JOURNAL
OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
An Academic Journal Publication
Website: | https://jerimspublication.com
INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS
PRINT ISSN 3116-5559
ONLINE ISSN 3116-5567
Volume 1, Issue 8, pp 25-32, October 2026

Research Article

Teachers' Experiences in Balancing Academic Demands and Motherhood

Grace M. Gumapas & Michelle S. Calimpong
Department of Education

Article History:

Submission: August, 2026
Revised: September, 2026
Accepted: September, 2026
Published: October, 2026

Originality: 98%
Similarity Index: 7%
Grammarly Score: 96%

*Corresponding Author:
gumapasgrace@gmail.com

Recommended Citation:

Gumapas, G., & Calimpong, M., (2026). Teachers' Experiences in Balancing Academic Demands and Motherhood. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(8), 25-32.*

https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.01.D1X3VP

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of public-school teacher-mothers balancing graduate education, classroom responsibilities, and childcare in District 6 of the Oroquieta City Division during school year 2025–2026. Twelve purposively selected teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were examined using thematic analysis. Findings were organized into twelve themes describing lived experiences, nine themes capturing challenges, and nine themes identifying coping mechanisms. Participants described conflicting obligations, compressed schedules, physical and emotional exhaustion, financial pressures, and unpredictable family needs. They responded through time management, adaptive work routines, family and collegial assistance, faith, self-care, and purpose-driven perseverance. The findings underscore that personal resilience and practical support operate together, while more responsive graduate-school and workplace arrangements may reduce avoidable role strain.

Keywords: *teacher-mothers; graduate education; academic demands; motherhood; role conflict; phenomenology; coping strategies.*

Copyright Notice:

2026 Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Introduction

Teachers who pursue graduate education while raising children negotiate three simultaneous sets of expectations: effective classroom instruction, academic progress, and daily maternal care. These commitments frequently compete for the same limited time, energy, and financial resources. The study focuses on teacher-mothers rather than on student-parents generally, recognizing the distinctive pressure created by the ongoing obligations of professional teaching.

The thesis situates this inquiry within literature on student-mothers' role conflict, exhaustion, guilt, and adaptation. Andres (2021) describes competing maternal and student identities; Ashipala and Natanael (2022) examine the balancing of nursing education and motherhood; and Baluyos and Alvarico (2024) document the persistence of competing academic and family demands. Together, these works illuminate why academic advancement can be both a source of hope and a source of intensified strain.

The conceptual lens is role conflict and role strain: when distinct social positions demand incompatible activities, fulfillment of one obligation may reduce time available for another. In the present setting, professional duties add a third layer to the graduate student–mother relationship. This lens directs attention not only to personal scheduling but also to institutional expectations, support networks, and the meaning participants attach to educational achievement.

The study identifies a local knowledge gap concerning public school teachers in District 6, Oroquieta City Division, who are enrolled in master's or doctoral programs while raising children. Rather than estimating prevalence or testing causal relationships, the inquiry aims to describe how these women interpret everyday role negotiation.

Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are teachers' lived experiences of balancing academic demands and motherhood? (2) What systemic and personal challenges arise? (3) What coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies support their continued professional and academic engagement? Hence, the inquiry is significant for teacher-mothers, families, school leaders, graduate faculty, and policymakers because their respective decisions shape the conditions under which women continue advanced education. The analysis therefore treats participants' perseverance as an important finding without assuming that individual resilience can substitute for institutional support.

Methods

The study employed a qualitative interpretative phenomenological design in District 6, Schools Division of Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental, during School Year 2025–2026. Twelve public school teacher-mothers were purposively selected based on their teaching employment in the district, enrollment in a master's or doctoral program, motherhood of at least one child younger than 18, and willingness to participate. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews using a researcher-developed guide subjected to expert review and pilot testing. Interviews were conducted following institutional and division permissions, with informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and pseudonyms observed. Transcripts were examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, including familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting, to interpret participants' lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies.

Results and Discussions

Lived experiences of teacher-mothers

Emergent theme	Representative coded experiences from thesis
Role Conflict and Multiple Responsibilities	Difficulty in Managing Multiple Roles (teacher, student, mother); Overlapping Academic and Maternal Duties; Prioritizing Child Over Academic Tasks
Time Constraints and Workload Pressure	Sacrificing Personal Time and Rest; Tight Schedules and Time Management Demands; Working Late at Night / Night Shift

Physical and Mental Strain	Physical Exhaustion and Sleep Deprivation; Emotional Stress and Burnout; Feelings of Anxiety, Pressure, and Overwhelm
Emotional Burden of Motherhood	Guilt from Divided Attention (child vs studies); Longing and Separation from Children; Concern for Children's Health and Needs
Financial and Practical Challenges	Financial Constraints (tuition, family needs); Balancing Budget for Studies and Household
Unpredictable Life Demands	Child Illness and Family Emergencies; Disruptions in Study Plans
Coping Through Organization	Strict Time Management and Scheduling; Task Prioritization and Planning Ahead; One Task at a Time Strategy
Social Support and Assistance	Use of Support Systems (husband, family, colleagues); Emotional and Practical Support from Family; Assistance in Childcare and Household Tasks
Source of Motivation and Purpose	Motivation Driven by Children's Future; Desire for Promotion and Better Opportunities; Modeling Perseverance and Lifelong Learning
Teacher-Mother Identity	Strong Sense of Responsibility and Sacrifice; Balancing Love and Professional Growth
Personal and Professional Development	Viewing Struggles as Part of Growth; Increased Resilience and Determination; Development of Time Management Skills
Meaning-Making and Achievement	Sense of Fulfillment Despite Challenges

The twelve themes demonstrate that participants experienced their roles not as separate activities but as interdependent commitments. A task completed for graduate school could consume time otherwise available for children, while family emergencies could disrupt study schedules. These interactions were especially pronounced when instructional duties, household tasks, and academic deadlines converged.

Lived Experiences

Role conflict and multiple responsibilities formed a central pattern in the narratives. Participants negotiated competing demands as teachers, graduate students, and mothers, often making difficult decisions about which role required immediate attention. The resulting sense of divided responsibility was accompanied by concern about academic progress and maternal presence.

Time constraints and workload pressure were described through late-night study, limited recovery periods, and work carried into hours ordinarily reserved for rest. Physical and mental strain therefore arose not simply from academic rigor but from the cumulative effort of classroom instruction, domestic care, and graduate assignments.

The emotional burden of motherhood appeared in participants' accounts of guilt, worry, and a perceived obligation to remain available to children. Financial and practical challenges included education-related expenses and the logistics of attending classes or completing academic work while sustaining household needs. Unpredictable life demands, particularly childcare emergencies, complicated even carefully organized schedules.

Importantly, the experiences also included coping through organization, social support and assistance, and a continuing source of motivation and purpose. These were not merely responses to difficulty; they shaped how participants interpreted themselves as capable teacher-mothers. Teacher-mother identity, personal and professional development, and meaning-making and achievement captured the possibility of growth amid persistent pressure.

This combination of strain and fulfillment is consistent with the role-conflict perspective used in the thesis. However, the presence of achievement should not obscure the costs of exhaustion and limited personal time. The findings suggest that educational aspiration is sustained through ongoing negotiation rather than a permanent resolution of competing responsibilities.

These findings are supported by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who explained that work–family conflict arises when competing demands from professional and family roles make participation in one role difficult because of responsibilities in another. Similarly, Goode (1960) emphasized that individuals occupying multiple social roles experience role strain when their responsibilities exceed available time, energy, and resources. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) further highlighted the importance of coping strategies, including problem-solving, emotional regulation, and seeking support, in managing stressful life circumstances. Moreover, House (1981) emphasized that social support provides emotional, informational, and practical resources that help individuals manage demanding responsibilities, while Bandura (1997) explained that self-efficacy strengthens individuals' confidence and perseverance in pursuing challenging goals. These perspectives reinforce the findings that teacher-mothers pursuing graduate education experience interconnected professional, academic, maternal, and personal responsibilities that generate both significant challenges and opportunities for growth. The findings suggest that effective time management, family support, institutional understanding, and personal determination are important in helping teacher-mothers sustain their academic aspirations while fulfilling their professional and maternal responsibilities.

2. Challenges encountered

Emergent themes of challenges encountered by teacher-mothers

Emergent theme	Representative coded experiences from thesis
Time-Related Challenges	Limited Time for Academic Tasks and Childcare; Overlapping Responsibilities (schoolwork vs motherhood); Difficulty Meeting Deadlines
Physical and Health-Related Challenges	Physical Fatigue and Exhaustion; Lack of Sleep; Mental Drain and Burnout
Emotional and Psychological Challenges	Emotional Stress and Overwhelm; Feelings of Anxiety and Pressure; Guilt for Not Giving Enough Time to Children
Financial Challenges	Financial Burden (tuition fees, household needs); Budget Constraints and Economic Pressure
Family-Related Challenges	Child Illness and Family Emergencies; Prioritizing Child's Health Over Studies; Disruptions in Academic Plans
Motherhood Role Strain	Lack of Time for Mother-Child Interaction; Difficulty Fulfilling Maternal Responsibilities; Separation from Children (for some cases)
Academic Demands and Pressure	Heavy Academic Workload and Requirements; Multiple Roles (teacher, student, mother); Paperwork and School Responsibilities
Cognitive and Performance Challenges	Difficulty Maintaining Focus and Energy; Divided Attention Between Roles; Reduced Productivity Due to Fatigue
Systemic and Structural Pressure	Need for Constant Time Management; Weekend Classes and Additional Commitments; Lack of Rest and Recovery Time

The nine challenge themes distinguish immediate pressures, such as scheduling and fatigue, from broader family and institutional conditions. Although some themes overlap with the lived-experience findings, this analysis emphasizes barriers that interfere with the participants' capacity to meet responsibilities rather than the overall meaning of those experiences.

Challenges

Time-related challenges were visible in conflicts between school requirements, graduate class schedules, deadlines, and children's routines. The thesis describes the practical necessity of completing academic tasks after teaching and caregiving obligations, producing a recurring "night shift" that reduced time for sleep and recovery.

Physical and health-related challenges included exhaustion and the strain of continuous multitasking. Emotional and psychological challenges included worry, guilt, and pressure to perform well across all roles. The relationship between these experiences is important: limited time can create exhaustion, which in turn makes concentration and emotional regulation more difficult.

Financial challenges arose from the simultaneous costs of household maintenance and graduate education. Family-related challenges included unexpected care needs and limited availability of assistance. Motherhood role strain referred specifically to the discomfort participants felt when academic requirements interfered with desired maternal involvement.

Academic demands and pressure included coursework, research tasks, and submission deadlines. Cognitive and performance challenges referred to difficulties sustaining concentration and quality work when fatigued. Systemic and structural pressure concerned scheduling expectations and insufficiently flexible arrangements in work and higher education settings.

These accounts do not establish that particular policies caused burnout; they identify pressures as participants perceived and experienced them. The findings nonetheless indicate practical opportunities for school administrators and graduate programs to review scheduling, academic advising, and caregiver-responsive support.

These findings are supported by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who emphasized that competing professional and family responsibilities create time-based and strain-based conflicts that interfere with individuals' ability to fulfill multiple roles effectively. Similarly, Goode (1960) explained that role strain emerges when individuals face excessive responsibilities that exceed their available time, energy, and personal resources. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) further highlighted that high workloads, limited recovery opportunities, and insufficient organizational resources increase the risk of occupational stress and exhaustion. Moreover, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasized that psychological stress arises when individuals perceive situational demands as exceeding their available coping resources, while Voydanoff (2005) explained that the interaction between work demands and family responsibilities can influence work–family conflict and individual well-being. These perspectives reinforce the findings that teacher-mothers pursuing graduate education encounter interconnected time-related, physical, emotional, financial, academic, and family-related challenges. The findings suggest that flexible academic arrangements, manageable workloads, adequate institutional support, and family-responsive policies may help reduce role strain and promote the academic persistence, professional effectiveness, and overall well-being of teacher-mothers.

3. Coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies

Emergent theme	Representative coded experiences from thesis
Time Management Strategies	Strict Time Management and Scheduling; Creating Daily Plans and To-Do Lists; Task Prioritization (urgent vs important)
Adaptive Work Strategies	Studying at Night (Night Shift); Using Free Time (weekends, child's nap time); Separating Study Time and Mommy Time
Social Support Systems	Seeking Help from Husband/Family; Assistance in Childcare and Household Tasks; Support from Friends and Colleagues
Spiritual Coping Mechanisms	Reliance on Faith and Prayer; Trust in God and Positive Outlook

Self-Care Practices	Taking Short Breaks and Rest; Relaxation and Bonding with Children; Maintaining Work-Life Balance Through Family Time
Personal Management Skills	Staying Organized and Disciplined; Maintaining Focus and Motivation
Motivation and Purpose-Driven Coping	Reminding Self of Goals (Why); Children as Source of Inspiration; Desire for Better Future for Family
Emotional Resilience	Maintaining Positive Mindset; Acceptance of Challenges as Part of Growth; Perseverance and Determination
Personal Growth and Adaptation	Developing Resilience and Patience; Learning to Adapt and Adjust Plans (Plan B); Continuous Self-Improvement

The nine coping themes show that participants combined personal discipline with assistance from others. Strategies were often practical and immediate, but the narratives also emphasized the emotional and spiritual resources that enabled continued engagement with graduate study**.**

Coping Mechanisms

Time management strategies included scheduling, task prioritization, and planning ahead for predictable commitments. Adaptive work strategies involved adjusting when and how academic tasks were completed, including the use of late-evening hours. Personal management skills reflected deliberate organization and efforts to maintain focus despite interruptions.

Social support systems were essential in creating usable study time. Help from partners, relatives, colleagues, and friends could reduce caregiving or practical burdens, while encouragement supported persistence. This finding reinforces the distinction between coping as an individual behavior and coping as an activity enabled by a network of relationships.

Spiritual coping mechanisms, motivation and purpose-driven coping, and emotional resilience allowed participants to attach meaning to difficult experiences. Their children and hopes for professional advancement were frequently represented as reasons to continue. Self-care practices and personal growth and adaptation completed the coping framework, although the narratives suggest that opportunities for rest were sometimes constrained.

The findings align with the thesis's reviewed literature on planning and social support, including Bustillo et al. (2024), Baluyos and Alvarico (2024), and Boakye et al. (2021). The participants' experiences indicate that effective coping is neither purely psychological nor purely organizational: it depends on the interaction of planning, relationships, and accessible conditions for study.

Integrated Discussion

Across the three research questions, a coherent picture emerges: teacher-mothers experienced competing role expectations, encountered structural and personal constraints, and constructed practical ways to continue graduate education. The thematic overlap is analytically meaningful. For example, time pressure appeared as a lived experience, a specific challenge, and a target of coping through scheduling.

A second pattern concerns the tension between achievement and well-being. Participants viewed graduate study as an investment in professional development and family aspirations, but this meaning did not eliminate fatigue, guilt, or economic pressure. The same commitment that motivated persistence could also encourage sacrificing rest. Accordingly, the thesis's interpretation of resilience is best read alongside its evidence of unmet support needs.

A third pattern is the importance of relational resources. Assistance from family and colleagues enabled participants to protect study time and recover from disruptions. Where formal flexibility was limited, these

informal networks assumed a larger role. Such dependence may not be equally available to every teacher-mother, which limits the general applicability of any one coping strategy.

The results offer an interpretative contribution to local educational management: graduate learning for working mothers is embedded in professional and family systems. Responsive arrangements may include clearer advance scheduling, realistic deadlines during family emergencies, accessible advising, peer support, and communication between teachers and institutional leaders. These are implications suggested by the findings, not interventions evaluated by this study.

The sample comprised twelve purposively selected teacher-mothers from one district. Interview-based accounts reflect participants' interpretations and do not permit causal inference, statistical generalization, or conclusions about the effectiveness of specific policy changes. Future work could examine other districts and evaluate support initiatives.

These findings are supported by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who emphasized that individuals manage stressful situations through problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, including planning, prioritization, emotional regulation, and seeking assistance. Similarly, House (1981) highlighted that social support provides emotional and practical resources that help individuals manage competing responsibilities and reduce stress. Pargament (1997) further explained that spiritual coping, particularly faith and prayer, can provide meaning, hope, and psychological strength during challenging circumstances. Moreover, Bandura (1997) emphasized that self-efficacy strengthens individuals' motivation, perseverance, and confidence in overcoming difficulties, while Greenhaus and Powell (2006) explained that experiences and resources gained from one life role can positively influence functioning in another. These perspectives reinforce the findings that teacher-mothers pursuing graduate education employ interconnected coping mechanisms involving time management, adaptive work practices, family support, spiritual beliefs, self-care, emotional resilience, and goal-oriented motivation. Overall, the findings suggest that their ability to sustain graduate studies while fulfilling professional and maternal responsibilities depends not only on personal determination but also on supportive relationships, accessible institutional resources, and opportunities to maintain a manageable balance among competing roles.

Conclusions

The study concludes that teacher-mothers in District 6 navigated graduate education through continuous negotiation among teaching, study, and caregiving responsibilities. Their experiences were characterized by role conflict, constrained time, physical and emotional strain, practical costs, and the need to respond to unpredictable family demands. Nevertheless, participants also identified growth, professional aspiration, and a strengthened sense of purpose. Coping relied on planning, adaptive work routines, support from other people, spiritual resources, self-care, and emotional resilience. The findings do not suggest that determination alone removes structural pressures. Rather, sustained participation in graduate study appears to be supported by the combination of individual strategies and responsive family, workplace, and academic environments.

Recommendations

Teacher-mothers may benefit from realistic planning, protected periods of rest, early communication about deadlines, and intentional use of available family and peer support. School leaders should consider predictable professional schedules, supportive conversations, and peer networks for teachers enrolled in graduate programs. Graduate-school administrators and advisers should consider caregiver-sensitive academic advising, advance schedule notice, and reasonable accommodations during documented family emergencies. Policymakers and community partners may explore financial, childcare, and well-being support. Further studies should compare contexts and assess whether specific institutional supports improve academic continuity and well-being.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Andres, K. P. (2021). Two faces of a mom: Student mothers lived experiences in a State University. International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 2(5), 406-412.

[2] Ashipala, D. O., & Natanael, S. (2022). Experiences of nursing students who are mothers in balancing their dual roles in undergraduate nursing and midwifery education: A phenomenological study. International Journal of Africa Nursing Sciences, 17, 100447. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214139122000543

[3] Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands–Resources model: State of the art. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22(3), 309–328. [https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115]

[4] Baluyos, Q. R. C., & Alvarico, A. B. (2024). Lived experiences of student mothers in balancing motherhood and academic pursuits: A phenomenological study. Available at SSRN 5287161. https://www.academia.edu/download/123267271/81079.pdf

[5] Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.

[6] Boakye, A. O., Dei Mensah, R., Bartrop-Sackey, M., & Muah, P. (2021). Juggling between work, studies and motherhood: The role of social support systems for the attainment of work–life balance. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 19, 10. https://sajhrm.co.za/index.php/sajhrm/article/view/1546

[7] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

[8] Bustillo, R. C. T., Bustillo, R. C. T., & Sayson, J. A. V. (2024). Navigating the dual roles: understanding the unique challenges of student-mothers in pursuit of higher education. Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 2(2), 58-69. https://icceph.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Navigating-The-Dual-Roles-Understanding-The-Unique-Challenges-Of-Student-Mothers-In-Pursuit-Of-Higher-Education.pdf

[9] Goode, W. J. (1960). A theory of role strain. American Sociological Review, 25(4), 483–496. [https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933](https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

[10] Goode, W. J. (1960). A theory of role strain. American Sociological Review, 25(4), 483–496. [https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933](https://doi.org/10.2307/2092933?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

[11] Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. Academy of Management Review, 10(1), 76–88. [https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352](https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

[12] Greenhaus, J. H., & Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment. Academy of Management Review, 31(1), 72–92. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.19379625

[13] House, J. S. (1981). Work stress and social support. Addison-Wesley.

[14] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. Springer Publishing Company.

[15] Pargament, K. I. (1997). The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice. Guilford Press.

[16] Voydanoff, P. (2005). Toward a conceptualization of perceived work-family fit and balance: A demands and resources approach. Journal of Marriage and Family, 67(4), 822–836. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00178.x]