

Balancing Acts: Navigating School, Work, and Life among Female Pre-Service Teachers in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Balancing school, work, and personal life presents significant challenges for emerging young adult female students in pre-service teacher education programs. This qualitative study examined their lived experiences via a phenomenological approach. Five participants were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected through semi-structured online interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Key challenges included time conflicts, role strain, and emotional stress. Despite prioritizing academics and personal well-being, participants demonstrated resilience, supported by family, faculty, and peers. They employed self-regulation and adaptability to cope. The study recommends flexible academic policies, responsive school programs, enhanced financial aid, on-campus jobs, faculty training, and industry collaboration to reduce burdens and improve academic success for working students.

Keywords: School, work, and life balance; female; mental health; pre-service teachers

INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of students are balancing work and studies due to socioeconomic challenges and rising education costs, requiring them to manage both academic and personal responsibilities. School, work, and life balance (SWLB) refers to the balance among different forms of student involvement in school, work, and personal life (O'Mahony & Jeske, 2019; Ong & Ramia, 2009). School, work, and life roles are often suggested in the lives of emerging adults. According to Arnett et al. (2014), this is the stage at which women plan their careers to avoid future role conflict, similar to how men approach their professions. In education, a field largely dominated by women, Kang et al. (2019) stated that teaching is among the professions with the least consistent or most disrupted work–life balance. Pre-service teachers consider work–life balance a factor that may hinder their well-being (Squires et al., 2022). Women experience school-work-life balance differently than men do, with a gender gap in how they perceive balancing these roles. For instance, women tend to have lower perceived balance than males do (Vokić et al., 2021). Researchers of SWLB have been interested in whether there is a gender difference in engagement in multiple roles (Mordi et al., 2023). Women also experience more unfavorable work experiences that contribute to mental health concerns (Fiorilli et al., 2022). Thus, balancing school, work, and life remains a complex challenge, particularly for women, who often face greater perceived imbalance and increased mental health concerns. Further research, particularly in Southeast Asia and among undergraduate students, is needed to better understand the impact of SWLB and the gender differences in managing these roles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Owing to economic crises that are acutely felt in low and middle-income countries, working while studying is common among young adults in universities (Canto et al., 2023). SWLB, a concept rooted in the construct of work–life balance (WLB), is complex and yields various definitions. Nonetheless, the term has been explained in various ways, including the notion that effort, time, and commitment should be evenly distributed between 'work and nonwork roles' (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Studies on school, work, and life balance among undergraduate students are limited (Hatcher & Hwang, 2020). Most studies have been conducted among adults (Yang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2024; Cinamon, 2016) and college students in Western countries (Sprung & Rogers, 2020). Studies have been conducted in the Philippines but have focused only on the experiences of working students in the college setting (Canto et al., 2023; Lanuza et al., 2024) and the work–life

balance of student single mothers (Mordi et al., 2023; Sudweste & Jumamil, 2024). In the Philippines, student workers face financial constraints, time management challenges, scheduling conflicts, health problems, and limited personal time, which affect their social lives (Maquiling, 2018).

In engaging with the demands of multiple roles, an individual may encounter conflicts that hinder effective performance. Interrole conflict occurs when the demands of different roles diminish personal resources such as time or energy. Numerous studies have confirmed that resources influence ideal interrole interactions (i.e., less conflict and more facilitation) or deficient interrole interactions (i.e., more conflict and less facilitation). The antecedents of interrole conflict in the school, work, and life domains include but are not limited to time constraints, job demands, workload, and time pressure (Boamah et al., 2022), with school social support linked to better school–work facilitation. Vokić et al. (2021) reported that students working 10-19 hours experienced lower SWLB and SLB than those working less than 10 hours. Moreover, core self-evaluation, which refers to one’s assessment of one’s worthiness (self-esteem), ability (self-efficacy), and locus of control (McNall & Michel, 2010; Choo et al., 2019), is linked to SWLB outcomes. The study by McNall and Michel (2016) examined the relationship between students’ core self-evaluations and SWLB, whereas Olson (2014) highlighted emotional stability as a factor in SWLB. These studies show that individuals who feel emotionally stable, efficacious, and in control tend to find supportive environments that help them balance their multiple roles. On the other hand, balancing full-time education with part-time work can have negative consequences for mental health (Abenoja, 2019). Mental health, defined as a state of psychological well-being that enables individuals to manage life challenges, realize their potential, and participate effectively in learning, work, and social interactions (WHO, 2022), is critical to students' ability to address conflicting issues. Thus, the added demands of juggling academic responsibilities and employment may compromise individuals’ well-being. Work experience before undergraduate program completion can influence students’ employability (Cacho et al., 2022).

While additional income and experience can be beneficial, the combined pressures of work and school, along with high stress, can negatively affect students (Canto et al., 2023). Balancing work and academic requirements reduces the ability of working students to effectively manage both time and energy, which makes it harder to meet the demands of both roles (Benner & Curl, 2018). However, research suggests that maintaining a balance between work and nonwork dimensions leads to greater life satisfaction and reduced psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depression (Allen et al., 2000; Ford & Collinson, 2011; Haar et al., 2014; Sirgy & Lee, 2017). Moreover, students who experience emotional

exhaustion (Lingard, 2007, Vokić et al., 2021), poor psychological health, high school burnout (Creed et al., 2015; Laughman et al., 2016; McNall & Michel, 2016), anxiety, and depressive thoughts due to the inability to balance responsibilities (Sprung & Rogers, 2020) are also subject to work-school conflict. The number of working hours and financial support that contribute to work and study conflict lead to increased feelings of depression (Cinamon, 2016).

Pre-service teachers in the Philippines face mental health challenges similar to those in other Southeast Asian countries, where access to mental health services is limited and often constrained by a lack of resources. Maddock et al. (2021) reported that while some psychological and social interventions, particularly those led by nonprofessionals, show promise, the evidence remains inconclusive. Therefore, culturally relevant approaches are urgently needed in the region. In the absence of accessible support, many students turn to personal and social strategies to cope. Among Filipino graduate students balancing work and studies, common coping methods include spending time with family, engaging in religious activities, and participating in leisure activities. This aligns with other studies emphasizing the importance of social support for student well-being (Cada, 2021).

Young people aged 18-25 (Arnett, 2000, 2011) are in the phase of emerging adulthood. Many face challenges in work or college studies, and some often choose to juggle both. The decision to work, attend college, or combine the two remains a difficult choice for many in this age group (Demoura, 2021). Moreover, several studies have examined WLB through a gendered lens, particularly focusing on the challenges women face in achieving balance across various contexts (Burnett et al., 2010; James, 2014). A range of studies have highlighted that women experience greater work-related stress and lack adequate support. These challenges amplify stressors, increasing the likelihood of burnout (Foley et al., 2020; Buonomo et al., 2020; Schaufeli et al., 2020).

The academic profession is known to be highly demanding and pressure-filled. Educators are especially susceptible to stress and tension during the early stages of their careers (Harmsen et al., 2018). Pre-service teachers inevitably experience academic and internship stressors during their undergraduate training. Zito et al. (2024) reported that many of these education students felt unprepared and overwhelmed by the physical and emotional demands of the teaching profession. Pre-service teachers face issues related to work-life balance (Squires et al., 2022). In fact, one of the key factors affecting pre-service teachers' well-being is how they balance work and life (Mairitsch et al., 2021). The challenges that pre-service teachers face in balancing academic, professional, and personal responsibilities are not isolated; they reflect broader trends within the teaching profession,

particularly in Southeast Asian countries. In Singapore, teaching is one of the four occupations with the highest turnover rates in the country (Poh, 2018). A key factor is the heavy administrative workload, which negatively impacts teachers' work–life balance (Yang, 2016), often leading to their resignation. Furthermore, a previous study found that when work interferes with personal time, it reduces job satisfaction and increases the likelihood that employees consider quitting (Cho et al., 2023). On the other hand, studies conducted in the Philippines that focused on the level of work–life balance of adult teachers yielded varying results. They reported that educators in basic education experience an average balance (Rufin & Buniel, 2022) whereas those in the higher education sector experience an imbalance in work–life dynamics. Moreover, maintaining a healthy balance between personal and professional life remains a persistent challenge for most teachers (Javier & Rosal, 2021).

Overall, the literature underscores the need to examine the work-life balance of emerging young adult pre-service female teachers, given the unique challenges they face in managing multiple roles. There is also a need to address the literature gap regarding school work and life balance experiences among this group. Henceforth, this study aims to fill this gap and provide insights that can support this vulnerable group. Thus, this study sought to explore and describe the significant experiences with school, work, and life within an undergraduate pre-service teacher education program. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the participants' experiences with school, work, and life balance, and how can these experiences be described?
2. How do participants describe their mental health while balancing school, work, and other aspects of their lives?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilized a phenomenology research design. Phenomenology is the study of human experience. It also involves how individuals formulate personal and collective experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Delmas & Giles, 2023). In particular, the researchers used hermeneutic phenomenology, which examines both the experience itself and the interpreted meanings attached to it (Shosha, 2012; Friesen et al., 2012). The research design is a suitable approach for exploring and capturing the major aspects of the experiences of emerging young adult female students regarding school work and life balance.

Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022) noted that phenomenological research may include sample sizes ranging from 120, depending on time constraints. In this study, five (5) female students were selected via purposive criterion sampling. The method is appropriate for the study since there are

specific criteria that the study requires for its respondents (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The research was conducted at a public university, and Google Meet was used for online interviews. A semistructured interview with open-ended questions was used to gather data for the study. This was based on the research literature and the study's two main questions: (1) *"How may the school-work-life balance of the participants be described?"*; (2) *"How may the school-work-life balance of the participants affect their mental health?"* To ensure content validity, the instrument underwent expert validation. A certified qualitative researcher with expertise in education research checked the interview guide and evaluated each item, classifying it as Essential, Useful but Not Essential, Not Necessary, and Comments and Suggestions. The expert used a checklist to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's goals and provided feedback that helped improve the instrument. Based on the expert's feedback, some questions were reworded for clarity and similar items were removed or consolidated. Sample questions included "How do you describe school-work-life balance?", "How do you balance the time in work, school, and personal life?", and "How does managing the demands at work, school, and personal life affect your mental health?"

The data collection process for the research involved several steps. First, permission and clearance to conduct the study were requested from the university authorities and the institutional research review unit. Following approval, a brief survey was distributed to students engaged in part-time work while studying to identify eligible participants. Students who met the inclusion criteria were invited to an online orientation via Google Meet, where the study's objectives and ethical considerations were explained and informed consent was obtained. One-on-one interviews, which were audio-recorded (with consent), were conducted virtually through Google Meet, each lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. The data were transcribed verbatim and anonymized.

The qualitative data gathered were analyzed via Colaizzi's (1978) approach to thoroughly examine the lived experiences of the participants. There are seven (7) steps involved in this method (Sanders, 2003; Shosha, 2012). First, the transcript is read comprehensively and thoroughly. This includes rereading the responses of the participants to gain a better understanding of their experiences. The second step involves extracting significant statements related to the phenomenon being studied. A separate sheet is provided that indicates the corresponding pages and line numbers of the participants' responses. Next, meanings were formulated from the extracted statements. These formulated meanings were then organized into clusters of themes describing the phenomenon.

The descriptions are then condensed into a fundamental structure. The last step includes the validation of findings from the participants to ensure alignment of the participants' intended response with the researchers' formulated interpretation.

Participants

This research focused on young adult females aged 20 to 24 years who were enrolled in a teacher education institution and working part-time. Pre-service teachers were purposively selected since they are susceptible to the challenges of maintaining work-life balance due to the strenuous demands of the teacher preparation program, coupled with part-time employment and personal obligations. Understanding how student teachers manage these challenges during their training years provides useful insight into the preparedness and well-being of future educators. The working hours of the participants were more than 10 hours, which helped provide valuable insights into their experiences of balancing employment and academic responsibilities. Vokić et al. (2021) reported that students working more than 10 hours part-time often struggle to manage their school, work, and personal commitments.

RESULTS

This section presents the study's findings, highlighting key results in response to the research questions. It explores the experiences of young adult women in an undergraduate pre-service teacher education program, focusing on their school life, work outside school, and mental health as they balance multiple roles. The findings are outlined in three (3) themes, as follows: (1) School-Work-Life Balance and Time Management, (2) Social Support and Its Role in Balancing Responsibilities, and (3) Psychological and Emotional Aspects of Balancing Responsibilities, which are further substantiated into 10 subthemes.

1. School-Work-Life Balance and Time Management

1.1 Simultaneous Balance and Time Management

Pre-service teachers' understanding of school, work, and life balance is reflected in their awareness of the various roles and responsibilities they must fulfill. Their narratives highlight the importance of effectively managing these demands to maintain equilibrium. One participant (Ms. C) expressed that *“school-work-life balance is a capability of every student to manage their time and different aspects in life, especially regarding school, and then work,*

and how they manage to balance their life.” Balancing demands simultaneously sometimes involves difficulty. This is Ms. S's view: *"School-work balance is difficult. It's hard because I have to juggle everything at the same time."* In contrast, if there is balance, then a person can say that there is no cause for concern because one can manage their obligations in different aspects of their lives.

1.2. Prioritized Time for School and Work, Overlooked Personal Time

This theme is evident in the participants' responses. According to Ms. A, *"Sometimes, I have to work overtime... I end up sacrificing my sleep and can't do other things like personal tasks."* These individuals view school and work as more of a priority than their personal needs. Education students can experience an imbalance between academic and work demands, with the latter consuming a significant portion of their time. *"It takes up more time than my studies; there are times when I feel like giving up or encountering problems with my academics,"* Ms. A stated, leading to academic struggles and emotional fatigue. Ms. C added, *"When multiple orders come in, I stay up late, 12 a.m. is already early for me."* These responses from the participants suggest that personal needs, such as sleep and personal well-being, are sometimes overlooked while trying to maintain their roles in their life domains.

1.3. Time Conflict Due to Work Affects School Demands

Since time is a limited resource, pre-service teachers often find that prioritizing one area, such as work, reduces the time available for other aspects of their lives. This imbalance can create challenges in fulfilling responsibilities across different dimensions. This is reflected in the students' statements. Ms. J stated, *"Because of work, I miss some activities and deadlines... I have to rush everything on Saturday and Sunday."* The scheduling conflict limits their ability to manage the time of their tasks effectively. Ms. AC stated, *"I spend more time at work, which leaves my body and mind exhausted...my schoolwork is affected... my grades and academic performance seem to decline."* As a result of interference in time while meeting multiple demands, students experience fatigue, which adversely affects their task completion and performance in school.

1.4. Conflict between School, Work, and Life Demands

Teacher trainees often face overwhelming demands that create conflicts between their roles in school, work, and personal life. Ms. AC stated, *"After school, I go straight to work, by the time I get home, I just sleep. Because of that, I'm unable to complete some of my academic requirements. Tasks pile up, and I end up cramming."* With multiple demands from different

roles, pre-service teachers face difficulty in effectively managing their academic, work and life domains. Although the participants did not always explicitly mention pre-service teaching duties, being in a teacher education program clearly impacts their academic experience, as they prepare for careers in education.

2. Social Support and Its Role in Balancing Responsibilities

2.1 School Support affects balance

This finding highlights the crucial role of school support in helping pre-service teachers balance their responsibilities across school, work, and life. Support may take various forms, such as social, financial, or institutional support, and can either ease or complicate this balance. For example, Ms. AC shared, *"Sometimes there's an opportunity to get a scholarship... I don't have to work as much overtime anymore because I now have money to cover certain expenses."* Similarly, Ms. A emphasized the need for support services: *"Even just having counseling services for students dealing with these challenges would help. It would also be beneficial to open job opportunities within the campus."* Social support helps and motivates students to improve their performance. Ms. S explained, *"Some professors still give me a chance to complete my requirements, even if I submit them late...that support strengthens my determination and keeps me going."* This shows how institutional support can help boost students' drive and perseverance, which underscores the importance of comprehensive and compassionate forms of assistance.

2.2 Family Support while Balancing Roles

Family support helps these young adults manage their school work and personal roles. Ms. C shared her experience with her family's support: *"They are very helpful, especially in regard to course requirements such as creating instructional materials. They truly assist me with big projects that need to be completed. I can rely on them because I wouldn't be able to finish everything on my own."* Pre-service teachers are often overwhelmed by numerous tasks and preparations, adding to the responsibilities they must balance with their work. Similarly, Ms. S described the emotional support of her family: *"They check in on me daily... this kind of support helps me stay strong and push through my challenge."* For individuals who face strenuous course requirements, family support can be a crucial source of stability and encouragement.

2.3 Support and mental health

Participants who juggle multiple responsibilities often struggle more

when they lack external support, increasing the risk of dropping out. Support from key areas, such as schools and homes, can significantly ease this burden. The students shared their perspectives on this. As Ms. A stated, *"Having support helps relieve the pressure... I don't have to stress as much about managing both responsibilities. I can focus more on my studies...my mental health feels more stable."* Family support is equally critical during a psychologically vulnerable stage of students' lives. Ms. J shared, *"It feels comforting... like I'm not carrying such a heavy burden."* Ms. S added, *"Having conversations with my family helps me feel at ease. It reduces my stress and gives me peace of mind."* Another student, Ms. A, expressed, *"Even simple things, my family checking in on me and asking if I've eaten, truly help. It reassures me and helps me cope with any negative thoughts..."* Connection with family and receiving such simple gestures of kindness can alleviate the psychological distress caused by multiple demands. This demonstrates that social support plays a vital role in helping pre-service teachers manage their responsibilities and balance multiple roles, thereby contributing to their mental well-being.

3. Psychological and Emotional Aspects of Balancing Responsibilities

3.1 Core Self-Evaluations and Emotional Stability Affect Balancing Demands

The study further explored how core self-evaluations and emotional stability influence students' ability to balance school, work, and life. Students' beliefs in their ability and self-worth affect how they balance their roles. As Ms. C shared, *"I am fully aware of my ability to take on and accept life's demands... 90% of me is always ready, in school, work, or other roles in life."* In contrast, Ms. S reflected, *"There are moments when I doubt whether I can accomplish things, and I fear that I might disappoint myself if I fail..."* Emotional stability also affects balance. Ms. J shared, *"When I feel emotionally stable, the outcomes are much better. I can complete my tasks on time."* The responses reflect the psychological dimension of SWLB. Core self-evaluations and emotional regulation appear to be instrumental to students' ways of managing multiple responsibilities.

3.2 Managing how time and demands affect mental health

Several participants shared their experiences related to the challenge of balancing time between school, work, and personal life, along with managing multiple simultaneous demands. Ms. C recalled, *"I truly struggled to balance my time. It affected my mental health."* Similarly, Ms. S noted, *"Managing my time between school, work, and personal life had a big impact on my mental health. In addition to mental exhaustion from school, physical*

fatigue can also occur. When both kinds of exhaustion build up, that's when I start feeling truly stressed."

Overwhelming responsibilities can significantly affect psychological well-being. Ms. A shared, *"Sometimes, I can't handle the stress...when the stress becomes too much, I resort to self-harm, especially when problems at work and school pile up all at once. There are times when I just cannot cope with the stress."* Similarly, Ms. AC expressed, *"It feels like my personal life has become so limited... I keep overthinking—constantly worrying about how to balance everything when I barely have enough time."* Interference in time while managing overwhelming demands can lead to fatigue and psychological strain among these employed pre-service teachers, which at times exceeds their capacity to cope.

3.3 Core Self-Evaluation and Emotional Stability while Balancing Roles Affects Mental Health

Certain individual factors contribute to the effective management of multiple roles. A person's core self-evaluation plays a crucial role in this process, as they assess their capabilities, self-worth, locus of control, and emotional stability. Some students struggle to balance their responsibilities due to these internal factors. These factors can either facilitate or hinder their ability to manage demands across school, work, and life domains. Ms. S shared, *"It feels like the stress just keeps repeating... I start blaming myself, thinking, 'I should have done this instead'... It's like there's a constant internal conflict."* Similarly, Ms. A stressed the importance of control over outcomes in managing stress: *"When I am able to control the outcome of something, my stress levels decrease... I feel better overall."* Ms. AC added, *"I feel disappointed when I fail to balance or manage my time between schoolwork and my job, even when I believed I could. It also has a negative impact on my mental health."* On one hand, Ms. S expressed the value of self-belief: *"My belief that I can handle things—that I can manage and balance school and work—has a positive effect on my mental health. It makes me think more optimistically."* Students' inner struggle in terms of their core self-evaluations leads to unfavorable psychological outcomes, while positive self-belief may function as a safeguard for mental health.

DISCUSSION

Pre-service teachers commonly experience challenges related to work–life balance. Picton (2021) noted that one of the primary ways in which students define school, work, and life balance (SWLB) is through their ability to manage time efficiently. On the other hand, this could also be defined as the level at which the person can simultaneously balance the demands of work

and nonwork roles (Hill et al., 2001). One of the unique challenges pre-service teachers face is time pressure (Pan et al., 2024). This is defined as the perception that teachers lack sufficient time to manage their workload effectively (Collie, 2022). The participants' experiences illustrate how overcommitment to work can impact their academic performance and well-being. They tend to spend more time on this aspect of their lives rather than reserving it for other domains and conserving energy for personal time (van Rooij et al., 2021). Most student workers suffer from sleep deprivation, which is a common consequence of students juggling part-time work and academic responsibilities (Abenoja, 2019). The conflicting demands they face stem from individuals having limited resources (Park & Sprung, 2013). However, effective resource management can help students maintain balance despite these competing demands. Maintaining a healthy work–life balance is not only an issue for pre-service teachers but also for educators. It can also be a source of stress. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the heavy workload that extends into their personal lives (Zito et al., 2024). While balancing school, work, and life, students may experience work–life interference, which reflects role conflict. Work–life interference, or a lack of balance, occurs when work demands hinder the ability to fulfill personal responsibilities (Boamah et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential for students to effectively manage their multiple roles to mitigate imbalance and maintain overall well-being.

The results suggest that various forms of school support, whether social, financial, or both, play a substantial role in determining students' experiences with SWLB. Studies on school-work-life balance (SWLB) suggest a connection between school support and the experience of role conflict and facilitation (Xu & Song, 2013; Nicklin, 2017; Cinamon, 2016). Moreover, students who receive school support tend to experience less role conflict and greater facilitation when demands are balanced across work and nonwork domains. When an educational institution provides support, role management is improved, reducing interference between responsibilities (Wyland et al., 2015; McNall & Michel, 2016). Recent studies further indicate that a systemic approach and sustainable management model (Bezuidenhout et al., 2026), as well as access to collegial collaboration, recognition, and leadership responsiveness, enhances individuals' perceived autonomy and competence, thereby promoting work-life balance (Aslam et al., 2026). Furthermore, social support improves students' ability to navigate school, work, and personal life while reducing conflicts between these domains (Demoura, 2021; Cinamon, 2016). Helping students navigate their roles more effectively in a school environment and fostering concern and care could provide them with significant advantages that can aid SWLB. On the other hand, family support can help alleviate the burden of managing students' responsibilities (Cinamon, 2016; Xu & Song, 2013). However, family support

does not always significantly contribute to maintaining balance across these dimensions (Nicklin, 2017). This highlights the complexity of work–life balance, where the effectiveness of support may vary depending on individual circumstances and other influencing factors.

Participating students who juggle both academic and work responsibilities are more vulnerable to mental health challenges, such as burnout and stress. This stems from the difficulty of allocating time, energy, and focus effectively across multiple roles or domains, often leading to emotional and cognitive strain (Drăghici & Cazan, 2022; Yang, 2004). Conflict among these domains can significantly affect student well-being, with part-time student workers often experiencing heightened stress due to reduced study time and the added demands of their jobs (Abenoja, 2019; Canto et al., 2023). Current research indicates that stress is strongly associated with time pressure, leading to difficulties in self-confidence and positive self-evaluation (Bezuidenhout et al., 2026). Internal factors related to mental and emotional well-being in managing academic, work, and personal responsibilities were regarded as essential. Students who perceive themselves as capable, worthy, in control of outcomes, and emotionally stable are more likely to achieve balance across school, work, and life domains (McNall & Michel, 2010; Olson, 2014; Choo et al., 2019). Their sense of self-efficacy enables them to create environments that support their engagement in multiple roles (McNall & Michel, 2016). Conversely, those who struggle with self-doubt are more vulnerable to role conflict and mental health issues (Choo et al., 2019; Nicklin, 2017). Understanding these psychological attributes is critical to overcoming the challenges of limited resources and competing demands.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the lived experiences of emerging young adult female students in a pre-service teacher education program as they navigated the challenges of balancing school, work, and personal life. The participants reported persistent struggles with time management, role conflicts, and the sacrifice of personal well-being in favor of academic and employment responsibilities. Emotional strain, stress, and psychological exhaustion are evident as a result of managing multiple responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, many demonstrated resilience and relied on social support systems, particularly from family, peers, and faculty, to cope. The need for institutional policies that promote flexibility and well-being is much more pressing. The study was limited by the small number and specific characteristics of participants, its focus on a specific institutional setting, and its reliance on self-reported narratives within the field of teacher education.

Nevertheless, it offers meaningful insights into the intersection of school-work-life responsibilities and mental health among working female pre-service teachers, highlighting the need for more responsive support systems in higher education.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results, several recommendations from the authors were developed in light of the interpretation of the findings rather than direct suggestions from the participants. To support emerging young adult female pre-service teachers in balancing school, work, and personal life, the university and other higher education institutions that may find the results and recommendations of this study transferable and usable to their context should implement policies that promote flexibility, mental health support, and structured academic-work arrangements. Existing flexible learning and work-study integration programs should be reviewed. It should allow students to enroll in hybrid or asynchronous courses, accommodating those working more than 10 hours per week. Additionally, establishing student well-being and support centers or groups that offer time-management workshops, mental health counseling, and peer mentorship programs should equip students with effective strategies for managing multiple responsibilities. To lessen financial burdens, priority financial assistance programs should be expanded to support deserving students engaged in part-time or full-time employment outside the university. These programs could include need-based scholarships, emergency financial aid, and stipends to help working students sustain their education. Furthermore, an enhanced student assistantship campus program should be implemented. This should provide students with opportunities to earn a modest income through on-campus employment in administrative support, research assistance, or tutoring. By offering structured employment within the university, students can avoid the added strain of commuting or excessive work hours that may interfere with their studies outside the campus. Institutional policies should also require faculty training to help educators recognize and support students experiencing work-study conflicts, thereby making coursework more accommodating and understanding. Strengthening partnerships with local businesses and industries to create on-campus or university-accredited student employment programs would further ensure that students can earn while learning in a way that aligns with their academic obligations and, at the same time, supports the university's quality-assurance efforts. These policies and programs not only help mitigate time conflicts and reduce financial stress but also enhance students' resilience and overall well-being, making their balancing acts more bearable and sustainable.

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