive enough and I only sleep for a few hours. I had to spend both Saturday and Sunday working in order to make up for the time lost during the week." (Dara, Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

Amaka also shared a similar narrative in her diary, on how she had to stay at home for two days with her daughter who was sick. The decision to prioritize her daughter's health over her work demands led to difficulties in carrying out her work responsibilities effectively therefore leading to life to work spillover. Amaka shares that:

> *"Well once again, I'm not happy because I had to stay at home with my daughter for the second time this week. My husband said that he couldn't stay with her because he had meetings with some important clients. Even on days where I didn't stay home with my daughter, I was constantly worried about her which led to me calling in regularly to*

check up on her and also, led to poor concentration at work. I was only able to spend 3.5 hours on work on days when I was at home, which isn't a lot considering the amount of work I have to do. I just feel like I am so behind on work which is going to definitely affect my working hours next week because I will have to work longer hours." (Amaka, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

For Tracy, whose son had to self-isolate due to COVID-19 symptoms, she had to provide support to him thereby reducing her working hours on Tuesday:

"I made the decision to finish work earlier than I usually would today as my youngest son is self-isolating and needed extra help in completing his schoolwork. I had also promised to spend some time in the garden with him in the afternoon and play swing ball as he is unable to leave the house." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

Sadie on the other hand, had to forego attending a workshop which was important for her job. She explains that she believes she made the right decision by prioritizing her children over work:

"I had booked into a workshop at Media City for a training. I had organized for friends to have my toddler for 2.5 hours and other friends to have the older ones. However, my toddler became very tired and grumpy, it was very stressful, so I had to give attention to her. I was unable to go to training, which was a shame. Instead, I ended up taking a few hours to sleep while my toddler finally fell asleep. Well, that made both of us very happy. I think it was the right decision, and the training will come around again I hope!" (Sadie, Married, 4 Children, UK)

For Tosin who is over 60 years old and no longer has dependent children, she explains that she constantly worries about her children when they are dealing with personal issues. At the end of the week, she reflects on her experiences and acknowledges that she needs to take her annual leave soon:

"Although my children are grown, I will always be their mother. One of my children needed me today so I had to help. I was able to do some marking but as always, my children came first. My son and I had to go to church, we have been fasting and praying. Some days are hard, and others are not, I know this phase will pass. I just need to take my annual leave soon." (Tosin, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)

4.2.2.1.2 Ageing Parents

A minority of the participants had diary entries that were related to having ageing parents which impacted their work life on certain days. For those participants who have ageing parents, but it did not affect their work life, it was because they either had a family member who took care of the parents or their parents' health was not a cause of concern at that time. The findings from the diary studies show that childcare responsibilities had a greater impact on the life to work conflict experiences of the participants. For Lola, who has no childcare responsibilities, she still experienced life-to-work conflict. She was writing a paper for a conference, when her work life was interrupted with issues relating to her father's health. She explains that she had to travel during the working week for the following reasons:

"I had to go and see my cousin yesterday who recently lost her husband. I am tired because I woke up by 4:30 am this morning to get some work done before travelling to see my parents in Abeokuta. It was so hard to focus on work when I was worried about my dad's health. I know that I won't be able to do any work for the next few days except respond to emails. My dad isn't doing great, and I just want him to get better." (Lola, Single, No Children, Nigeria)

Similarly, Kate mentioned that her mum's ongoing health issues constantly makes her worried:

"I always worry about my mother because I know she is getting old, and she lives alone. It is hard not to worry you know. It is not like she lives close by where I can easily drive

down to. If something happens to her, it will take us a while to get to her. I spoke to her
this afternoon, and she didn't sound so well, even though she said she was fine. I was so
worried, and I felt terrible that I couldn't go to see her immediately to make sure that
she was okay. I honestly couldn't really concentrate on work after I spoke to her." (Kate,
Partner, no Children, UK)

4.2.3 Overlapping Category

This section focuses on anchors which represents work-related and family-related support. It is identified as an overlapping category due to support falling under both work and self-categories.

4.2.3.1 Anchors

A small number of the participants that filled the diary entries, provided details of the forms of anchors that they had in their daily experiences as most of the information in the diary entries were linked to flexible workplace and the impact of family on their work-life balance. For those that mentioned the significance of support in their entries, it was linked to either the support provided by family through partners and parents, or the organizational support provided by the line managers and colleagues. This section has been categorized into two sub-sections, namely, Family-Anchor and Work-Anchor.

4.2.3.1.1 Family-Anchor

Participants described the support that they received from spouses, partners and parents in taking care of the children and assisting them with household responsibilities. Tracy explains that having a supportive partner has had a positive impact on her work-life balance experience. In her words:

"Having a self-employed fiancée who is a company director has been really good for me
because he is able to maintain and keep up with the childcare and house related

activities so that I can concentrate on work. It was my youngest son's birthday today and my partner was able to look after him for most of the day because I was in the Law clinic supervising student." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)

Similarly for Sadie, she explained that her spouse and parents have been significantly helpful with regards to childcare responsibilities although, she occasionally feels guilty about it:

"Today, I decided to go to the gym on my way home. I left my husband at home with the kids, and sometimes I feel guilty about it because I feel like I should be the one at home with them, or I shouldn't even leave him at home alone because it is a lot of work. I am tired from lack of sleep because this week has been hectic, but I get to have a good night's sleep when my husband helps out with the kids or when my parents come to our home to help out every Thursday." (Sadie, Married, 3 Children, UK)

In the daily entries, majority of the participants constantly expressed the need for support, as the lack of available support constantly had a negative effect on their work-life balance experiences. They described day-to-day situations where they had to stay at home, therefore prioritizing their children over their work demands. Amaka, whose husband was unable to stay home with the children, struggled for the first 2 days until she received family support. She explains that:

"I am glad that I had family support because I was able to catch up on work today, even though I still have a lot to do. The last two days were difficult because there was no one available to help me at home but thankfully my cousin was able to come and help out. She will be here for the next few days. I am honestly thankful for family." (Amaka, Married, 3 Children, Nigeria)

Tinuke, whose child was also sick, shared her experience on this:

"There was no one available to take care of my child so I had to stay home. It was hard to concentrate on marking assignments when I was worried about my daughter, taking

her to the clinic and having to constantly check up on her. I think I will have to be home with her for the next few days. Thankfully, the university lectures have ended so I don't have to be physically present right now. But if this happened while the university lectures were ongoing, which has happened before, I would have felt frustrated." *(Tinuke, Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)*

4.2.3.1.2 Work-Anchor

Participants also provided details about the positive impact of support they receive from their line managers and colleagues. They stated that it led to a spillover of positive emotions into their personal lives and how they engaged in their work responsibilities. For instance, Tracy discusses the negative impact of COVID-19 on the ability to have regular interactions with her colleagues:

> *"I had positive interactions with my colleagues today, who made it a pleasant day for me. I felt more positive about tackling my responsibilities, maybe that is why I was able to accomplish a lot. Although it isn't the same anymore since COVID-19. Before the pandemic, you could see a colleague in the corridor or in the office daily, and then you can both chat but since the pandemic, you don't do that often. This pandemic carries with it feelings of loneliness and isolation from colleagues. I also had a career conversation with my line manager who complimented me on my ability to keep up with deadlines and work commitments, that also made me feel positive." (Tracy, Partner, 2 Children, UK)*

Elisha expresses her gratitude to be able to work in academia which encourages and supports flexibility:

> *"I feel lucky to be able to work from home occasionally which helps me to manage home responsibilities and not always have to worry about my children. I have amazing colleagues who have been so nice and caring over the last few months. It's nice to know*

that people genuinely care about you and are willing to be there for you whenever you need them." (Elisha, Married, 2 Children, UK)

4.3 Participatory Visual Drawings

Visual drawings were incorporated into this research in order to understand the perceptions that women academics in UK and Nigeria hold about their work-life balance. These drawings (Figure 4.11 - 4.21) were used to encourage self-reflection and to express their feelings towards their current situation. The participants involved in this data collection method all engaged in this activity after completing their diary entries. They were further asked to explain in words how they felt about the drawings. Each description that has been linked to each drawing was interpreted in two ways; the details in the drawings and the short descriptions of the drawings that were provided by the participants. Table 4.1 shows keywords that emerged from the description of the drawings, in the order of most recurring to least recurring.

Figure 4.11: Caroline's Drawing (Married, 1 Child, UK)

The bicycle represents the constant need for balance, although the bicycle is weighed down by young children, shopping and work responsibilities. Caroline mentions that she is happy,

and she places her hand on the handlebar to show that she is partially in control. However,

she desires a better work-life balance.

Figure 4.12: Sadie's Drawing (Married, 4 Children, UK)
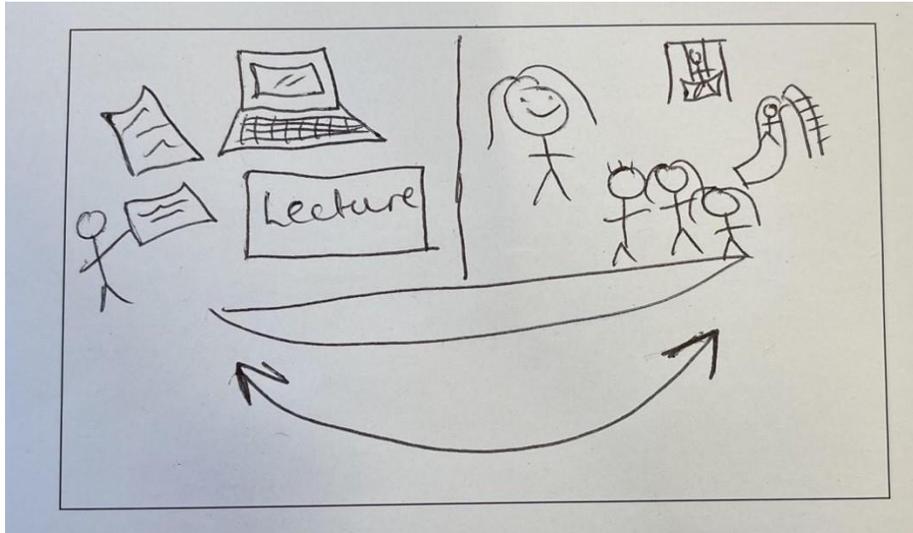
The drawing shows a scale and a connection between her work and her family life. The scale

occasionally tilts to one side when the demands from one domain outweigh the other. Sadie

explains in her description of the drawing that it demonstrates that she can effectively

manage her work-life balance however, this is significantly dependent on the daily

responsibilities.

Figure 4.13: Lynn's Drawing (Partner, No Children, UK)
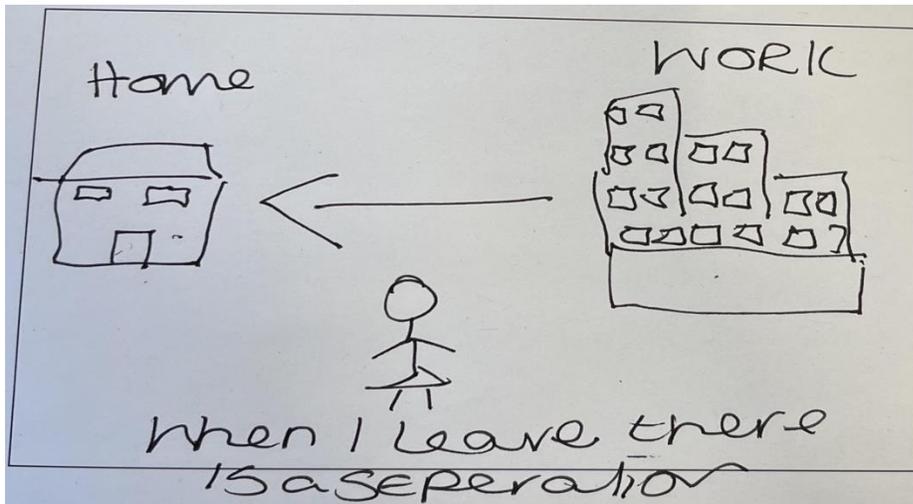
Lynn's drawing represents the ability to create a boundary between her work and her non-work domains. There is a conscious effort on her part to ensure that a boundary exists between her work and her family and personal life. Lynn explains that she is mostly successful at creating this boundary, although it isn't always the case which is strongly dependent on the academic year.

Figure 4.14: Tosin's Drawing (Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)
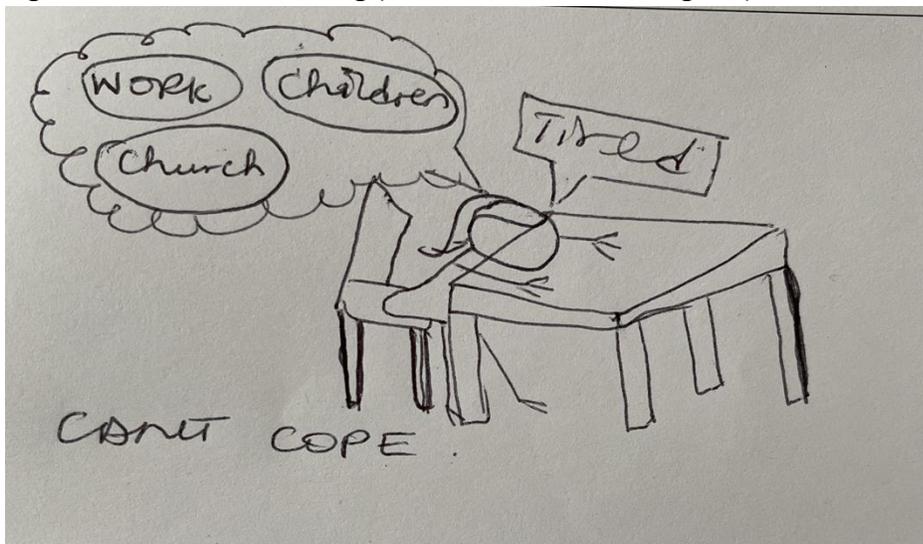
Tosin is not presently happy with her work-life balance because she feels like she isn't in control and cannot effectively manage the demands from each domain. The childcare

demands, work demands and religious activities conflict with each other thereby making her feel like she cannot cope. She explains that the drawing expresses her present frustrations.

Figure 4.15: Tinuke's Drawing (Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)
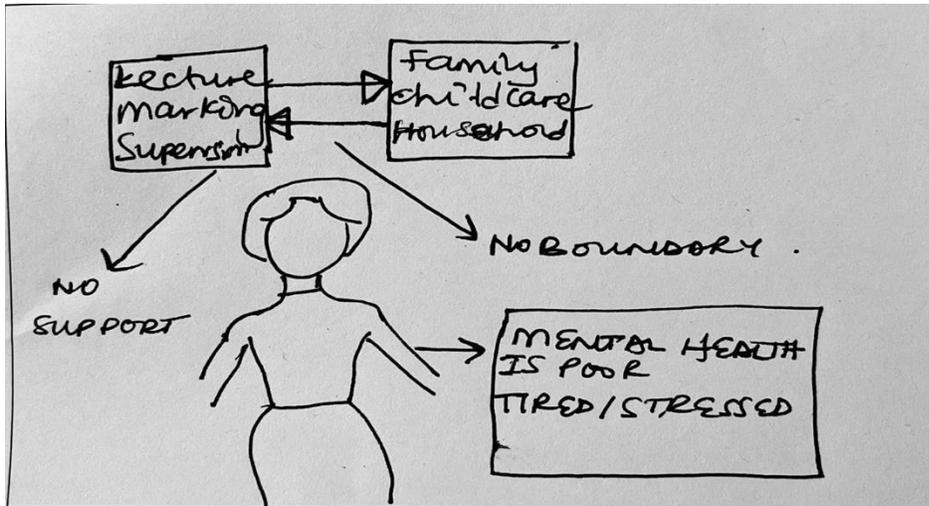
Tinuke feels tired and stressed. She feels that her mental health is poor due to the numerous roles of lecturing, marking, supervision, family, childcare and household responsibilities. She does not have any form of support and lacks a boundary between her work and non-work domain. In her description of the image, she mentions that she doesn't have a good work-life balance and she requires assistance. She is convinced that if she doesn't get any form of support, her mental health will deteriorate significantly.

Figure 4.16: Amaka's Drawing (Married, 3 Children, Nigeria)
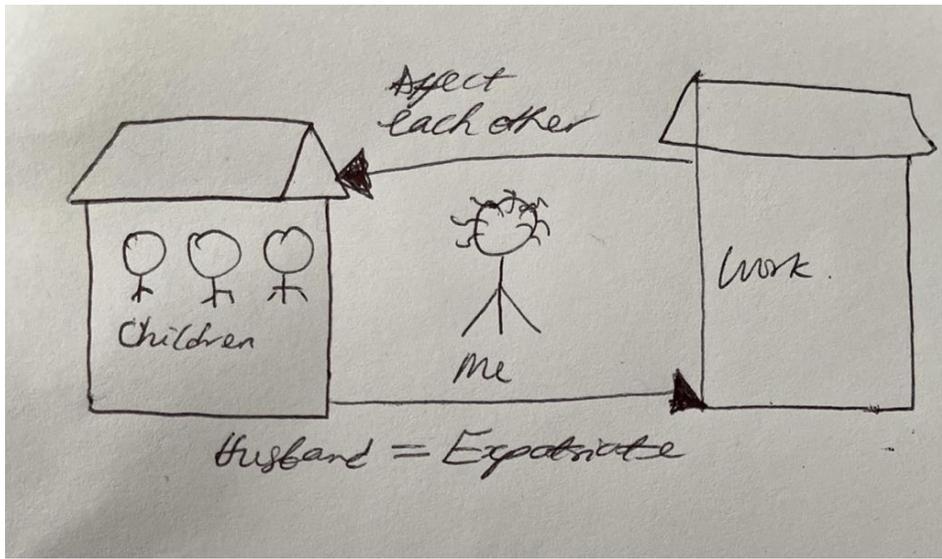
Amaka doesn't believe that her work-life balance will get better even though she wishes that it would. She constantly makes compromises to stay at home and take care of her children, when her husband is away from home, and she has no other form of support. The time spent on childcare and other household responsibilities impact the time that she should spend on her work demands thereby leading to life to work conflict.

Figure 4.17: Kate's Drawing (Partner, No Children, UK)
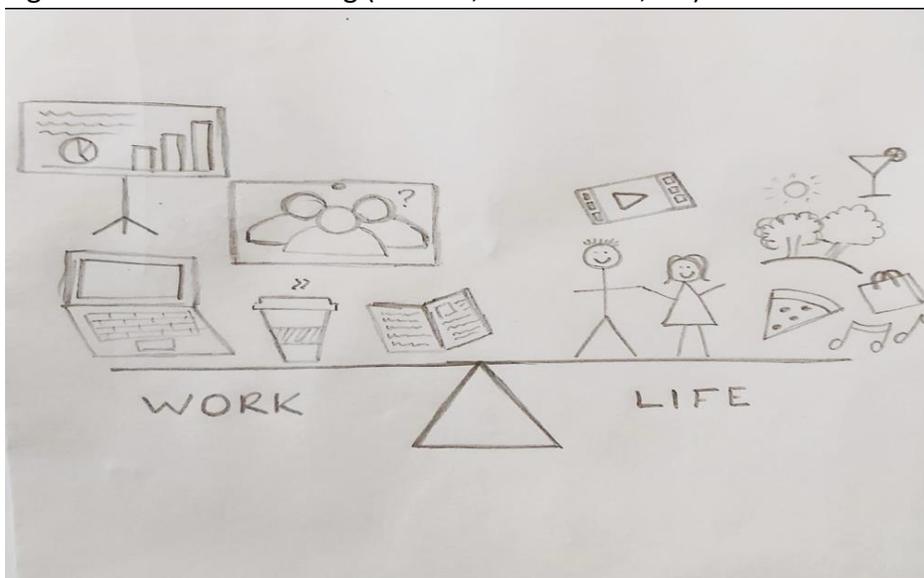
The drawing shows a balance on the scale, between her work and her personal life. Kate seems to be presently satisfied with her work-life balance due to her personal and leisure activities that help her to detach from work such as spending time with her partner, going on walks, listening to music, shopping, spending time with friends and family. She further explains that a reason for the balance could be because she has no childcare responsibilities and that this balance constantly fluctuates.

Figure 4.18: Lola's Drawing (Single, No Children, Nigeria)
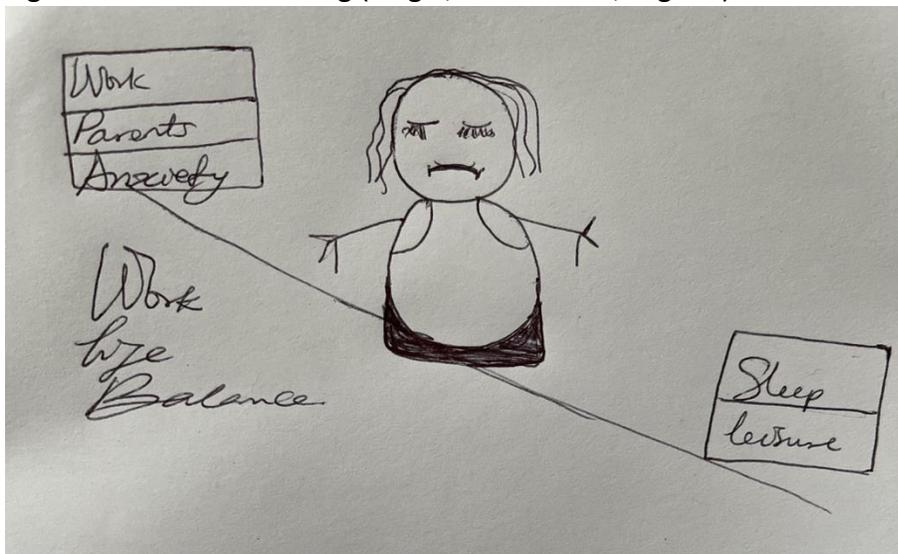
Lola's drawing helped her to reflect on her current work-life balance and how she is unsatisfied with it. The drawing depicts a lack of balance and signifies that the lack of balance leads to lack of sleep and leisure time. She constantly worries about her ageing parents, while dealing with her work responsibilities, therefore making her unhappy in mood.

Figure 4.19: Eleana's Drawing (Married, 2 Children, Nigeria)
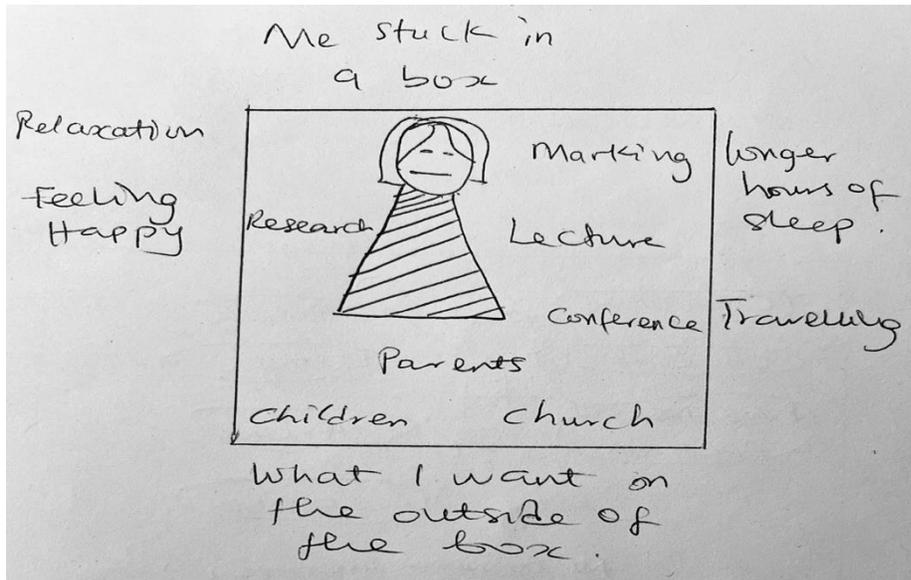
This drawing represents the perception that Tosin holds about her work-life balance. Being stuck in a box shows that her life revolves around those responsibilities; church activities, childcare responsibilities, ageing parents, work responsibilities. The writings outside the box signify what she desires, which is her own perception of what a good work-life balance entail.

Figure 4.20: Dara's Drawing (Widow, 2 Children, Nigeria)
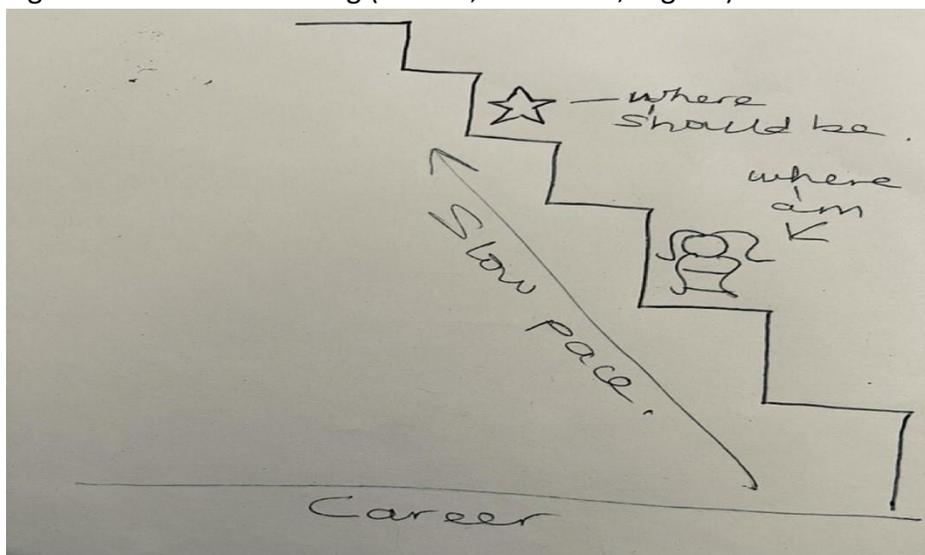
Dara's drawing represents her career progression which has been slow as she struggles to manage her work-life balance. It shows where she is now, and where she believes she should be. She further explains that despite having children who are over 21 years old, she still has childcare responsibilities being the only parent, which therefore increases her workload.

Figure 4.21: Christine's Drawing (Married, No Children, UK)

Christine shows an image of herself in drawing, lifting weights where one side represents her work which is evidently heavier than her life. This shows that her non-work domains are outweighed by the demands and pressures of her work-life. She constantly feels unhappy and burnt out.

Table 4.1: Emergent keywords from the drawings

Key words	Drawings
Balance	Figure 4.12, Figure 4.13, Figure 4.18, Figure 4.19, Figure 4.20, Figure 4.22
Work and non-work demands	Figure 4.15, Figure 4.16, Figure 4.17, Figure 4.19, Figure 4.21
Boundary	Figure 4.14, Figure 4.16
Support	Figure 4.16
Career progression	Figure 4.21

4.4 Policies in Different National Contexts (UK and Nigeria)

This section focuses on interviews with 2 HR officials in Nigeria and 2 members of the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (SAT) in the UK. It explores discussions regarding the implementation of policies to encourage gender equality and the improvement of work-life balance experiences of women academics.

4.4.1 Athena SWAN Charter in UK

This sub-section focuses on discussions around the Athena SWAN award application, gender equality in the workplace, the effectiveness of the charter, flexible working policies and career breaks.

4.4.1.1 Athena SWAN Award Application

The participants explained that the schools and the universities applied for the Athena SWAN award primarily because of their commitment to gender equality in the workplace. Furthermore, they stated that the link to research funding was also a motivation for the application. They both explained the application process which involved each school

applying separately as well as the University making its own application. According to Sara who speaks on the University's application:

"The university originally submitted an application in 2015 and there are a couple of reasons I believe; one of those reasons is a bigger move to equality of all strands especially gender equality but also, a lot of research funding is tied to the charter so essentially if you don't have the award, you would be excluded from being able to apply for certain research funding and it can also be a barrier to people wanting to come and work for you as an academic or study with you as a student if you notice that we don't have that thing that other universities do." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

Similarly, Tamara expresses her opinion on the Business school's reason for applying for the bronze award:

"I think there was pressure from the university, and then it is a reputation thing as well. They want to be seen and perceived as a school that is egalitarian and is a good place to work and where gender equality is important, there were also links between the Athena SWAN awards and funding so for some research grants, institutions or schools needed to have a silver award to be able to apply. Since September, they removed that requirement, but it was the case for a while. Funding bodies require schools and institutions to demonstrate their commitment and effort to gender equality and having the Athena SWAN award is one way of demonstrating that the school is committed to this." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Further investigation during the interviews shed light on the meetings that are held for the Athena SWAN applications and action plan. The aim was to gain some knowledge of how often the meetings hold what is discussed in the meetings and the workload of committee members. Tamara explains that:

"The meetings are held twice a semester and then 1 after the Easter vacation so normally 5 per year. We used to meet at 12pm, go to lunch between 12-12:30 and have

the meeting after until 2 pm. Now since covid, we don't necessarily follow the same schedule, sometimes it's at 10am, or lunch time but usually between 12 and 4. We implemented this rule anyway in the business school because of the Athena SWAN in order to prevent holding meetings after work." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara also describes the schedule for the meeting:

"The meetings are quarterly, 4 to 5 times a year and the reason it is like that is because we have an inclusion and diversity structure that goes all the way up to the executive team. So, when the Athena swan sub-committee meets, the same sort of time, the REC self-assessment team meet, and other teams like the committee about student experience also meet. So, the last meeting was from 2 until 4, sometimes it is a lot quicker, and it is usually held Wednesday afternoons. Our last meeting was different because we just appointed a new head of the Athena SWAN team, it was more about how we want to change the way of working a little bit. But usually, what happens in those meetings, we have an action log, any action from the submission and any action plan brought to the meeting, they get put in there and people are held accountable for completing those actions." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

Having discussed the process involved in the Athena SWAN award application and the meetings held to discuss the applications and action plan, the next sub-section focuses on the steps taken to address gender equality in the workplace.

4.4.1.2 Gender Equality in the Workplace

Discussions regarding gender equality in the workplace commenced with Athena SWAN charter only being extended to include non-STEM departments in 2015. Both participants shared similar opinions on why the charter was only extended in 2015, 10 years after it was established. Tamara explains that:

"There is a reason for that because women are even more underrepresented in STEM and students as well so that is where the idea came from but then people realized that it would still make sense to extend it to humanities and business. Because even though there was a higher proportion of women staff and students in comparison to STEM, women were still underrepresented at higher grades and positions, more senior roles." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara shares the same opinion:

"Initially the charter was focused on STEM to address gender equality but then they realized they need to extend it to other schools. I think there were recommendations on how to change or improve the plans of the charter." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

The responses from the participants show evidence of actions being taken to promote gender equality in the workplace by beginning with ensuring a gender balance on the Athena SWAN self-assessment team and sub-committee. Tamara provides information on the ratio of males to females on the self-assessment team:

"Well, there are definitely more females than males on the team. This is because the purpose of this, is to mainly address issues regarding females in the workplace. So, there are 15 females and 5 males so 75 percent of females." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara explains that the university is currently doing a survey to find out the number of men and women on each team, in every school and the university. She states that:

I don't have the exact number, but we are currently doing a survey demographic on it, but it is mainly women in there and it has been an issue in the schools trying to get more males in there because one of the big issues about equality charters is about who the equality charter impacts. (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

In terms of publications and data on gender equality, and the results from the action plan of the Athena SWAN application in the schools and universities, Sara explains that:

Every year we produce the gender pay gap report. We also publish an inclusion and diversity year report which not only looks at gender but protective characteristics for staff and highlights issues, and experience and stories. The survey is done every two years so the last time it was published was in 2019, and 2017 before that. The data has been used to influence and inform what is included in the action plan that they want to do, for the submission." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

Tamara explains that:

"We have data on gender in the business school in different grades, in terms of recruitment and in terms of promotion. We haven't been looking at different departments though. And no, we don't have any publications on what has been done in terms of the action plan. It was 2 years ago that we applied, 1 and a half years since we got the award, so we haven't seen much progress in representation of women in senior academic grades. (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

4.4.1.3 Flexible Working Options and Career Breaks

When asked about the availability of flexible working options and the support for returnees who are returning from maternity leave, both participants explained that flexible working options was already established as a policy by the university however, there were steps taken to support returnees. Tamara explains that:

"The university has been less focused on workload or working hours and more focused on flexibility although academics can have discussions on their work allocation. An example of one way in which the university encourages flexibility is making sure that meetings take place between 10 am and 4 pm. We also have a program to support or fund childcare if people want to go to conferences. One colleague went to France with her child, the school paid for childcare, one also went to Australia with her 8-year-old

and the school paid for the child's flight. In terms of working time, people can also reduce working time if they want but that is a policy of the university, so it isn't something that comes from the Athena SWAN aspect of the school. So, it is part of flexible working policy." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara on the other hand, explains that University A encourages flexibility through flexible working and agile working, the latter which has only been recently introduced by the University. According to her:

"I know we have both flexible working policies and agile working. Flexible working is more of a legal process where somebody can change their hours, at a more specific period, whereas agile working is week by week, you can work with your manager on that, so you don't have to make any changes to your contract on that. So, with agile working, the university is helping to encourage work-life balance especially with the pandemic with has made everything so difficult." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

In terms of further steps that are taken to support women returnees, participants discussed implementing plans such as reduced hours, research funding, and providing opportunities for women to speak about their issues. Sara explains:

"We have women's voice which is a colleague network which was set up from a student's research whereby women returnees wanted to talk about what they need. There have been actions in the Athena SWAN sub-committee as well looking at when women return from maternity leave particularly in research areas, there is not a coherent approach yet. There have been trials. We have also been talking a lot about mental health, we have YAMA, a group where we post people's stories about mental health. But yeah, everything we do is based on Athena SWAN, it is part of that gender equality lens. I know that in the last year, there have been changes to how research is done, changes to the research excellence framework. I am not so involved in it but I know that there is categorization, so those in their early career are given different responsibility for their

research, that is, different work allocation. I have seen some information about mentoring but as I said, I am not super involved in that so I wouldn't be able to comment about it." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

Similarly, Tamara explained that:

"There isn't anything in particular to reduce workload but there was a proposal, and we included that in the Athena SWAN action plan but then it was thought that it should be a university policy, so the university launched a pilot scheme for this, but the pilot scheme was stopped during COVID-19. But what this was, was to enable returnees, from maternity leave, parental leave including shared parental leave, to reduce or to have no teaching for a semester so that they could focus solely on research. Also, when they return, they have meetings with their line managers in terms of their needs for training. In terms of the support for seminars, conferences, research funding, the university is quite rich in relation to that. Money is not a very big problem. Of course, with covid there were restrictions. In principle, if you want to go to a conference, the university can pay for that. So, it is the same for people returning from maternity leave. Every year we have 3000 pounds for each academic staff member. And if someone might exceed this amount, there might still be funding allowance so they will need to apply for extra funding." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

4.4.1.4 Effectiveness of the Athena SWAN Charter

Participants explained that they believe the charter was somewhat effective in encouraging gender equality in the workplace, however it has its limitations. During the interview, Tamara shares her perception of its effectiveness. She explains that:

"Yes, I think it has been effective in general although it has its limitations, but it has put gender equality in the agenda of academic departments and institutions and has drawn attention to the work-life balance of women. It encourages institutions to have flexible working options and I think that has been very good. And making allowance in promotion applications for maternity leaves and I am not sure this would have

happened without Athena SWAN because it has made or encouraged universities to think about many ways in supporting women's careers." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara speaks on her perception:

"I think charters in general can be a very useful tool for framing that discussion whether it is the Athena SWAN charter or the Race equality charter. You can be a member of staff that wants to bring these discussions to the university but if there's nothing structured, it won't be taken seriously so, having a charter like this gives you that framework to say oh let's do this and having a link to funding for research gives people that drive to buy into it." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

With regards to the limitations of the Athena SWAN charter, a few concerns were identified by the interviewees on what can be improved or taken into consideration. Tamara explains that more attention should be given to the gender pay gap. In her words:

"I think one limitation is that it doesn't pay sufficient attention to the gender pay gap in Higher Education. There wasn't any question in the bronze award application, and I think there still isn't. Not even any question about the data on gender pay gap. I think even in the silver application, it's not very strong, from what I have seen from the review of the Athena SWAN, I don't think that the gender pay gap is going to feature very prominently in the new review's program. So, I think it would be good to focus more on that." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

Sara on the other hand, holds the opinion that there should be more flexibility in terms of the application criteria. She expresses that:

"I think there are some things that work and some that don't. In my role, I end up going to meetings with other people that are responsible for the charter submission from the Northwest and some of the things that we see from the Russell group universities for example and universities like ours and individual research departments, we all have to

submit the same thing with the same criteria, but our universities are all different, so it makes it rigid and difficult to compare against each other. And I think as well with the charter, it is what you make of it, it is meant to be there as a starting point, and you take that forward and build on it. So, there is a lot to be said about how its packaged, how its talked about." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

To conclude the discussion on the effectiveness of the charter, both participants were asked on their thoughts regarding different national contexts adapting the charter to address gender equality in academia. According to Sara:

"I don't see a reason why it couldn't, but it would need some looking at, to see how it would fit the context of that country. I know that higher education in the UK is one way but in America, it is completely different, so it needs to be shaped by the environment." (Sara, Inclusion and Diversity Officer, UK)

Similarly, Tamara states that:

"Yes, I think so and it is already happening in Ireland and Australia and maybe other countries. I don't know the details and well, I don't know if it is the same charter or has just been adapted." (Tamara, Chair of Equality and Diversity Committee, UK)

4.4.2 HR Policy Makers in Nigeria

The previous section examined the role and effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in improving gender equality and flexibility in the workplace for women academics. This section focuses on gender equality and flexible working in Nigeria. It examines the policies that are presently available regarding the aforementioned, as well as any proposed action plans by the institutions.

4.4.2.1 Gender Equality in the Workplace

Gender equality in the workplace was much less addressed at both universities in comparison to the UK universities as they were no national charters in Nigeria. There were no immediate action plans to address gender disparity across departments and in senior positions. According to Ope:

"There are many women academics who get promoted and quite a few in senior positions, but at the moment, I do not know the statistics or demographics because we haven't collected data yet on this. We also don't presently have data on the statistics in departments. We are aware that while there is a good number of females in different academic ranks, it is still relatively lower to the number of men in this position. This isn't intentional and I think it has more to do with the ratio of males to females based on recruitment. We recruit more males than females because we have more applications for men, but this is probably because we haven't come up with an effective strategy to attract more female academics. This is something that I think, we as an institution to look at in the relatively near future." (Ope, Head of HR, Nigeria)

Similarly, Dupe explains that:

"As I mentioned earlier, we are being encouraged more to go on international conferences that cover these topics. We have learnt a lot about this and would like to implement some of the strategies that have successfully worked in other countries. At the moment, we haven't collected data on this, but we did a survey two years ago where we asked academics about their opinion on how the university manages their way of working. We received more responses from females who made comments on the strictness of some of the policies and, how we have disregarded providing considerations for women regarding promotions due to their family and personal responsibilities. This has been taken into consideration." (Dupe, HR Manager, Nigeria)

Further investigation revealed that there was also no data on gender pay gap at both universities in Nigeria. Although, the participants explained that the pay was largely

determined by educational qualifications and promotion. Dupe explains the situation in the private university:

"We officially do not have any publication on gender pay gap. We try to avoid bias or discrimination between gender when it comes to their pay. We believe we are fair by ensuring that they are paid based on their job roles and their educational level. It is possible that there might be more males than females with a PhD or with more published papers. That is why I mentioned earlier that we are taking their responses into consideration, and we also try to encourage academics to study further, that is why we provide pay for those studying even if it's abroad." (Dupe, HR Manager, Nigeria)

The next sub-section focuses on the flexible working options, maternity leaves and study leaves available to Nigerian women academics.

4.4.2.2 Flexible Working Options and Career Breaks

Discussions regarding flexible working options at both the private and public universities showed that there was a lack of a variety of policies relating to flexibility. This was coherent with what the Nigerian female academics stated in relation to the topic. Dupe who is the Human Resource Manager at the private university explained that the management has had discussions regarding the introduction of flexible working options, and she explains that there is presently provision for staff quarters in the university's campus as well as paid study leaves. According to Dupe:

"Academics have the liberty to come in and leave the University at any time. They can schedule their lecture to when it is convenient for them. We are still working on a crèche for those who have children. There are no immediate plans to officially introduce flexible working options but there have been discussions. As a private university, it would be a milestone if we could successfully introduce these policies before other universities do. That's why the university occasionally pays for us to go to international conferences

relating to HR, where we can learn from the developments of other countries and institutions. We also have quarters for staff who want to live close to the university. Of course, they pay for it, but it is at a relatively affordable price compared to what they would normally pay in other parts of the city. Not many academics have taken up the opportunity because some prefer to live elsewhere due to family and personal reasons." (Dupe, HR Manager, Nigeria)

Ope on the other hand, speaks on the role of the university in implementing policies for flexible working:

"Well, several of the academics don't come into work every time but there is no provision for this officially. We haven't discussed any plans regarding this, but we are thinking about having a workshop where academics come together and talk about what changes they would like to see implemented in the university. We have a lot of staff, although many of them have left the university, so we are trying to work on that in order to encourage academics to stay here." (Ope, Head of HR, Nigeria)

Maternity leave was also discussed by the participants who expressed that this was generally provided by every institution in the country, as it is a regularized policy by the country's government. For instance, Ope explained that:

"The maternity leave has been extended to 6 months if any female wants an extension although the average female academic won't be home for 6 months. Also, returnees from maternity leave are allowed to close quite early from work for the next 3 months, usually around 2pm." (Ope, Head of HR, Nigeria)

In the private university, Dupe's response contrasted with Ope's as she explains that women academics can go on maternity leave, but it is only paid if the academic is married. She explains that:

"We have received backlash as an institution, because of our policies and the way we do things but that's what makes us stand out. If we are confident that we are taking the

right steps, we will continue to uphold our values and vision for this university. Yes, the maternity leave is 3 months and there is an allowance for more if needed. It is paid, but the individual must be married. Staff know about this. For instance, a staff came into the office yesterday and she explained that currently she isn't married. I told her that she can go for her maternity leave, but it won't be paid for, she agreed and said okay, that's fine." (Dupe, HR Manager, Nigeria)

Dupe also mentions that the university makes provision for those who require career breaks on study leaves or are studying part-time:

"The University has measures put in place for those who are still studying while working here. We give them days off and they are paid on those days. 2 of them are currently outside the country. We sponsor them, we still pay their salary and pay them an allowance every year." (Dupe, HR Manager, Nigeria)

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this research by examining the relationship between the research questions, the literature review and the emergent findings. It begins with an introduction that highlights the significance of the research findings.

5.1 Introduction

Work-life balance is a fundamental aspect of an individual's life as the presence of work-life issues can be detrimental to their work and personal life. The ability to create a boundary between these often-competing domains can lead to positive outcomes in relation to their work and non-work domains (Lourel et al, 2007). The existing body of literature on work-life balance fails to address the role of culture in influencing work-life balance experiences particularly in academia (Mordi et al, 2012). Literature has shown that academics experience a significant level of work-life conflict which could impose greater difficulties for women, who are influenced by institutional and societal factors (Kamenou, 2008; Adisa, 2019). Despite the progress made to work-life balance literature as well as institutional policies, there is a considerable focus on Western countries which is evident in the existing body of literature hence, there remains a lack of extensive research in developing countries where there is little knowledge regarding their work-life balance experiences. Furthermore, there is a need to examine the effectiveness of the institutional role in promoting work-life balance in these western countries. This research therefore addressed these gaps by exploring the

work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria using semi-structured interviews, diary studies and participatory visual methods.

A significant contribution of this research is to knowledge which places an emphasis on the role of culture which is evidently lacking in work-life balance literature. As (Tsai, 2008) argues, that majority of the research regarding work-life balance is predominantly focused on western countries with less focus on ethnic minorities. Empirical research that has considered the role of culture in the debates on work-life balance has concentrated on individual countries, while those that have undergone comparative research have mainly done so on a multi-level approach using quantitative surveys (McGinnity and Whelan, 2009; Chung, 2011). The role of culture will be discussed in much detail in section 5.3 of the chapter, which compares the work-life balance experiences of different cultures. The next section provides an overview of the findings of this research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This section presents in table 5.1 a summary of the findings that emerged from the research investigation. It presents 10 themes which include flexible workplace, working policies, pressure points, health, family life, impact of COVID-19, coping strategies, anchors, role of culture, policies, and practices in different national contexts.

Table 5.1: Summary of Findings

Major Theme	Sub-theme	Findings
Flexible Workplace	1.) Working Time 2.) Workload	The findings showed that female academics who are full-time, part-time and hourly paid, experienced long working hours and unsocial hours. This had a negative effect on both married and single individuals, with and without children, however a stronger effect was related to those with children. Interestingly, it was most evident among early career and mid-career academics. Furthermore, heavy workload impacted the time spent with family and personal time.
Working Policies	1.) Flexible Working Policies 2.) Work Leaves 3.) Childcare Services	Formal and informal flexible working policies were evident, however there was a lack of knowledge about a vast majority of these policies. Several participants did not consistently take annual leaves particularly during term time and for those who did, they still engaged in work activities. Additionally, in some cases, maternity leave was either not taken or was taken for a short period of time due to work demands. There are childcare facilities available, however some participants had no knowledge of this.
Pressure Points	1.) Promotion 2.) Academic Year	The pressure to publish papers as a requirement for promotion led to working during evenings and weekends therefore creating work-to-life conflict. It was less intense for late career academics who were already at the peak of their career. Work demands fluctuate between each semester with semester one being the most demanding as fewer modules are taught in semester two and three. Additionally, the examination period leads to an increase in conflict.
Health	1.) Mental Health 2.) Physical Health	Evidence showed that feelings of guilt about not dedicating more time to work demands led to a blurring of boundaries between the work and non-work domain and an increase in stress levels. It also led to changes in sleeping patterns in which participants had a shorter rest time and also led to changes in eating habits.
Family Life	1.) Childcare 2.) Ageing Parents	Participants experienced life-to-work conflict which occurs when demands from family and personal life come into conflict with the demands from work. Prioritizing family over work often led to decisions that slowed down their career and those with children experienced greater life-to-work conflict although it

271

		was significantly more intense for those with young children. Having ageing parents had an emotional impact for academics which often diverted their focus from work activities therefore occasionally hindering their ability to meet up with deadlines.
Impact of COVID-19	1.) Lifestyle Changes 2.) Work Intensity	The impact of the pandemic led to mental health issues for participants who struggled with creating boundaries while working from home, as well as those who were unable to see friends and family that often provided support to them. Additionally, there was an increase in work intensity as female academics described facing pressure from management in meeting deadlines, as well as changes in the teaching and assessment structure.
Coping Strategies	1.) Creating Boundaries 2.) Leisure	Some participants were able to effectively implement coping strategies however these were mostly those who have no childcare responsibilities or those who made a conscious effort to separate the work and non-work domains even though they weren't always successful. Finding ways to detach from work helped them to feel like they had control over their work-life balance by engaging in activities such as volunteering, religious activities, exercising, spending time with family and friends.
Anchors	1.) Family-Anchor 2.) Work-Anchor	Emotional and Instrumental support was provided by spouses, partners and other family members, as well as support from line managers and colleagues. Although, support from family has a greater impact on the work-life balance of the participants than support from work. The majority of the participants who had spouses that are academics stated that it aided understanding and increased support. Informal support at work was more dominant than formal support and gender had a role to play in the support received by the participants.
Role of Culture	1.) Patriarchal System 2.) Religion	Patriarchy has the strongest level of dominance in Nigeria in comparison to the UK. Culture still had an impact on those participants in the UK with non-British backgrounds as they often felt that they were not fulfilling their duties as a female when they received assistance from their spouses and partners which was linked to the norms and expectations of their culture. This conflicted with the findings of those with a British

		background as they did not share this same feeling or perception
Policies and Practices in Different National Contexts	1.) Athena SWAN award application 2.) Gender Equality in the workplace 3.) Flexible working Options and Career Breaks 4.) Effectiveness of the Athena SWAN Charter	Research funding was a source of motivation for institutions applying for the Athena SWAN award in the UK. Being on the self-assessment team showed a positive relationship to work-to-life conflict due to an increase in workload and working hours. However, there was evidence of support for working mothers, flexible working options and agile working. The Nigerian institutions on the other hand provided study leave, creches and support for returning mothers however there was a lack of data regarding the gender disparity among departments and ranks.

5.3 Research Questions

This section provides an understanding of how the findings addressed the research questions which have been shown in Figure 5.1 below. Furthermore, it discusses the gaps in literature that have been addressed by the findings of the research.

Figure 5.1: Relationship between research questions and the emergent themes of this research
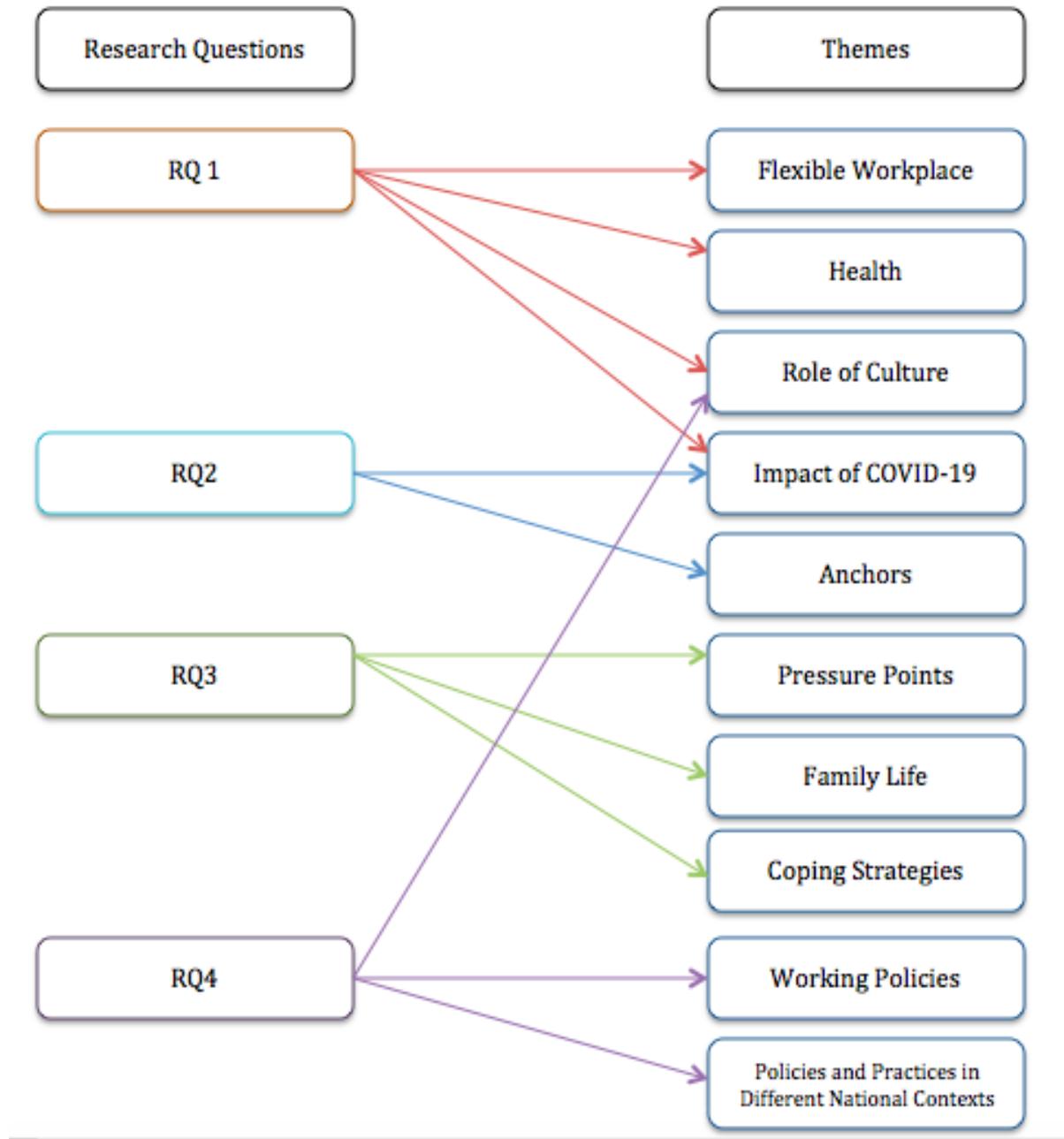
5.3.1 Research Question 1

To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance?

A significant finding that emerged in this research was that women academics in the UK and Nigeria shared similar reasons for going into academia which was primarily linked to the need for flexibility. However, the underlying reason for this need varied amongst the participants who mentioned that it was either due to family responsibilities or personal demands such as leisure or further study. The participants' responses indicated that this assumption was a misconception as the flexible nature of academia is associated with long, unsocial working hours and heavy workload. These demands that are attributed to being an academic often lead to a spillover of work time into the time that should be spent with family, personal time and on other important activities. UK women academics seem to work longer hours than those in Nigeria however, the Nigerian women academics experienced greater work-life conflict as they were more involved in family and childcare. This concurs with Lyonette et al (2007) argument that those with traditional gendered culture experience a greater level of work-life conflict.

Working long and unsocial hours has had an adverse effect on those who are married, those with partners and single academics with and without children. Additionally, those who are single or don't have children, were more likely to work long and unsocial hours than those who are married, have partners and have children, as their work became their life making it more difficult for them to create a boundary between the work and non-work domains. This

aligns with Hamilton et al's (2006) argument that women academics with no spousal or childcare responsibilities experience work-life conflict due to the spillover of work time into the non-work domains. Women academics who do not have children admitted that the nature of academia involving heavy workload and long, unsocial hours had an impact on their decision to not have children or postpone childbearing. This finding adds to Santos (2015) findings on Portuguese academics, which showed that women restricted the number of children or delayed having the first child which was identified as 'Scheduling/planning of family lifecycle landmarks'.

Additionally, the existent literature mainly considers one lifecycle either early career, mid-career or late career employees see for example, Emslie and Hunt (2009). And for those who make the comparisons between different career stages, there is a greater focus on the effect of family status on the decisions made relating to their work-life balance and therefore, do not examine the impact of years in academia or in that specific institution. This research challenges this narrative by going beyond the traditional idea of prioritizing family responsibilities to identifying that those in their early and mid-career worked longer hours than those at the top of their career irrespective of their family status which was primarily linked to lower number of years in academia, the institution or in their present rank which was motivated either by the fear of being laid off from work or the need to impress their line managers. Furthermore, consistent with Wattis et al's (2013) research on working mothers in the UK, this research showed that being a part-time academic or an hourly paid academic, was linked with having similar workload as those working full-time however, working part-time resulted in lesser pay for doing the same amount of work.

It was concerning to discover the extent to which working time and workload negatively impacted mental and physical health of the participants through feelings of guilt, stress, adverse changes to eating and sleeping patterns, as well as high blood pressure. This alerts us to broaden our perceptions of what constitutes the negative effects of workload and working hours beyond time conflict to considering stress and health related issues. As Wong, Chan and Ngan (2019) argue that long working hours are strongly linked to sleep deprivation and a higher risk of suffering from cardiovascular disease. Applying culture to the analysis of the findings showed that participants in the UK reported greater mental health issues than those in Nigeria however, there is the possibility that women academic in Nigeria were less comfortable in talking about their mental health issues due to the pronounced level of mental health stigma. Hieu (2020) argues that religion provides individuals with the perception that they are in control of their work-life balance and is deemed to have similar level of importance as friendships, families and other significant activities. This research has provided evidence that Nigerian academics used religion as a coping strategy in comparison to the UK academics, due to the level of religiosity in the African culture. Several participants in Nigeria admitted that their working arrangements occasionally hindered their ability to go to church and therefore perceived that they were prioritizing their work over their religion which made them feel like they weren't in control of their work-life balance.

This sub-section has addressed the extent to which working time and workload impacts the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance. The next sub-section addresses research question 2 in relation to family and

organizational support. And further examines the impact of culture and COVID-19 in influencing the support received by women academics.

5.3.2 Research Question 2

How do women academics in the UK and Nigeria perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?

Key findings in this research show that the women academics viewed family and organizational support to be significant to their work-life balance experiences. Family support in relation to emotional and instrumental support was linked to their spouses, partners and parents who supported primarily with childcare responsibilities and being understanding. Organizational support on the other hand, was linked to workplace support from colleagues and line managers. This correlates with the findings from Whelan-Berry and Gordon's (2006) study which showed that work-based and personal support are positively related to the work-life balance of working women. One fundamental finding that emerged was that the support from spouse and partners had a greater impact than other forms of support. This supports Akanbi's (2016) findings which indicated that women perceive support received from friends, family and significant other to be stronger than work support in reducing work-life conflict. Furthermore, while majority of the participants stated that their spouses and partners exhibited both instrumental and emotional forms of support, one form of support was more dominant than the other which varied amongst individuals.

The literature around debates on social support (Marcinkus et al, 2007; Njenga, 2010) suggests that key individuals are more approachable than work-related forms of support, therefore individuals feel more comfortable around their family and friends. This research

supports their findings as a significant number of women academics who expressed that they had no form of support from their spouses or partners, had negative experiences in which they often had to make compromises by prioritizing their childcare responsibilities over their work demands. The findings further highlighted that having a spouse who is an academic promotes understanding although for one participant who had an academic spouse, she had no support therefore leading to difficulties in managing her work-life balance. Since having spouses who are academics was only consistent with Nigerian participants, it is possible that patriarchy had a role to play in the distinct experiences as some households may experience a higher level of patriarchal dominance than others. In addition, it was interesting to see that despite the provision of support for UK women academics, there were occasional compromises that were only made by the women and not their spouses. For example, one UK academic made compromises by working part-time in order to manage her childcare responsibilities, however her spouse was not willing to make the same compromise. This confirms Lyonette's (2015) argument that a large proportion of women work part-time to manage childcare even though they often desire to work full-time.

This research's findings showed that the lack of spousal and family support was more pronounced for Nigerian women academics than those in the UK. This was primarily due to the cultural norms and expectations whereby the woman is expected to contribute to the household income as well as taking care of the home. This finding adds to Eze (2017) findings on Nigerian women by extending the sample beyond those in executive positions to including different ranks, emphasizing that women in Nigeria are still impacted by cultural gendered expectations regardless of where they are on the career ladder. The impact of culture was in fact quite evident for those in the UK who were from Irish, Nigerian and Asian

backgrounds however, those with Asian and Nigerian backgrounds struggled most as they often felt feelings of guilt that they weren't fulfilling their roles as a woman, particularly when they received support from their spouses. This addresses the evident gap in literature relating to culture by examining the distinct experiences of different cultures, especially ethnic minorities. As Kamenou (2008) argues, the career experiences of ethnic minority women cannot be viewed in isolation without acknowledging their broader life circumstances, in relation to their family, culture and religion.

This research further contributes empirical evidence to debates around the impact of COVID-19, which is still a relatively new area of study relating to work-life balance. It showed that achieving work-life balance was particularly difficult for women academics in the UK who received support from their parents and other family members, as they experienced a greater level of work-life conflict due to the COVID-19 restrictions in which they had no access to their families. It was difficult to adapt to the current situation particularly with regards to childcare responsibilities which their parents occasionally helped with. It suggests that family support is quite significant for women however the extent of this significance can effectively be examined by comparing the presence and absence of support particularly across different timeframes.

As discussed in the literature review, majority of the research on work-related support focuses predominantly on the U.S. This research therefore addresses this gap by suggesting that support through line managers and colleagues were more important to academics in comparison to formal support provided by the institutions through policies, in both the UK and Nigeria. An explanation for this could be due to the lack of knowledge of available

support, and the perception that utilizing formal support could be detrimental to their career advancement. This supports (Njenga, 2010) argument that women employees rated fear of being perceived as uncommitted higher than men, if they used formal policies. This shows that it is crucial for scholars to extend work-related support studies to developing countries in order to gain further understanding of the significance of work-related support as there may be deeper explanations to this finding. In fact, the weight of academics' perception regarding informal support was identified by the data collected in the UK regarding the impact of COVID-19 as academics stated that seeing colleagues regularly had a positive effect on their work-life balance perceptions.

Having examined the role of family and organizational support, the next sub-section addresses research question 3 on the role of work to life and life to work conflict in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria.

5.3.3 Research Question 3

What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?

The research findings related to work-life conflict have shown evidence that work-life conflict is bi-directional. This asserts the argument that literature has focused greatly on the work to life conflict while occasionally overlooking the life to work conflict. The findings challenge Frone (2003) argument that work has greater effects than family as work to family conflict is reported more than family to work conflict. Firstly, this research expands the focus of conflict discourses to include the life domain rather than focusing solely on the family domain. Additionally, it shows that despite work to life conflict being reported more than life

to work conflict, the life domain still has a significant role to play in experiencing conflict. The disparity in the reports may be explained by the lack of consensus of an appropriate definition of work-life balance as there seems to be a significant level of ignorance on the role of the non-work domain in influencing work-life balance.

There are several reasons to explain why work-life conflict has had a crucial impact in influencing the career progression of women academics. One key determinant is the pressure to publish papers and the lack of adequate time to carry out research. This supports Doherty and Manfredi's (2006) finding that the presence of young children creates less time for women academics to conduct research and write papers. However, this research adds to this, by identifying another reason for the lack of time to undertake research which is the presence of heavy workload. Evidence shows that participants in the UK had allocation for research yet, the majority were unable to undertake research due to their heavy workload which was due to teaching and administrative duties. Another suggestion is that in the UK universities involved in this research, it wasn't mandatory for academics to publish papers although allocation was given for it. This was contradictory to the findings in Nigeria, as it was necessary for academics to publish 6-7 articles every 3 years. The major reason for the inability of participants in Nigeria to publish papers was due to childcare responsibilities which often came into conflict with their work demands. In fact, several of the Nigerian participants perceived that their colleagues without childcare responsibilities had a more successful career, as those who are mothers were prone to prioritizing their children over work which was evident in their decision to postpone further study, study part-time, switch to part-time employment, opting out of important meetings and conferences. This finding aligns with Ezzedeen and Ritchey's (2009) results showing that women without childcare

responsibilities believe that they would not have been successful in their career if they had children.

The findings show that single women academics were also negatively impacted by childcare and other family responsibilities. Although there was a low number of single women academics in the UK and Nigeria, they mentioned that they had made sacrifices such as opting out of academic conferences to use the conference fee for a sibling's fees as well as helping with childcare where they had nieces and nephews. This shows that literature has ignored effectively examining the experiences of those who are single and have no children by giving greater attention to those who are married and have children. The research further supports that a child's age is a determinant of life to work conflict as women academics with children reflected on how they struggled with conflict between domains when they had dependent children. Additionally, those who presently have young children narrated experiences in which they often faced difficulties in meeting demands.

The next sub-section addresses research question 4 which evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and practices adopted by the universities to promote the work-life balance of women academics in the UK and Nigeria. It considers the support provided for returning mothers, informal flexible options, annual leave and paid maternity leave.

5.3.4 Research Question 4

What are the policies and strategies adopted by the universities in the UK and Nigeria to improve the work-life balance experiences of female academics?

The Athena SWAN charter which was established in 2005 but only extended to non-STEM departments in 2015 has been examined by past studies in literature however, this research

contributes to the empirical studies by providing an in-depth evaluation of the charter in Business Schools as this is a gap in literature that needs to be addressed. The findings challenge Rosser et al's (2019) argument which disregards the significance of the perceptions of women academics and calls for a direct measure of impact to be utilized. Therefore, the research undertakes a 2-way approach in which the findings exhibit evidence of examining the effectiveness of the strategies and policies adopted by the institution, from the perspective of women academics and, the institution through interviews with officials involved in the charter on an institutional level.

From the women academics' perspective, the UK institutions had formal working policies in place, in comparison to Nigeria which had mostly informal strategies with the exclusion of maternity leave and study leave. It was surprising to discover that although there were fewer formal policies in Nigeria, they had a greater level of flexibility than women academics in the UK. This is alarming as it suggests that questions should be raised about how effective the policies are in the UK. An example of this is the ability of Nigerian women academics to schedule their lecture time, based on their preference and to work from home a few days a week unofficially. This points out that although informal, Nigerian institutions seem to have progressed in certain areas relating to flexibility in comparison to the UK. On the other hand, women academics in the UK were unable to effectively identify most of the flexible working options available apart from part-time work, reduced hours and discussions with line managers on work allocations. Furthermore, the shift to home working during the pandemic led to an increase in work-life conflict for the majority of UK women academics due to the blurring of boundaries which was caused by engaging in both home and work activities in the same environment. The findings add to Palumbo's (2020) argument that despite the role

of home working in promoting work-life balance, it paves the way for both work to life and life to work conflict. This shows that despite the literature highlighting that homeworking could promote work-life balance, it could also encourage both work intensity and long working hours which is detrimental to one's work-life balance.

During the analysis of the data collected, specific similarities and differences in both countries relating to annual leave and childcare services were observed. Nigerian women academics stated that they regularly took their annual leave yet, they engaged in work activities while on leave. Despite the majority of women academics in the UK stating that they struggled to have the time to take their annual leave, a few of them shared similar experiences with those in Nigeria narrating their experiences of how they engaged in work during their leave, as they often felt guilty leaving such an amount of work for a few days or weeks. Findings pertaining to childcare services showed that the implementation does not always mean that knowledge regarding these services has been effectively disseminated. UK academics were aware of the childcare services available, however not all use these services. On the other hand, there were contradictory responses amongst women academics in Nigeria as there seemed to be creches and schools available on the campuses for staff however, not all were aware of these childcare services. While for those who were aware, they admitted that the facility and quality of teaching were substandard.

Culture had a role to play in the strategies employed by one of the Nigerian institutions in regard to religion. Previous studies focusing on religion have shown that it shares a significant relationship with individuals deciding to utilize institutional policies yet, there is a need to explore the relationship between religion and institutional policies in African

cultures as well as looking at the negative spillover of religion. Specifically, Heath (2012) found that faith was important for women when overwhelmed with work. This study shows similar findings, however it also shows that religion could be detrimental to the work-life balance of women. One example of this is the prayer sessions held regularly by the faith-based university during working time which has been made compulsory and therefore, frequently comes into conflict with their work and non-work demands. Additionally, religion was used as a tool to enforce certain restrictions such as the paid maternity leave only available to women academics who are married. This is concerning as it shows that despite maternity leave being statutory, it appears that the institution can enforce its own regulations.

From the institution's perspective, findings relating to the Athena SWAN award application were consistent with literature, showing that research funding was a source of motivation for institutions applying for the award although, it was also viewed as an opportunity to promote their commitment to gender equality. This reflects that the charter is aimed at promoting gender equality and this has been effective to some extent. However, the relationship between the award and funding for research leads to questions about how genuine the institutions' motives are. Further questions could also be raised on whether the institutions are indeed interested in committing themselves to ensuring the career progressions of women academics or if it is more of a "look good on paper approach" in which they want to seem attractive to potential employees and prospective students. This supports Tzanakou and Pearce's (2019) argument that this can lead to reductionist approaches towards gender equality.

Nonetheless, there is evidence to show that the implementation of the charter has its shortcomings. For instance, it was mentioned in the interviews with Athena SWAN charter team members that meetings relating to the award are usually held quarterly or twice a semester and are held earlier in the day to avoid having meetings after work hours. Despite the institutions efforts to ensure that they are mindful of the likely negative effects of being on the self-assessment team, such as an increase in workload and working hours, there are evidently more women than men on the team and there have been difficulties in trying to get more men to participate. It is understandable that there will likely be more women than men however, this implies that it could be a source of work-life conflict for women. This correlates with past studies (Caffrey et al, 2016; Ovseiko et al, 2017) that being on the Athena SWAN application team and panel ironically increases their workload and working hours.

It was acknowledged by one of the institutions that since they received the bronze award, not much progress has been made in the representation of women in senior academic grades which was confirmed through their survey which was carried out in the business school to identify gender in different grades and, in terms of recruitment and selection. This suggests that while the charter's objectives are aimed in the right direction, the implementation is not quite effective. Nonetheless, there are positive results that have emerged which include support for returning mothers, and flexible working. For example, one of the institutions provides reduced working time, no teaching for a semester so returnees can focus on research, discussions with line managers regarding their needs for training, research funding and childcare support. The other institution identified that there is the provision of flexible working policies, agile working, mentoring and mental health group.

On the other hand, gender equality was much less discussed in both Nigerian institutions included in the study. The findings also show that there was no data on gender in each department and ranks however, considerations were being made for women regarding promotions due to their family and personal demands. This implies that despite informal flexibility being available to academics, the institutions had not consciously made many efforts in promoting gender equality. However, there was evidence to show that they provided study leave, creches and allowed returning mothers to close early from work for the next 3 months.

5.4 Chapter Conclusion

This discussion chapter has presented the summary of the findings and how they answer the research questions. Although the findings agree with the literature to some extent, there are specific findings that raise questions, particularly in relation to the impact of culture. Furthermore, the use of diary studies and visual drawings as additional data collection methods, improved the validity of the data collected and measured the variations in their daily experiences as well as their reflections on their present work-balance situation. The next chapter concludes the research, by presenting the contributions of the research to theory, knowledge and practice as well as the implications for future research.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

This chapter aims to conclude the research by first providing a summary of the research and an evaluation of the research aim and research questions as well as the contributions of the research to theory, knowledge and practice. It establishes the implications for future research and practice with regards to work-life balance. It concludes by discussing the limitations of the research.

6.1 Summary of the Research

The aim of this research was to explore the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria, and to examine the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in promoting gender equality. The initial part of the research was focused on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the literature on work-life balance. In order to achieve this, the role conflict theory (Kahn et al, 1964) and spillover theory (Edwards and Rothard, 2000) were employed to effectively examine the notion of work-life balance. It was imperative to examine what work-life balance is through the various definitions provided by scholars, in order to fully grasp what it entails.

What emerged from the literature review, was that the notion of 'work-life balance' was constricted as the definitions provided in the literature failed to acknowledge the significant role of culture on the work-life balance experiences of individuals. Culture penetrates various aspects of one's life in relation to their family, work environment, beliefs and values and support systems. Furthermore, the literature review revealed more attention has been given to the work and family domains, with little consideration for the life domain. This was

particularly interesting given an individual's life exceeds beyond the family domain to include other activities such as personal time and other important activities that are unique to each individual. From the existing literature, it became evident that academia remains under-researched in cross-cultural research, particularly for women who also have non-work responsibilities.

Themes and sub-themes emerged relating to the impact of motherhood, patriarchal systems, religion, support, work-life balance policies and working time arrangements. Further research into academia revealed that there was a lack of institutional framework to promote gender equality and work-life balance in Nigeria. Therefore, the Athena SWAN charter by the Advance HE was examined to evaluate its progress and effectiveness in UK institutions, in order to determine if it can be adapted to Nigeria. While it was evident that the charter has provided some benefits, it also had its shortcomings particularly relating to the lack of vast studies in non-STEM departments and the link to research funding which could impact the genuity of institutions motives in applying for the Athena SWAN awards.

Having understood the notion of work-life balance through the themes developed in the literature review. The next phase involved using a three-method approach consisting of 30 semi-structured interviews, 11 diary studies and 11 visual drawings to collect rich data on women academics in UK and Nigeria in relation to their work-life balance experiences. Further 4 interviews were carried out with HR professionals and Athena SWAN team members to evaluate the policies and practices aimed at promoting work-life balance from the institution's perspectives. In summary, 9 themes emerged relating to the experiences of women academics and lastly, one theme relating to the policies and practices in different

national contexts. These themes include flexible workplace, working policies, pressure points, health, anchors, role of culture, family life, impact of COVID-19, coping strategies, policies in different national contexts (UK and Nigeria).

The next section evaluates the relationship between the findings of the research and the research questions.

6.2 Evaluation of the Research Questions

The literature was key in shaping the methodological approach of this research which gathered data on the work-life balance experiences of women academics. The table below (Table 6.1) shows a detailed summary of the research questions mapped across to the findings.

Table 6.1: Evaluation of the Research Questions

Research Questions	Research Findings
RQ1 - To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics to effectively manage their work-life balance?	➢ All participants explained that they experienced work to life conflict due to their long working hours, unsocial hours and workload which led to the blurring of boundaries between their work and non-work domains. ➢ Some participants admitted to delaying or restricting the number of children they have, due to their work demands. ➢ Findings relating to part-time work showed that working as a part-time academic was still linked to work to life conflict as there was no reduction

	in workload therefore, they also struggled to achieve a healthy work-life balance.
	➤ For Nigerian academics, the nature of their job occasionally hindered their ability to have time for other important aspects of their lives aside family, such as religious activities.
	➤ It also led to mental and physical challenges for participants in both countries although, those in the UK reported more mental health issues than those in Nigeria.
RQ2 - How do women academics perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?	➤ Family and organizational support were deemed significant to the work-life balance of participants as they were positively correlated. Although, the findings revealed that family support was perceived to have a greater impact than work-based support.
	➤ Despite the provision of family support, women academics still made compromises relating to their work life. For instance, having to work part-time or forego conferences.
	➤ Nigerian academics received less spousal and family support than academics in the UK, which was mainly due to the cultural expectations of a woman contributing to the household income and being primarily responsible for the household responsibilities.

	➢ For those that did receive family and work support particularly relating to childcare, the COVID-19 pandemic led to greater amounts of work-life conflict as they no longer had access to those family, friends, creches that assisted with childcare
RQ3 - What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics?	➢ Evidence from the findings showed that work-life conflict has a significant impact on their career progression due to their heavy workload and childcare responsibilities which resulted in little time to engage in research and other significant activities related to their career progression. ➢ Academics with childcare responsibilities perceived that their colleagues who were single or had no children had a more successful career than they, as childcare demands led to making certain career sacrifices such as engaging in part-time employment, postponing or prolonged study. ➢ Academics who are single and/or have no children still experienced negative impact of work-life conflict on their career progression due to making sacrifices such as foregoing academic conferences.
RQ4 - What are the policies and strategies adopted by the universities to improve the work-	➢ Despite having fewer formal policies in Nigeria, Nigerian academics experienced greater levels of flexibility than academics in the UK.

life balance experiences of women academics?	➢ Homeworking during the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in work-life conflict for majority of the UK academics due to the blurring of boundaries.
	➢ One of the Nigerian universities which is faith-based, placed restrictions on maternity leave in which maternity leave was only paid for those who ae married.
	➢ In the Uk, being on the Athena SWAN self-assessment team led to an increase in working hours and workload, which can be a source of work-life conflict.

6.3 Contributions of the Research

This section presents the contributions of this research to theory, knowledge and practice. It discusses the conceptual framework of the research that considers the life domain, a revised definition of work-life balance, empirical research on the work-life balance of women academics, the impact of culture, novel methodological approaches, contribution to the literature on the COVID-19 pandemic and homeworking, evaluation of the Athena SWAN charter. It concludes with the recommendations for the UK and Nigeria higher education.

6.3.1 Contribution to Theory

This section presents the contributions of this research to theory. It begins with a revised definition for work-life balance and thereafter, presents the conceptual framework of this research.

6.3.1.1 Work-Life Balance Definition

The findings of this research challenge the literature on what the notion of 'work-life balance' means. Several authors (Clark, 2000; DeCieri et al, 2005) as stated in the literature review, do not consider the importance of the life domain and for those who do, they omit other significant components that are embedded in the work-life balance experiences of individuals. For example, Delecta (2011) acknowledges the life domain, however there is no consideration given to culture and gender. While the work and family domains are important, women academics considered other aspects of their lives such as engaging in leisure activities and other engagements that they deemed impactful such as volunteering, to impact their work-life balance. These life activities were seen to play a significant role in influencing the perceptions of the participants as those who engaged in this activity believed that it gave them some form of control over their work-life balance. Therefore, a revised definition of what constitutes work-life balance has been proposed in order to ensure that key aspects of an individual's life do not remain overlooked. This research proposes that the term 'Work-life balance' *comprises of the perceptions held by individuals regarding their control over their work, family and life demands which are significantly shaped by gender, culture, family and career life stages.* With the changes to the way we work and the increase in women's participation in the labour force, work-life balance is no longer bound to only the work and family domain and is influenced by other key aspects of one's life.

6.3.1.2 Conceptual Framework

This research builds on the Role Conflict theory and Spillover theory by presenting a conceptual framework in Figure 6.2 which considers the significance of culture and gender

in influencing the work-life balance of women academics. Role Conflict theory (Kahn et al, 1964) states that the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other. While the spillover theory (Zedd, 1992) states that an individual's attitudes, skills and emotions can spillover from one domain to another. As discussed in the findings chapter, this research shows that work-life conflict was evident for women academics in UK and Nigeria. Work and non-work domains both played significant roles in influencing the ability of women academics to effectively manage their work-life balance however, the work domain had a greater effect than the non-work domains particularly with regards to time-based conflict. This is consistent with Steiber's (2009) study which revealed that time-based conflict had a stronger effect than strain-based conflict among men and women. This was unsurprising as time-based conflict in the literature has been strongly linked to long working hours, unsocial hours and family demands.

The majority of the participants in both countries explained that the demands from the work domain came into conflict with the other domains as they were unable to fulfil these demands due to the time spent on work activities thereby coming into conflict with the time that should be spent on non-work activities. Although work to life conflict had a greater effect than life to work conflict, the latter still occurred to an extent, as the family and other demands came into conflict with the time that should be spent on work activities. This coincides with Frone's (2003) argument that work has more negative effects than family although this could be strongly associated with the nature of the job as academia is linked to long and unsocial working hours despite its notion of flexibility. However, it remains

fundamental for more studies to examine both forms of conflict rather than a continuous neglect of life to work conflict.

As shown in the findings chapter, family demands such as childcare responsibilities could impede the time spent on work demands as there were several situations described in the interviews as well as in the diary entries, in which participants consistently prioritized their children over their work therefore leading to an adverse effect in which they were unable to meet up with work demands and, in some cases, made significant decisions about their career such as deciding to work part-time, inability to publish research papers for promotion or postponing their PhD programme. This supports Doherty and Manfredi (2006) findings that shows women academics have less impressive career profiles than their male counterparts due to the unavailability of time to conduct research and write papers.

Figure 6.1: Conceptual Framework for this Research

Role Conflict theory

Work-life Balance

Culture

Academics

Gender

Life Domain
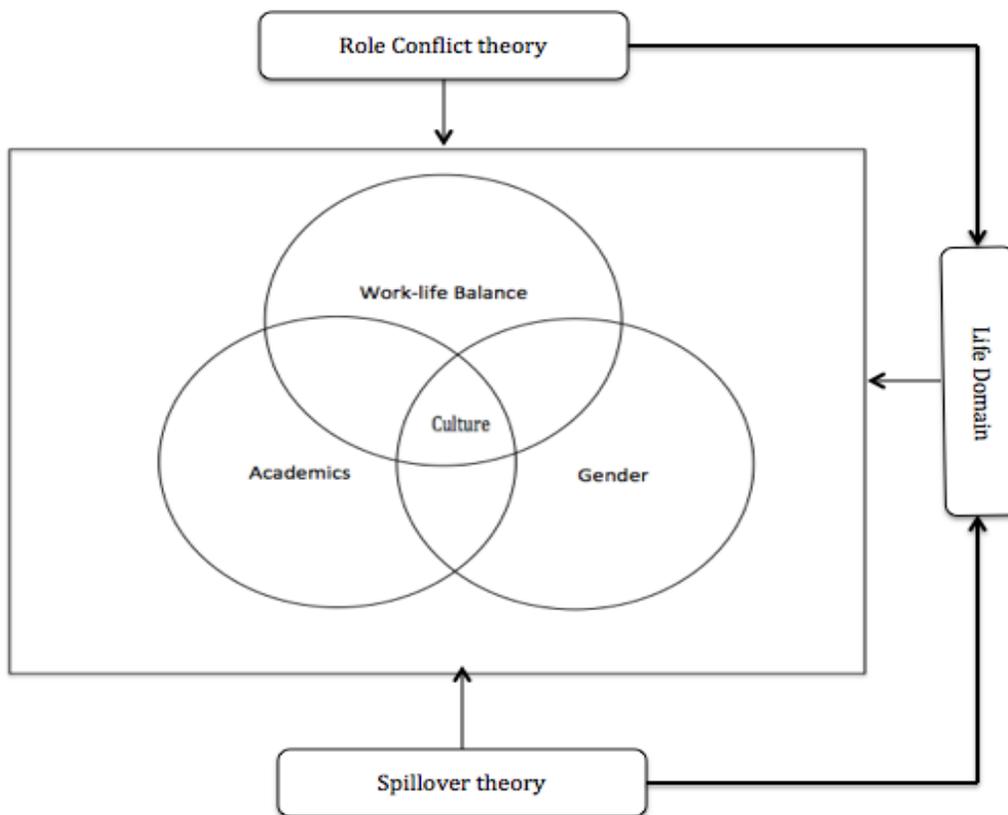
Spillover theory

In relation to the spillover theory, the findings showed that negative spillover was present to a greater extent than positive spillover. Evidence from the research suggests that women academics in Nigeria experience negative spillover more than positive spillover which is evident in their emotions and attitude of feeling stressed and tired which spilled over into other domains. Furthermore, this research addresses Kiger's (2007) argument that work-family spillover is often viewed as one construct, although they are separate and bi-directional. The distinction was made between work-family spillover by examining work to family spillover and family to work spillover as separate constructs and goes further to include the life domain. Additionally, it adds to the literature on family/life to work spillover, which is presently lacking, by providing evidence of emotions which spillover from the

family and life domain into the work domain. For example, on occasions when participants felt that happy in their non-work domains, these emotions often spilled over into the work domain and on occasions where there were feelings of guilt for not spending time with family, it led to lack of motivation and feelings of unhappiness when focusing on work responsibilities.

This sub-section has presented the contributions of this research to theory, the next sub-section presents the contributions of this research to knowledge.

6.3.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This section presents the contributions of this research to knowledge. It begins with addressing the lack of research on the work-life balance experiences in developing countries and further adds empirical research to the work-life balance literature on academia. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of culture in influencing the work-life balance experiences of women academics. Other key contributions of this research include methodological approaches, with the hybrid diaries being novel in work-life balance literature and the contribution of empirical research to the literature on the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it examines the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter and evaluates the policies and practices in the Universities.

6.3.2.1 Empirical Research on the Work-Life Balance of Women Academics

A key contribution of this research is addressing a significant gap in literature relating to the lack of significant studies on the work-life balance experiences in developing countries. There is an evident lack of empirical research undertaken in developing countries as majority of the work-life balance research (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006; Emslie and Hunt,

2009) has been predominantly in western countries. This research therefore adds to the empirical studies on work-life balance in developing countries and further contributes to the work-life balance literature on women academics in developing countries which is also lacking. The findings of this research challenge Melinda and Jacobs (2008) justification for the attention given to western countries, in which they argue that the debates on work-life spillover may be particularly relevant in western countries due to the increase in dual-earner couples. Although their argument highlights the relevance of work-life balance research in examining western countries, it overlooks the significance of examining the work-life balance experiences in non-western countries. This research presents findings that show that Nigerian women are actively participating in the labor force and those who work in academia, struggle with work-life balance issues. Hence, this research presents key findings that have implications for work-life balance research by highlighting the need to examine not only western countries but also non-western countries.

This sub-section has set out to highlight the contributions of this research to work-life balance in academia and developing countries. The next sub-section presents the significance of the inclusion of culture in the discourse on work-life balance.

6.3.2.2 The Impact of Culture

This research justifies the significance of culture in the discourse on work-life balance as the findings show that culture influences the perceptions and experiences of women academics which are distinct as no two experiences are the same. This research extends the debates on culture and work-life balance by examining the impact of culture in the work and non-work domains. In the literature review, it was established that patriarchy and religion are linked to the debates on culture (Acker, 1989; Saroglou and Cohen, 2011). Regarding the work

domain and non-work domain, the impact of patriarchy was much more discussed in Nigeria than in the UK. Nigerian women academics perceived that men were more likely to be favored than women in regard to promotion hence, the low number of women academics in these institutions. Additionally, there were no considerations given to women regarding promotion particularly women returnees.

In the non-work domain, patriarchy seems to be evident in the work-life balance experiences of women academics however, it was particularly prevalent for Nigerian women. Their ability to achieve work-life balance and career progression was often impeded by the societal norms and expectations in which they are perceived to be the primary homemaker while also contributing to the household income. This inevitably led to conflict between the work and non-work demands. For women academics in Nigeria, there was no reduction in household and childcare demands, and they often had to make short-term and long-term sacrifices that adversely impeded their career advancement. For example, in the diary studies, the majority narrated daily experiences that were linked to a variety of sacrifices such as foregoing to work on certain days and occasionally had to decrease working hours yet, the partners did not make these sacrifices. Therefore, the findings of this research agree with Adisa (2016) who argues that women have their careers pulling them in one direction and their family demands pulling them in the other direction.

 In the UK, women academics from non-British cultural backgrounds such as Ireland, Africa and Asia, all had work-life balance experiences that were linked to patriarchy. Particularly the African and Asian women academics who felt that they were still obligated to be the primary homemaker and in certain situations, this expectation was linked to health issues

such as stress. The British women academics were also affected by patriarchy although not all. For those who were, it adversely affected their career progression. For instance, one academic had to switch from full-time employment to working part-time due to her childcare demands, however her spouse did not make the same decision regarding his career. These findings are therefore of utmost importance to the discussions of culture as it provides justification for the considerable impact of culture on a woman's work-life balance. The findings agree with McSweeney's (2009) argument that diversity within cultures should not be ignored.

Religion as a part of culture (Cohen, 2009), was also evident in the findings of this research, to have both positive and negative impacts on their work and non-work domains. In the Nigerian context, one of the universities which is Christian based, implemented policies that were influenced by religious belief. These findings address a significant gap in literature which is the absence of pertinent studies examining the role of religion from an institutional perspective. One example is the condition given to women academics that they will only receive pay for maternity leave if they are married. This has been an ongoing policy at the university since it was established and has adversely affected those who intend to go on maternity leave but are unmarried. Furthermore, engaging in religious activities in the workplace which was compulsory for all staff at the Christian based university, negatively led to a spillover of time and emotions from the work domain into the non-work domain. This is relevant to the discourse on spillover, as little attention has been paid to religion as a determinant of work-life spillover. Additionally, the findings agree with Ozbilgin et al's (2011) argument that religion is constantly being omitted from work-life literature yet, it remains an important aspect of some individual's life.

6.3.2.3 Methodological Approaches

The third contribution of this research to knowledge relates to the methodological approaches to work-life balance research designs. This research uses triangulation of semi-structured interviews, hybrid diaries and participatory visual drawings, with hybrid diaries and participatory visual drawings being novel in regard to work-life balance research, particularly in a comparative context. Allen et al (2000) argue that most research tends to be cross-sectional and correlational with very few research using longitudinal designs that can track how life changes over time and career stages, as well as track corresponding changes in stress and affective outcomes. In addition, Vincent and Warren (2012) stress the need to broaden the data collection techniques of work-life balance experiences beyond the traditional question and answer techniques, to collect data about the participants through reflective practices in order to elicit unrevealed emotions and thoughts regarding the phenomena of interest.   This research has shown the significance of implementing longitudinal research designs alongside cross-sectional designs as it has improved our understanding of the changes to women academics' work-life balance experiences relating to the daily fluctuations in the decisions they make regarding their work and non-work demands.

The findings of this research show that perceptions of women academics which are mainly attained through the traditional qualitative approach using interviews do not always reveal consequential data about specific events that are influenced by changing dynamics or can only be accounted for by unspoken thoughts. For instance, data from the diary studies revealed that participants' priorities change in different situations in which on some days, they prioritize their childcare and family responsibilities over work and vice versa. This is

significant to work-life balance literature as it suggests that past literature does not acknowledge the possible daily changes in work and family demands which could lead to changes in priorities and ultimately generate variations in work-life balance experiences therefore indicating that these experiences are transient. An example of this is shown in the findings of this research in which women make the decision to prioritize their work over their family in situations where they have work deadlines. Also, it could be that there are family demands that require their attention therefore choosing to prioritize their family demands over work. It is most likely that this would not have been effectively examined through semi-structured interviews as individuals reflect on their past experiences but may not always remember important details however, this issue is addressed with the use of diaries as events are recorded in the present day. Importantly, the hybrid diaries showed that majority of the women academics who perceived that they have a healthy work-life balance during the interviews, realized during the diary entries that they did not always experience this feeling of control particularly on days when their demands conflicted with each other. This alerts us to unpack our understanding of how work-life balance can be perceived in relation to daily fluctuations.

Applying participatory visual drawings to the research supports Gauntlett's (2007) argument that the images act as metaphors for complex emotions, perceptions and identities. The drawings shown in the findings chapter were used to validate the data collected through the interviews and diaries in a few ways. Firstly, it asserts that the inter-role conflict experienced between the work and non-work domains is dynamic and further shows that work-life conflict affects career progression. For example, a Nigerian Academic with two children had a drawing (Figure 4.20) in which she showed where she is currently

in her career and where she feels she should be, as she presently experiences slow career progression. Similarly, upon reflection, a UK participant (Figure 4.19) perceived to be mentally stuck in a box with her demands that are overwhelming and then further shows what she desires outside the box which includes feeling happy and having an improved sleeping pattern. Hence, these findings add to the literature by incorporating a method that isn't commonly used in empirical studies on work-life balance and shows that it can reveal key findings that can only be presented through images. It gives the participants the opportunity to fully express themselves without any restrictions and further aids individuals in reflecting on their feelings. Upon reflection of the drawings made, majority of the participants perceived that they were not satisfied with their present work-life balance and began considering personal strategies to implement. While this data collection method isn't a quick fix to work-life conflict related issues, it makes it easier to identify specific challenges that require attention.

This sub-section has presented the contributions of this research to methodological approaches by incorporating the use of hybrid diaries and participatory visual drawings alongside semi-structured interviews to work-life balance research. The next sub-section presents empirical findings that contribute to the discourse on COVID-19 pandemic and homeworking.

6.3.2.4 COVID-19 Pandemic and Homeworking

This research presents findings related to COVID-19 and homeworking thereby contributing to the literature on the pandemic, which is a relatively new area of research that is significant in a post-pandemic world. The findings of this research showed that there were positive and negative experiences among women academics regarding their ability to successfully create

a boundary between their work and non-work domains. Although homeworking has been positively linked to work-life balance, the findings of this research suggest that homeworking is also linked to work-life conflict, therefore the findings support recent studies in literature (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020; Uddin, 2021) that have shown that the pandemic has increased the work-life issues for working women. Ironically, homeworking has been identified as a strategy to promote work-life balance (CIPD, 2021).

Majority of UK women academics in this research found it difficult to separate domains as they were addressing both work and home demands in the same setting. Furthermore, the shift from face-to-face teaching to virtual learning was identified as determinant of work-life conflict as these group of women found the transition particularly challenges and they also experienced an increase in workload. These findings are therefore relevant to work-life balance discourse on homeworking, as it indicates that positive or negative outcomes of homeworking can be influenced by external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This calls for us to re-evaluate our understanding of homeworking and its possible effects on one's work-life balance. Additionally, this research found that there were positive outcomes to homeworking for some of the participants such as reduced commute time to work, increased family and personal time. This research also draws out the significance of support from work and home for women academics as the findings show that the lack of support from work and home adversely affected their work-life balance experiences. For women who relied on support from family particularly in regard to childcare demands, experienced a high level of work-life conflict during the pandemic due to UK government COVID-19 restrictions that limited their ability to gain access to support from outside their household. Similarly in the work domain, the pandemic changed the ways in which support from

managers and colleagues were made available. The inability to regularly meet and speak with colleagues and line managers led to lack of motivation at work and increased mental health issues linked to the ability to cope during the pandemic. This indicates that support is perceived to be a key aspect of work-life balance for women academics. This finding aligns with Carlson and Perrewe's (1999) findings which showed that support is perceived to be a significant coping mechanism in reducing work-family conflict.

This sub-section has presented the significance of the findings to discourse on COVID-19 and homeworking. The next sub-section presents the contributions of this research to the debates on the effectiveness of the Advance HE's Athena SWAN's charter in the UK.

6.3.2.5 Athena SWAN Charter

This section presents this research's contributions to the literature on the evaluation of the Athena SWAN charter in the UK. The literature review reveals the dearth of key empirical findings related to the evaluation of the Athena SWAN charter's effectiveness in non-STEM departments. This is a significant contribution as it addresses this gap in the literature on the Athena SWAN charter. Although it was highlighted in the literature review that one reason for this gap is that the charter was only extended to non-STEM departments in 2015 to include arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law yet, it doesn't explain why there has been little to no research on non-STEM departments since the extension in 2015 which was over 5 years ago. Hence, this research presents extensive findings pertinent to literature on work-life balance and the Athena SWAN charter.

The findings of this research show that the charter has brought about positive changes, however, it also has its limitations. This research found that members of the Athena SWAN

team perceived that the primary motivation of institutions applying for the Athena SWAN award is linked to the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) funding. This finding is consistent with (Gregory-Smith, 2015; Ovseiko et al, 2017; Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019) who argued that institutions may not be genuine about their intentions to promote gender equality in academia and are more focused on NIHR funding. While this link to research funding could have critical implications on the effectiveness of the charter, it seems to be an acceptable strategy for encouraging UK Higher Education institutions to improve gender equality. This research also suggests that institutions want to be perceived as an attractive establishment for potential employees and students by showing that they have been awarded for their contributions to gender equality in academia. Therefore, this adds to the literature on the rationale for institutions applying for the Athena SWAN award. Furthermore, the findings show that despite the charter's goal towards gender equality and career progression of women in academia, the lack of knowledge regarding work-life balance policies amongst a significant number of women academics in the UK, raises questions about the effectiveness of the charter. The findings indicate that there is a significant distinction between the implementation and effectiveness of work-life balance policies.

The next section discusses the contribution of the research to practice, by highlighting the implications of the findings for HR and policy makers.

6.3.3 Contribution to Practice (Implications for HR and Policy Makers)

This section presents the contributions of this research to practice. It considers the implications of the findings for HR professionals and policy makers. It commences with the

discussion on the Athena SWAN charter and calls for key aspects of the charter to be adapted to Nigeria.

The implications for HR professionals and institutions who are linked to the implementation of policies are many. To begin, there was an apparent lack of practical framework in Nigeria that is focused on the career progression of women in academia, in comparison to the Athena SWAN charter in the UK. Although the Athena SWAN charter has its shortcomings which were identified in the literature review, it also has its benefits. It has brought about greater attention to the challenges faced by women in academia which need to be addressed and has further brought about institutions taking steps to make improvements to these women issues. Moreover, the charter has been reviewed and recent changes have been made to address its shortcomings particularly to its principles. Although there have been few policies and practices implemented by the universities in Nigeria, there is no effective framework to guide them and ensure that the policies implemented are aimed at tackling gender issues in academia. Therefore, the Athena SWAN charter could serve as a framework for Higher Education in Nigeria to adapt, as it would bring about positive changes to both the work lives and personal lives of Nigerian women academics.

For universities in the UK, it is necessary to review the policy documents aimed at improving work-life balance and career progression as the findings of this research evidently shows that several of the women academics are not aware of majority of the work-life balance policies provided by the institutions, and they also experience life to work conflict which could be detrimental to their career. Firstly, considerations around promotion structures should be given to women academics due to certain life situations such as maternity leave,

family and childcare demands which can impede their research time therefore adversely affecting their ability to qualify for promotion. This is critical for HR professionals and policy makers to consider as the findings of this research indicate that women academics struggle to publish papers for promotion, and in some cases, women choose to opt for a shorter duration of maternity leave due to work demands. Literature has extensively shown evidence of the impact of multiple demands such as family and personal life demands on the career progression of women (Doyle and Hind, 2002; Currie and Eveline, 2011).

Secondly, workshops that promote work-life balance discussions where academics can discuss their challenges and receive recommendations on how to achieve a better work-life balance should be made more available. It will also be useful to consider providing academics with their teaching schedule early, before the semester commences in order to provide those who have childcare responsibilities with the time to sort out their other commitments, as this could help reduce the level of work-life conflict they experience. Importantly, more awareness should be made regarding the available work-life balance policies at the institutions in order to ensure that these policies are effectively implemented and being used by academics. The findings of this research align with the literature (Njenga, 2010; Ehrens, 2016) that shows that many work-life balance policies have poor implementation.

This research has shown that the Athena SWAN charter has a key role to play in promoting gender equality in academia despite its shortcomings. The review of literature on its effectiveness has also reflected the recent changes to the charter in 2021 showing that it continues to make improvements to the implementation of the charter's objectives. Nonetheless, one concern remains, which is the long working hours and increased workloads

for women in academia involved in the Athena SWAN process in universities. This contradicts the overall aim of the charter and ironically increases their work-life conflict therefore, it is important to review the allocation of workload to those on the self-assessment team by ensuring that it doesn't negatively affect their work-life balance. Changes can be made by considering reducing their workload through the inclusion of more individuals on the team and promoting job share.

6.4 Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research which contributed empirical evidence to the role conflict theory showing that time-based conflict caused by the work domain had a stronger effect on their work-life balance in both countries, justifies the need for further research to be carried out on the impact of time-based conflict particularly in developing countries. The significant lack of empirical evidence in regard to developing countries shows that there has been slow progress made in work-life balance literature. Similarly, the findings of this research relating to the spillover theory shows that both work to life and life to work spillover are significant to the discussions on work-life balance however, there needs to be more attention given to life to work spillover, as the review of literature evidently shows that it is discussed less in comparison to work to life spillover. The extension of the role conflict theory and spillover theory in this research to include the life domain provided key findings related to other activities that are important to individuals therefore, this area requires further attention as there seems to be a greater focus on the work and family domains. The significance of this call to attention cannot be overlooked.

From a methodological standpoint, the use of diaries and visual drawings provided deeper insights into the work-life balance experiences of the participants however as highlighted in the limitations of the research, the diary study was collected over a short period of time and the drawings were undertaken in the absence of the researcher. Hence, further research using diaries over a longer period will help to measure the variations or fluctuations in their experiences which will most likely be more reliable than over a 5-day period. Although giving the participants the opportunity to do the drawings in their own personal time made them more comfortable than it possibly would have been to have the researcher present, nonetheless, giving the participants the opportunity to express the meanings behind their drawings using their audio recorded interpretations rather than written words, should be used in future research to reduce researcher's bias towards the interpretation of the data.

Another practical step for future research would be to include a larger number of part-time women academics in the study, as this was lacking in the present research. Similarly, it would be of benefit to work-life balance research to explore same-sex couples to compare their experiences relating to division of household responsibilities, with other couples. Furthermore, as this research is focused solely on women academics in the UK and Nigeria, it included ethnicities relating to Caucasian, Black British/African, and Asians. Although work-life balance studies are predominantly white, majority of studies still collect data on BAME however, they do not compare their experiences therefore, it is key to not only collect data from this sample but also to compare their experiences and consider the impact of culture on their work-life balance experiences. Lastly, it would be useful to carry out a focus group, to collect data on useful recommendations that women academics think the institutions can implement to improve their work-life balance and promote gender equality.

6.5 Limitations of the Research

As explained in the methodology chapter, the results from the pilot study informed the main data collection process by ensuring that some changes were made to how, when the data was collected and what questions were asked. These changes which brought about some limitations will be discussed in this section, alongside other limitations in the research.

One significant limitation in this research is related to the duration of the diary entries. Initially, the data collection process was to commence with the diary studies and participatory visual drawings and then followed up with the interviews. However, the results from the pilot study showed that this wasn't a feasible approach because the participants in the pilot study seemed to lack interest in engaging in the interviews. Hence, the diary studies and participatory visual drawings were filled together after the interviews, with the diaries filled over a 5-day period to prevent a decline in the participant's interest. While this approach was more effective in retaining the interest of the participants, filling in the diary entries within a short amount of time could hinder the possibility of further collecting pertinent data relating to the daily fluctuations in their work-life balance experiences. This is because each day and week poses new experiences therefore, there was no opportunity to collect data relating to the following week which could have provided new and rich insights.

Another limitation of this research is linked to the data on the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection process commenced pre-covid in 2019 therefore the pandemic was an unforeseen event which took place from early 2020 to present. At the time of the pandemic, data collected on Nigerian academics has been completed and the researcher was unable to travel back to Nigeria to collect further data on the pandemic, due to the travel restrictions.

Therefore, data relating to the pandemic was only collected in the UK on a small sample, as data collection was still ongoing on this group of academics. Nonetheless, the data collected on the pandemic was still pertinent to this research as it examined the experiences of women academics working from home and it also showed their struggles with childcare, lack of support and the blurring of boundaries. It further added to the literature relating to the pandemic, which is still relatively new therefore, it remains an under-researched area.

A few concerns relating to the sample also pose a limitation. Firstly, the inclusion of participants in the STEM departments in Nigeria. Although, the data collected relating to this group provided rich data significant to the research, the initial plan was to collect data in both countries specifically relating to women academics in the Business School however, this was impossible to achieve in Nigeria. This is due to the low number of women academics in business departments in comparison to those in the UK therefore, if data was collected solely from those in business, then there would have been a significantly low number of sample size from Nigeria. Hence, data was collected from STEM departments to prevent this. Secondly, the sample included participants who were married, single, with or without children either in full-time or part-time employment. However, there was a low number of part-time academics included in the study which was beyond the researcher's control. It was surprising to find out that in both countries, there is a low number of part-time academics. This calls for future research to explore this further and research into the underlying reason for this.

Thirdly, in relation to the data collected on those who are married or have partners, there was no data collected on those in same-sex relationships or marriages. Once again, this was

out of the researcher's control as this group of people weren't excluded from the study, however all the participants approached, who agreed to take part in the study were not in this group. Particularly in Nigeria, this would have been impossible because legally, it is against the law to be in same-sex marriages or relationships. Lastly, regarding the geographical location of the research in both countries, data was only collected from Lagos state in Nigeria and Manchester in the UK. There were a few important reasons for this. To begin, the time constraint limited the scope of the study as the research only had about 6-8 months to collect data in both countries, half of which was spent in each country. Additionally, the financial constraint also restricted the researcher from collecting data in other regions, as this research was self-funded.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has concluded the research investigation. The aim of this research was to explore the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria, and to examine the effectiveness of the Athena SWAN charter in promoting gender equality. The findings have provided justification for the significance of exploring the work-life balance experiences of these group of women. The findings have also provided a rationale for the role that culture plays in influencing work-life balance experiences across different national contexts. Culture is pertinent to the discussions on work-life balance as this research has shown that the patriarchal system in one's personal life can be detrimental to achieving work-life balance while also being present in the workplace. Religion has also shown to have both negative and positive impacts, as it can either be a coping strategy or be an impediment to work-life balance.

There are significant implications for future research and policy makers as this research has firstly shown that UK Higher Education institutions need to review their current work-life balance policies and practices to ensure that it is effective in addressing what it has set out to do, which is promoting work-life balance and improving gender equality in the workplace. For the Nigerian Higher Education institutions, recommendations have been made regarding adapting the Athena SWAN charter's strategies towards gender equality. This is key, as there is no practical framework in Nigeria that is focused on the progression of women in academia. The implications for future research call to attention, the need for work-life balance literature to give greater focus to developing countries which is evidently lacking. It further justifies the need to go beyond the use of interviews in exploring work-life balance experiences by incorporating the use of diaries and participatory visual methods that can be used to elicit responses regarding daily fluctuations in work-life balance experiences and to gain insight into complex emotions and perceptions that can only be explained through images. It is possible to address the work-life balance issues of women academics and to truly make progress towards gender equality in Higher Education however, it is important to consider the recommendations provided for future research and policy makers.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval

University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

**Research, Innovation and Academic
Engagement Ethical Approval Panel**

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8 May 2019

Evelyn Oginni

Dear Evelyn,

**RE: ETHICS APPLICATION SBSR1819-23: Worklife Balance and Female Academics; A
Comparative Study on Selected Universities in Nigeria and UK.**

Based on the information that you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your
application SBSR1819-23 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon
as possible by contacting SBS-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David F. Percy
Chair of the Staff and Postgraduate Research Ethics Panel
Salford Business School

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Women Academics

Thank you for taking out the time to speak with me today. My name is Evelyn Oginni and I am a PhD student at Salford Business School. I am carrying out a comparative study on the work-life balance of HE women academics in the UK and in Nigeria. The purpose of this interview is to gather rich and relevant information on the work-life balance experiences of women academics in the UK and Nigeria. The questions set out for this interview are aimed to address the research questions of the study by ensuring that the data collected provide key information relevant to each of the research question below with the aim of making contributions to theory, practice and knowledge.

RQ1. To what extent does working time and workload impact the ability of women academics in the UK and Nigeria to effectively manage their work-life balance?

RQ2. How do women academics in the UK and Nigeria perceive family and organizational support, and to what extent do these forms of support influence their work-life balance experiences?

RQ3. What role does work-life conflict play in influencing the career progression of women academics in the UK and Nigeria?

RQ4. What are the policies and strategies adopted by universities in the UK and Nigeria to improve the work-life balance experiences of women academics?

Before I ask you some more specific questions, I would like to know if you have ever heard the term, work-life balance and what you understand about it. Have you ever achieved work-life balance?

QUESTIONS:

BACKGROUND

- Can you tell me about yourself? Age bracket, family situation, mini career overview

- Why did you decide to go into the educational sector, how long have you been in this sector?

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Can you tell me about your job title? What are the key aspects of your job? How long have you worked in this position?

- What was your job role when you had children?

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- How would you describe a typical day for you?

- How would you describe your ability to balance your paid work and your family/personal life?

- As someone who has a partner, how is the domestic work assigned between you and your partner? And what is your partner's perception/stand of how the domestic work is divided between the both of you?

- Do you do any work at home or outside office hours? If yes, how often do you work outside office hours?

- For single mothers, what is your ability to carry out domestic work? Do you have any support?

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

- Are there any HR policies that support work-life balance, that you are aware of? For example, flexible working. If there is, do you take advantage of them? If not, why?

- Can you tell me about how you request for flexible working arrangement? formal or informal?

- Has utilizing flexible working options had any impact on your career advancement? Why?

- Does your manager provide any form of support in managing your flexible working needs?

- How does the institution raise awareness about the flexible working policies available?

RETURNING MOTHERS

- Is there any form of support available for mothers who are returning to work?

- Are you currently satisfied with the available support for returning mothers? Why?

- What form of support would you like the institution to provide for returning mothers, which hasn't yet been put in place? For instance, In the UK where I study, there is a

legal right to paternity leave and shared parental leave. Would you like to see that in this institution if it isn't presently implemented?

BACKLASH

- Do you have supportive colleagues?

- How do your colleagues react to the changes you make to your flexibility? Does the change affect their job tasks, if yes, how?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for HR Officials and Athena SWAN self-assessment team members

Interviewer gives details about the research and gives participants the opportunity to ask any questions before the interview commences

Questions:

ATHENA SWAN AWARD

- When did the school apply for the Athena SWAN bronze award? Were there any feedback or adjustments to be made after the initial submission?

- I would like to know what the motivation was behind the school applying for the bronze award.

- Now that the school has achieved the bronze award, is there any intention of achieving the silver or gold award? If yes, what steps have been taken to achieve this?

SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM

- What is the ratio of men to women on the SAT? Is there a balance?

- Can you give me an overview of what goes on in the SAT meeting and what your responsibilities are? How often do these meetings hold? Do these meetings happen during work hours? And how early or late during the day?

- As a member of the SAT team, do the demands of the team increase your workload? If yes, How? And does it in any way impact your work-life balance?

ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- My research is focused on work-life balance in relation to workload and working hours. What aspect of the Athena SWAN principle focuses on these areas and how has the Business school looked at these areas in relation to the action plans?

- What policies are put in place to encourage gender equality in the workplace?

- What flexible working policies has the University provided? Are these policies easily accessible by staff and is awareness about these policies being made?

- Did you know that the charter was only extended in 2015 to include AHSSBL? What's your perspective on why it was only extended in 2015?

- There are publications on the effectiveness of the charter in STEM, however there aren't any in non-STEM departments apart from one published in Arts and Humanities. Can you tell me how the charter has been effective in business school?

- What form of data and how often is collected on staff; on gender disparity in the various departments, the number of women in senior positions, the number of women with a PhD and the number of women who have publications. Also, are there data collected on progression, awareness and use of flexible working policies? And what form of evaluation is carried out after this data is collected?

- What is the return rate and what form of support is provided to women returnees after maternity leave? Are there any form of research grants or training available to them?

- Are grants, training, mentoring schemes and events to encourage career development provided to academics, most especially those in their early career?

- Do you think that the Athena SWAN charter is effective for improving the lives of women academics? And why?

HR MANAGERS

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY

- I'd like to know from this institution's perspective what work-life balance means?

- How do you, as an HR manager, personally view the concept of work-life balance? What do you do as an HR manager, to promote flexibility in the workplace?

- Are there any flexible working options available in the workplace? If yes, what are they? If not, why?

GENDER EQUALITY

- Do you think the institution is focused on promoting gender equality?

- Are there any data collected on gender disparity in various departments and schools? Women in senior academic positions?

- Are there any data collected on gender pay gap at the institution?

RETURNESS, CAREER BREAKS

- Can you tell me about the maternity leave policy in the workplace? What is the duration and the pay?

- What support is available to women returnees after maternity leave? In relation to training, support and mentoring schemes.

- Is paternity leave or shared parental leave available at the institution?

Final Question: What steps does the institution aim to take in regards to promoting work-life balance and encouraging gender equality in the workplace?

Appendix 4: Diary Study

WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIARY STUDY

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The purpose of this study is to gain insights into the daily experiences of women academics on their work-life balance. This diary will create an opportunity to log your personal experiences over 5 working days. Please note that you are not obligated to fill in the diary entry. If you are happy to complete the diary you can decide which 5 working days to fill it in, but it may be interesting for you if you choose consecutive workdays e.g., Monday to Friday in one single week, so you can use the diary as a tool to evaluate your own work life balance. You are in control of the entries and should only disclose what you are comfortable with. Any information disclosed in the study will be strictly confidential. If you have any queries at any time during the completion of the diary, please feel free to contact me via the contact details below.

Email: E.A.Oginni@edu.salford.ac.uk

 Thank you once again for deciding to participate in the study.

Participant Diary

ENTRY DAY

Day of the week …………………………...

How many hours did you spend on work activities today? …………………..

Did you feel like you were able to manage your work and your family/personal life? Yes

No

Was there a point in time today when you had to make a decision between your work and family/personal responsibilities? Yes   No

If yes, what was the decision you had to make, why did you decide to choose between your work and your family/personal life and how did you feel after making the decision?

……

……

……

How did you feel today?

☺   ☹   Other ………………..

Why do you feel that way?

………

……………………………………………………

Comments (At the end of the week period)

Overall, how would you say your work-life balance was over the last two weeks? Were you satisfied with it or did you have difficulties? And what would you hope to change in order to have a better work life balance?

Please give details

………

………

………

………

Appendix 5: Participatory Visual Drawing

MY WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN A DRAWING

By ....

Short Description of the Image

How did the drawing make you feel?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………

Appendix 6: Participant Description

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Country	Description
1	Lilian	UK	Lilian is a senior research associate, who has a husband and no children. She works from home 2 days a week and takes her annual leave regularly, however, still experiences difficulties in creating boundaries between her work and her non-work domains. Despite the struggle to create boundaries, Lilian believes that she presently has a good work-life balance in comparison to a few months ago, by reducing the number of hours she spent on work activities during unsocial hours.
2	Kate	UK	Kate is a full-time lecturer, who was previously an hourly paid academic for 9 years. She has a partner who she has been with for 27 years and they had no children. Kate explains that she currently doesn't have a healthy work-life balance because she recently became a full-time permanent lecturer and therefore, she is conscious about meeting up with deadlines in order to ensure that she stays as a permanent lecturer.
3	Chelsy	UK	Chelsy is an early-career researcher, who has only been in the full-time research role for a year due to a career change. She has a partner and 2 boys who are aged 23 and 19 years old. She made a career compromise by working in her previous role for 20 years, in order to have the time for her family, therefore, choosing to work part-time and not applying for certain jobs due to the distance from home. Chelsy believes that her present role as a researcher is very demanding but quite flexible, because she can undertake her research from home.
4	Amanda	UK	Amanda is a lecturer who had previously worked as a teaching assistant for 5 years and then, a researcher for 6 years. She has a partner and has no children. Amanda believes that she is currently prioritizing her work over her personal life, and this has adversely affected her mental health. This is due to the pressure from work which increased during the Covid-19 pandemic and has since been working on weekdays and half days every weekend.
5	Tracy	UK	Tracy, who was previously a solicitor, became a lecturer after making the decision for a career change, after a divorce. She has 2 sons aged 8 and 12 years old, and she currently has a partner. She believes that her work-life

			balance was unhealthy when she was a single parent in comparison to having a partner now who is supportive.
6	Amy	UK	Amy is a senior lecturer, who is single and has no children. She has childcare responsibilities when she looks after her niece on Wednesday and Fridays. Amy explains that there is constantly a spillover of work into her personal life due to the multiple projects she is currently working on, therefore inevitably working after office hours.
7	Eleana	UK	Eleana was previously an hourly paid academic for 2 years before becoming a full-time permanent lecturer at the University for just over a year. She is not married and has no children but admits that she struggles to manage her work-life balance on some days, particularly on Tuesdays when she teaches from 9am – 5:30pm without any breaks. Eleana has been unable to take her annual leave since she came into full-time employment due to the pressure from work during COVID-19.
8	Elisha	UK	Elisha is an associate lecturer, who is married and has 2 sons with the youngest being 14 years old. She mentions that she had her children before her Master's degree and PhD however, it has been a challenging career journey because she has always prioritized her children over her career.
9	Caroline	UK	Caroline is a lecturer and a director, who is married and has one child who is 8 years old. She narrates that a typical working day for her begins by waking up at 5:30am and not returning back home until 8pm on days when she works till 6pm. She often works during evenings and weekends, which conflicts with her personal time that should be spent with her daughter.
10	Toni	UK	Toni is a lecturer and part of the self-assessment team of the Athena SWAN charter at the Salford Business School. She is married with 3 children and has taken 3 maternity leaves in her role. She started working at the university full-time before deciding to work part-time in order to have time for her PhD programme as well as her children. She admits that working part-time feels like when she was working full-time because there is no reduction in workload.

11	Lynn	UK	Lynn is a lecturer, programme leader and module leader. She has a partner and no children however, she has ageing parents whose health has declined over the past 5 years. This has led to frequent travels to her home country to visit her parents. Lynn describes her working day by stating that she gets to work as early as 5:30-6pm due to her heavy workload and points out that she experiences fluctuations in her work-life balance, which is highly dependent on the semester, with semester one being hectic.
12	Christine	UK	Christine is a lecturer and programme leader for two programmes, she is married and has no children. She believes that having no relatives living close by has been detrimental to having a good work-life balance. She constantly struggles to create boundaries and is concerned about how she will be able to manage her work-life balance if she has children. Christine explains that even when she takes annual leave, she continues to do administrative work and respond to emails.
13	Jade	UK	Jade went into academia in her mid-30's after transitioning from being a marketing director to teaching because she felt the latter was more rewarding. She is married and has two children. Her typical working day involves teaching, meetings for accreditation, apprentiships and college improvement plans.
14	Sadie	UK	Sadie is married and has 4 children. She explains that her multiple roles sometimes means that she doesn't have a work-life balance, however she is occasionally able to effectively manage it.
15	Bisi	Nigeria	Bisi is an associate professor and a dean, who is married with children over 18 years of age. She explains that she presently has an unhealthy work-life balance due to the pressure to publish papers for promotion. Bisi describes her working day, explaining that she gets to work at 9am to attend non-academic activities before lecturing from 10am and continues to carry out research and write papers at home until 1am.
16	Ronke	Nigeria	Ronke is a lecturer who is married and has a son. She lives within the University environment thereby shortening her commute to work. She states that she occasionally experiences conflicts during the examination period when she has to mark examination papers.

17	Tinuke	Nigeria	Tinuke is a lecturer and researcher, married with children. She believes that it is impossible to have a work-life balance but ensures that she dedicates 40% of her time to work and 60% to her family and personal life. She explains that prioritizing her children over her career has slowed down her career particularly having to do her PhD part-time, which was further extended for a few more years.
18	Fisayo	Nigeria	Fisayo is a lecturer, married with children. She began her career at the university as a demonstrator during her master's programme before getting promoted to associate lecturer, and now lecturer. She explains that she went into academia in order to have time for her family and having a supportive partner has played a significant role in having a healthy work-life balance.
19	Ada	Nigeria	Ada is a lecturer and has an administrative role, she is married with children. She doesn't work outside office hours as she explains that there has been a reduction in her workload, as she is at the peak of her career. Although, she explains that she gets to the university at 8am to ensure that she has enough time to attend to all work demands before closing from work.
20	Amaka	Nigeria	Amaka is a lecturer who is married and has 3 sons, however her husband is an expatriate who is presently outside the country. She explains that having children has slowed down her career, which has led to her decision to not have any more children. She describes her work day by stating that she gets to work before 8am and doesn't leave work until 6-7pm.
21	Nkechi	Nigeria	Nkechi is a lecturer and researcher who is married with children. She makes a conscious effort to avoid working during unsocial hours in order to spend time with her family. She believes that having a supportive partner has helped her to manage her work-life balance effectively.
22	Toun	Nigeria	Toun is a lecturer, who has been at the university for 18 years. She is married and has children. Toun explains that having a husband who is an academic has been a positive experience for her because he understands her struggles with her work-life balance. She believes that having a healthy work-life balance means that family should always be a priority.
23	Tola	Nigeria	Tola is a professor who has been at the university for 29 years. She is married and has one child, who is over 21 years old. Tola explains that having a child has slowed

			down her career by occasionally foregoing publishing papers for research due to prioritizing her child before work. However, she believes she made the right decision.
24	Ola	Nigeria	Ola is an academic who is married with children. She is currently doing her PhD programme part-time and she spends her weekends working on her research. She explains that she has experienced difficulties in trying to have a work-life balance, however, the support received from her husband has made it easier.
25	Tope	Nigeria	Tope is a senior lecturer, married with children with the youngest being 21 years old. She reflects on her experience as an academic with young children, stating that having young children negatively impacted her career by not being able to do research or attend conferences however, she presently has a good work-life balance due to a decline in childcare responsibilities.
26	Dara	Nigeria	Dara is a lecturer and has been at the university for 27 years. She is a widow and has children who are above the age of 21. She explains that she leaves home as early as 6:45am because she has a long commute to work. Dara explains that she constantly experiences difficulties in managing her work-life balance which intensifies during the examination period as she regularly marks examination papers during unsocial hours.
27	Chi	Nigeria	Chi is a lecturer, who is also a course adviser. She has been at the university for 10 years and she explains that having multiple roles has been detrimental to her work-life balance. Chi states that making sacrifices for her children, such as not attending conferences during her children's term time has influenced her slow career progression
28	Lola	Nigeria	Lola is a lecturer, who is single and has no children. She takes care of her ageing parents and siblings who live with her. She believes that it has been difficult to achieve her career goals due to her family demands.
29	Tosin	Nigeria	Tosin is a senior lecturer and director, who previously worked at a research institute for 30 years. She is 60 years of age and is married with children who are over 21 years old. Tosin teaches a module with 650 students by herself, another module with 102 students and an MBA with 15 students. She is also a pastor who goes to church mid-week and on Sundays. She explains that she experiences conflict due to the heavy workload both at work and at home.

30	Yemisi	Nigeria	Yemisi is a lecturer, who is married with children. She has been at the university for 12 years and teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate students. She explains that she doesn't have a healthy work-life balance as she struggles to create a boundary between her work and non-work domains because she constantly works during unsocial hours and occasionally closes from work at 9pm.
31	Tamara	UK	Tamara is a senior lecturer who took on a role on the Athena SWAN Charter team at the Business School in 2018. Her role involves trying to encourage both race equality and gender equality at the University. She explains that she as well as the committee are taking steps to implement the action plan, although it has been difficult during the pandemic
32	Sara	UK	Sara specializes in the Inclusion and Diversity department at the University. She also works on the institutional applications for the Athena SWAN Charter award and takes steps in monitoring the implementation of the action plans.
33	Dupe	Nigeria	Dupe is the HR Manager of the private university in Nigeria which is Christian based. She speaks on the issues concerning flexibility and paid maternity leave for those who are married. She explains that the university is presently interested in ways in which they can promote a better work-life balance.
34	Ope	Nigeria	Ope is the head of HR at the public university in Nigeria. She talks about flexible working options, gender balance and maternity leave at the university. She has been at the university for 13 years and mentions that there has been a decline in the hiring rate of female academics

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