

**MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCES OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA**

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*A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of Doctor of
Philosophy in African Women Studies of the University of Nairobi*

@ September, 2018

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university for academic credit whatsoever.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my sister Jane for her strong desire to achieve higher education while undertaking child care and work-related duties. She has set an excellent example of what it means to be a strong woman. May her wildest dreams come true.

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the motherhood experiences of post-graduate students in Kenya. Combining motherhood and studying without compromising the activities of either one is a great dilemma for female student parents. This study sought to analyze the multiple roles of mothers in post-graduate studies, examine the benefits of post-graduate studies to student mothers, explore the challenges student mothers face in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies and evaluate coping strategies of student mothers in pursuit of their careers.

Theoretical basis was drawn from social learning, role and structuration theories to guide and explain experiences of the study participants as both mothers and students. This study used a phenomenology study design that involved the use of in-depth interviews to collect data from the thirty-two female students enrolled for post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi. As an inclusion criterion, only post graduate students self reporting to have children below the age of 18 were enrolled in the study.

Data gathered from student mothers was read and re-read for like phrases and themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning. Through this process, the researcher constructed the universal meaning of student mothers' experiences and arrived at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon, hence, supportive verbatim have been used in the text during presentation of the findings.

The findings of the study revealed that student mothers experienced conflict between various role commitments they often balanced such as childcare, domestic work, and

academic responsibilities. Even though adjusting childcare obligations and student roles appeared to be hard to student mothers, they surmounted these challenges with exceedingly good organization, sound time management and by receiving family support. Further, yearning for individual accomplishment and the chance to make a better future for their families particularly their offsprings unequivocally inspired student mothers. This inspiration is an obvious observation showing that post-graduate education rewarded women with a sense of freedom, development, pride, and accomplishment and also built up their professions or careers.

Additionally, the post-graduate studies offer self-actualization platform where students reported developing and building up their capacities while bringing up their offsprings. The study concludes that the researcher's labeling of struggles and juggles in the lives of student mothers who study at post-graduate level was not accurate. This is because while women confirmed that the experiences during their study were challenging at times, they considered it to have positive, rather than negative impact on their lives. Therefore, this study turned out to be a robust utilization of cross-checking because student mothers rectified the researcher. The input unearthed from this research brought about an alternate understanding of encounters of student mothers at post-graduate level.

This study recommends that university departments be considerate to student mothers and if possible work with specific students to identify and address their needs. Post-graduate student mothers need to communicate with other household members of their added obligations and how the learning may impacted them. The government and universities

should develop policies and procedures to address unique needs of student mothers, devise programs for identifying student mothers at a higher risk of dropping out and put in place measures for their retention. Further research should compare the circumstances of post-graduate mothers in different universities and faculties in Kenya. Also, new research should explore specific family variables such as the experiences of single mothers pursuing post-graduate education.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAUW:	American Association of University Women
ADB:	Asian Development Bank
AWSC:	African Women Study Centre
CAE:	College of Architecture and Engineering
CAMFED:	Campaign for Female Education
CAVS:	College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences
CBPS:	College of Biological and Physical Sciences
CBS:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEES:	College of Education and External Studies
CHE:	Commission for Higher Education
CHS:	College of Health Sciences
CHSS:	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CNL:	Commission for a Nation of Learners
CSEIT:	Computer Science Education Innovation Technology
CUE:	Commission for Higher Education
CUEA:	Catholic University of East Africa
DPMF:	Development Policy Management Program
IEA:	Institute of Economic Affairs
KCA:	Kenya College of Accountancy
KESSP:	Kenya Education Sector Support Program
KNBS:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KU:	Kenyatta University

KUCCPS:	Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service
MCC:	Monroe Community College
MoE:	Ministry of Education
MUCSD:	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Services
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
NCE:	National Centre for Education
NCTE:	National Commission on Tertiary Education
NGDP:	National Gender and Development Policy
PFETR:	Policy Framework for Education, Training, and Research
Ph.D.:	Doctor of Philosophy
RoK:	Republic of Kenya
SCARDA:	Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research and Development in Africa
SU:	Strathmore University
TEQSA:	Tertiary Education Quality and Standard Agency
UFB:	University Funding Board
UN:	United Nations
UNDAW:	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNEP:	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization
UoN:	University of Nairobi
WDR:	World Development Report

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

It is against the goals of women that one can examine experiences of post-graduate student mothers. In the book *Higher Education of Women*, Emily Davies defined the goal of women as being the best wife and mother. (Davies, 2006) argued that any education not central to these objectives is considered unnecessary. Rogers (1997) contends that knowledge and resources are emanating from education indisputably determine the potential for socio-economic empowerment of women which results to improved and stable living standards.

Education is one of the critical requirements for alleviating poverty, improving health outcomes and quality of life, reducing gender and social disparities as well as enhancing economic productivity. It contributes to economic growth and productivity as well as to sustainability of livelihoods for national development (Rogers, 1997). Education has played a significant role in the empowerment of women across the world. Muthaka & Mwangi, (2002), pointed out a critical role that education plays in enabling women to engage in the development and growth of the country.

Education promotes equal opportunity for men and women, which is necessary for economic growth and development. According to the World Development Report (WDR, 2001), for economic growth to occur, equal sharing of opportunities and resources between men and women is vital. Women participation in employment is a phenomenon that has been in development since time in memorial. This participation, for a long time, has been restricted by

legal, cultural, educational conventions and religious practices that propagated inequality. However, the modern day woman no longer stays at home to rear children because of the rising cost of living and the desire to explore their potential outside home (Odouard, 2005).

Girls' education is one of the most effective ways of ending poverty in developing nations. This assertion is because individuals, families and the society in general share benefits of their education. These benefits include family planning, lowering infant, child and maternal mortality rates, preventing HIV/AIDS infection and increasing number of women with jobs and higher earnings. According to the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA, 2008), the level of education of the mother largely determines the wellbeing of their children, their education, and even their development to become productive adults.

Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kenya introduced Gender Education Policy (2007) to ensure gender equity and equality regarding access, retention, completion, performance, and transition, that does not discriminate on the basis of gender (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization-UNESCO, 2012). This policy has led to a significant increase in women's literacy rates as a result of its inherently gender-neutral nature in outlook (Republic of Kenya-RoK, 2000).

Gender-based inequalities, however, still exist and have primarily contributed to poor performance of girls in Kenya. In addition, these imbalances have constrained women's potentials and their level of development. (Njeru, 2003). As a result, Kenyan women face both legal and actual discrimination in political, economic, relational and workplace arenas (Muthoni,

2000). This is because, women are expected to adapt to the new role of both student and working spouse without a significant lessening of their responsibilities as wife, homemaker and possibly mother (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006).

Many women struggle to balance family responsibilities, academic and career aspirations (Muller, 2008). As a result, they develop greater role strain due to little or no support received from their spouses and their families as they balance academic and family demands (Lamanna & Reidmann, 2000). To many, this makes accomplishing the goal of earning a degree while working, parenting and being a wife difficult (Kramarae, 2001).

Gender plays a significant role in many societies and more so in Africa as it defines everyday jobs and how we refer to people. Entrenchment of these roles takes place throughout our lives (Lorber, 2006). Many women in the family take on multiple roles of wife, mother, and student and at times are emotional, mentally and physically stressed. With societal expectations of role of motherhood as caregiving, women seem to bear more burdens in nurturing their families (Becky, 2005). Nevertheless, few studies have examined the implications of women's multiple roles of wife, mother, and student in the family.

Globally, society dictates how the role of family members should be played out according to their gender (i.e., male or female). In Africa, gender is the social-cultural construction of roles and functions performed by a person in the society. These roles determine the opportunities available to us, the roles we play and the nature of the relationships we have in our communities (Ngubane, 2010). As a result, many female students experience common difficulties in

organizing multiple duties and responsibilities of scholarly work and domestic chores, together with detrimental traditional practices (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006).

Kramarae, (2001) contends that female students often struggle to squeeze learning into their already busy schedules of work and family responsibilities. They struggle because, they are expected to ably take on both roles if they wish to continue with their education (Lamanna & Reidmann, 2000). As a result, many face significant challenges that make attaining a degree in a university setting challenging or impossible. These challenges continue to affect them until their role, as students is no longer an extra duty to their other obligations and commitments (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007).

In an environment subjugated by traditional, cultural and religious practices, the role of women is seen as tied to household or domestic chores and child-care which is challenging to student mothers. According to Wane, (2003) in the context of traditional cultural and religious practices, a woman is perceived to be a mother who undertakes household duties and subsistence activities tied to nurturing a family such as weeding, harvesting, and cooking. Despite agreement that access to educational opportunities for women is critical), domestic or household chores imposed on women pose severe challenges to their post-graduate studies (Shibanda & Seru, 2002).

1.2 Problem Statement

In Africa, there are a growing number of student mothers enrolling for post-graduate studies. However, about 60% of them face challenges in balancing their studies and multiple roles (Moreau & Kerner, 2012). Combining post-graduate studies and motherhood is usually a

complicated and challenging task within patriarchal societies. Managing family roles, work, and academic study place student mothers at a higher risk of dropping out of their post-graduate studies. The central challenge student mothers experience is lack of time to manage their multiple roles (Tauken, 2015).

The challenges of balancing multiple roles have had significant implications on student mothers' academic success (Tauken, 2015). Some of the reasons for such challenges are that student mothers spend a lot of their time on childcare and work. They are also expected to make significant contributions in their families and college. In this regard, their study time is consumed on caring for their families or at work. Student mothers face difficulties in their post-graduate studies as they are likely to arrive late for classes, leave early or even miss classes (Kuperberg, 2009; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010).

Having family and work obligations on top of their responsibilities make postgraduate student mothers have unique needs as students. This uniqueness affects their ability to fairly compete academically with others. As a result, many report challenges related to meeting the requirements of their post-graduate studies (Adu-Yeboah, 2015). Therefore, there was need to examine the challenges post-graduate student mothers face as well as coping strategies they employ in balancing family obligations, work-related duties and student roles. The current study evaluated motherhood experiences of post-graduate students studying at the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the motherhood experiences of post-graduate students studying at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Analyze multiple roles of student mothers in post-graduate studies;
- ii. Examine benefits of post-graduate studies to student mothers;
- iii. Explore challenges student mothers face in balancing motherhood and studies; and
- iv. Identify coping strategies of post-graduate student mothers in their career pursuits.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are the multiple roles played by post-graduate student mothers?
- ii. How do student mothers benefit from post-graduate studies?
- iii. What are the challenges student mothers face in balancing motherhood and studies?
- iv. What are the coping strategies employed by student mothers to pursue their careers?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study endeavored to find out how post-graduate student mothers experience the two identities of “mother” and “student” at the University of Nairobi. Specifically, the target population was post-graduate student mothers raising at least one dependent child 18 years or younger enrolled from 2005 to 2015.

The findings, conclusion, and recommendations of this study are valuable to various stakeholders. Policymakers who will find the results of this study useful include Ministry of

Education (MoE) and university managers including Directorate of Post-Graduate Studies in Universities. Others who will benefit from this study include advocates for gender equality, postgraduate students, scholars, and researchers in related areas.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education officially launched a gender policy that proposed gender balanced entry in education. It addresses what inhibits girls' access to schooling and highlights concerns and disparities in education and enrolment, retention and transition rates. It provides an enabling policy environment through laws and programs that address key gender issues at public universities in Kenya. The gender policy further highlighted and castigated the detrimental social-cultural practices and attitudes that inhibit women's access to education. Consequently, its inception and implementation has increased participation of women in higher education as well as ensured gender equity in university processes.

The study examined experiences at the micro, macro and meso levels by providing data to policymakers and women who wish to better their understanding of the plight of student mothers undertaking postgraduate studies. This study is expected to benefit the field of gender in that female postgraduate student mothers who took part in this research will benefit from the exploration of their own experiences and have the opportunity to process through challenges that may have affected their lives in different ways at the individual level.

At the macro level increased level of self-awareness and self-examination will help University of Nairobi and the students who participated in this study. This self-awareness will help faculty members to understand student mothers and give them extra attention as compared to other

students with fewer roles. The university administration may decide to be more flexible in their programming and introduce other support services to accommodate student mothers enrolled therein.

At the meso level, social policy and programs will benefit from greater self-examination and from the continuous reassessment of issues that directly affect equal rights of students enrolled at different universities in Kenya. This situation provides an exploratory research into how postgraduate student mothers in Kenya managed their work related roles, home and family responsibilities as well as school duties.

Post-graduate student mothers make a unique population owing to their characteristics and balancing they have to make in the course of their studies. Post-graduate student mothers with children below 18 years were considered to be in active motherhood due to many demands by the younger children who required more time and other resources to care for as compared to those above 18 years. Young children were also vulnerable to sicknesses that forced many postgraduate student mothers to miss classes to care for them.

The ten-year time frame was vital as the majority of post-graduate student mothers at the University of Nairobi graduated within ten years of enrolment. This time frame was revealed at the piloting of data collection tools on 6th of March 2016. All the six post-graduate student mothers' respondents fell within this period, but the majority were those pursuing their doctorate and had taken longer in school to graduate as compared to other students undertaking other programs like masters, postgraduate diploma and fellowship programs.

In Kenyan history, 2005-2015 date marks the inception of free primary and day secondary education that eliminated the fee burden to many parents especially post-graduate student mothers enabled them to use the savings to further their own education. Free secondary education also increased the enrolment rate that translated to high enrolment in secondary schools and consequently, university. More women were expected to have enrolled for post-graduate studies within this period.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

It also presents information on experiences and challenges faced by the researcher during fieldwork emanating from the procedure used and the postgraduate student mothers interviewed. The section ends with the ways that the researcher managed to overcome the identified challenges as indicated next:

a) Generalization of the Research Findings

The study focused on a small sample of 32 student mothers, thus making it difficult to generalize study findings to all universities in Kenya. To overcome this challenge, the researcher used “logic and reasoning” which meant creating an inductive argument for generalizing results, from specific to general. In other words, she made inferences on the conclusions drawn from the postgraduate student mothers’ experiences on motherhood and education at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The results were thus viewed as part of creating awareness of the challenges postgraduate student mothers experience and how they address their specific challenges. To this end, any student mother undertaking studies in any institution of higher learning can relate to the findings of this study.

b) Socio-Cultural Differences of Institutions

The research concentrated on what postgraduate student mothers went through in the course of their study at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Consequently, this concerned a specific category of post-graduate student mothers whose experiences may not be similar to other post-graduate student mothers in other universities due to the physical and social set up in each institution. The difference in participants contributed to different experiences. In addition, the use of in-depth interviewing to gather information limited the study by removing the ability to verify the results independently. To overcome this challenge, the researcher recommends that other studies be conducted in other universities in Kenya to compare the experiences with University of Nairobi.

c) Criteria for Participants Selection

To be eligible to take part in this research, a postgraduate student mother must have registered for a higher diploma, Masters, Ph.D. or either fellowship at the University of Nairobi not later than 2005-2015, with dependent child (ren) below 18 years of age. In this regard, some student did not qualify for this study criterion and especially those at the Ph.D. level who although they had children, their ages were above 18 years. At the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, for example, women identified did not meet the study criteria since they had children above 18 years. To overcome this challenge, the researcher moved to other colleges where post-graduate student mothers qualified for the study.

d) Participants' Commitments

The targeted group was believed to have many family commitments like nurturing their offsprings and families and was therefore likely to be unavailable, necessitating substitution.

However, prior arrangements were made via email, mobile texts or phone calls to secure a more appropriate date/time for the interviews. Similarly, some postgraduate student mothers were unwilling to cooperate and or participate in the study due to lack of time, but the researcher created rapport and convinced them to cooperate. No information about client behavior or outcomes was discussed or analyzed.

e) Participants' Attitude

This study employed an in-depth face-to-face data collection method that required more time to complete. Many postgraduate student mothers complained of limited time due to tight schedules at home, school, and work. To overcome this challenge, the researcher explained to postgraduate student mothers the importance of their interaction and that the interview would not take much of their time. Each interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

f) Participants' Recruitment

The study targeted to recruit postgraduate student mothers enrolled in the six colleges at the University of Nairobi. First, most of the postgraduate student mothers had busy schedules especially those at the Ph.D. level and were difficult to find. Majority requested for mailed questionnaires, yet the data collection tool for this study was an interview guide that needed face-to-face in-depth interviewing. Where an appointment was secured, it involved traveling to their offices several days before they could get time for the interview.

Adequate time and financial resources was required to facilitate the process. To overcome this challenge, the researcher used persuasive skills in convincing postgraduate student mothers the

importance of in-depth interviews in qualitative studies as opposed to mailed questionnaires that majority demanded. Appointments were secured a week before the study through the email, and after that follow-ups were regularly made via text messages and phone calls.

g) Confidentiality and Personal Issues

Some postgraduate student mothers withdrew from the study citing many personal questions and their unwillingness to share their private lives with strangers even after being informed in advance that their privacy was respected and confidentiality upheld. Some gave conditions that if they were to participate in the study, they must be guaranteed co-authorship once the document was published, something the researcher could not guarantee. The researcher applied persuasive skills to overcome these challenges by convincing postgraduate student mothers that confidentiality would be upheld. On being included as the authors of the study, that was not assured, and those who withdrew were allowed to do so.

h) Complaints of Research Tool

To test the applicability of the interview guide, the researcher piloted it with six postgraduate student mothers who never raised any concern. However, during data collection, some postgraduate student mothers complained that the tool was too long and took much of their time. To overcome this challenge, the researcher simplified the tool with the help of the university supervisors before collecting data.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This section is a description of scope of the study or delimitations which outline the parameters that the study covered. This is a qualitative study centered on motherhood experiences of post-graduate student mothers at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Many scholars and policymakers have posited that there are many factors affecting student mothers pursuing post-graduate studies, but the primary focus of this study was the multiple roles of student mothers, benefits of post-graduate education, challenges facing post-graduate student mothers and coping strategies employed by post-graduate student mothers in balancing the multiple role of mother, student and employee.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

All empirical studies are grounded on theory which is a body of knowledge attempting to explain a given social reality (Ndeti, 2011). The theoretical framework is a structure that guides research by relying on a formal principle (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). In this study, the theoretical basis was drawn from social learning, role and structuration theories. Thus, three theories were used to guide and explain the experiences of postgraduate student mothers as students, mothers, and employees.

1.8.1 Social Learning Theory

Social cognitive theory, also known as social learning theory was first proposed by Neal E. Miller and John Dollard in 1941, but Albert Bandura expanded the ideas to develop social learning theory in 1977 (Culatta, 2011). Social learning theory holds that learning occurs within a context whereby the person, environment, and behavior interact dynamically and reciprocally It

considers the unique way individuals acquire and maintain behaviors, while also considering the social context in which individuals perform the behavior (McLeod, 2011). Learning occurs either inactively through actually doing or vicariously by observing others or models perform (Schunk, 2012), and behaving in specific ways to reach goals (Ormrod, 2003).

Social learning theory recognizes that the knowledge resulting from prior experiences composes own mental representation (Schunk, 2012). Much of the information intertwined is gleaned from observation of models, including the perceived appropriateness, consequences, and value of a given behavior. This information can have either a positive or negative effect on the individual's confidence or self-efficacy which subsequently increases or decreases learner motivation. Inactive or experiential learning contributes to an individual's mental schema by retaining information on behaviors and contexts that led to favorable consequences (Schunk, 2012).

In this study, postgraduate student mothers benefited from inactive learning in their postgraduate studies environments that promoted student learning through opportunities to observe and interact with others (Morrison et al., 2011). Social learning increased confidence, applicability, engagement, and motivation among student mothers. In this study, vicarious learning provided information regarding the perceived value and usefulness of information as postgraduate student mothers observed the consequences of behaviors performed by their mentors and peers, like parenting skills (Schunk, 2012).

Also, models promoted observational learning (Bandura, 1986) by postgraduate student mothers through role modeling by peers that influenced postgraduate student mothers positively and increased their self-confidence despite their multiple roles as mothers, students, and employees. Through social learning theory, postgraduate student mothers copied and modeled behaviors learned from those around them to fit their current situation. They also related new information gained from the previous experience to balance their multiple roles of childcare, school roles, and work-related duties.

On the other hand, mentors provided feedback to postgraduate student mothers that they used to correct deficiencies in their performance about multiple roles of mother, student, and employee. In observational learning, postgraduate student mothers refined their skills with practice and corrective feedback to increase self-efficacy, confidence, and motivation. Also, post-graduate student mothers became aware of success stories of others in a similar situation. Therefore, modeled behaviors served as motivation for behavior by creating outcome expectations and raising self-efficacy to post-graduate student mothers.

Societal expectations enhanced learning among post-graduate student mothers enabling them to set their own goals and increased their self-efficacy resulting in high goal commitment. The success of female university supervisors motivated post-graduate student mothers who participated in this study. This was helpful in sustaining their behaviors which were systematically oriented towards the attainment of goals. Feedback given by mentor/supervisors raised postgraduate student mothers' self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement especially when it informed their competence and improvement in inspiring them to work diligently.

Through social learning theory, it is, however, difficult to judge whether post-graduate student mothers' behaviors were of appropriate and valued standards. This difficulty is because social learning theory contemplates numerous stages of framework of interaction of people and their environment intending to conduct a change of people and not necessarily on multiple roles of mother, student, and employee which is the critical focus of this study. Thus, the applicability of social learning theory in this study and especially in addressing role conflict experienced by postgraduate student mothers may be difficult especially in understanding how post-graduate student mothers balance motherhood and education. This situation is due to the reasons explained next:

First, social learning theory wrongly presupposes that variations in the surroundings will inevitably yield to changes in the people. This is not always the case. Second, social learning theory is slackly structured, grounded exclusively on the active interaction between individuals, their conduct, and the surroundings. The theory is therefore not clear as to what level these aspects influence the real behavior of an individual and whether one of the aspects has more influence than others.

Third, social learning theory mainly concentrates on how people learn and downplays physical factors that may affect how people behave, notwithstanding experiences in the past and anticipations by postgraduate student mothers. Last, this theory focuses on emotion or motivation, other than through reference to experience in the past, thus, minimal attention is paid to these factors. Therefore, there is need to include another theory to complement social learning

theory by addressing role conflict as postgraduate student mothers juggle between motherhood, education, and work.

1.8.2 Role Theory

According to Hindin (2007), role theory is a viewpoint in sociology that considers most of the everyday activities to be the acting-out of socially defined categories such as mother, manager or student. Roles consist of a set of rules that guide behavior and specify what goals should be pursued, what tasks must be accomplished, and what performances are required in a given scenario or situation (Hindin, 2007). The authors further define the social role as a set of rights, duties, expectations, norms, and behaviors that a person has to face and fulfill. It explains roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their behaviors and those of other persons.

Role theory examines the linkages between the social organization, culture, and performances that human beings give while engaged in interaction (Martin, 2005). Further, this theory argues that individual and group expectations guide human behavior. These expectations correspond to different roles individuals perform or enact in their daily lives. To role theory, roles correspond to behaviors and vice versa, i.e. to change behavior it is necessary to change roles.

In the current study, role theory informed the researchers' understanding of the gap between goals set by post-graduate student mothers and the means they used to achieve them resulting to role strain. Role strain, which was associated with role overload led to role stress as some student mothers lacked means to successfully fulfill family obligations, student roles and work-related

duties due to the limited amount of time and resources. Prolonged role strain led to harmful effects on post-graduate student mothers that resulted in neglecting one or more roles at the expense of the other. The accepted means of achieving these goals emphasized hard work, self-control, persistence and long-suffering.

Thus, post-graduate student mothers' success both at home and at school was predominantly weighed in based on physical assets, societal standing, and acknowledgment of individual appearance. In this study, role theory was a direct result of student mothers taking on several responsibilities and not being able to successfully balance them (Scharlach, 2001), leading to role strain. Role strain resulting from undertaking multiple roles negatively affected the well-being of postgraduate student mothers who participated in this study. This situation is because, the role of postgraduate student mothers at home, school, and work were equally demanding when they tried to satisfy the demands of family, student, and work-related duties.

To reduce this feeling of role strain, post-graduate student mothers continuously engaged in the process of role decisions and bargains by selecting among role behaviors. To this end, the support system emerged as a key strategy used by post-graduate student mothers to overcome challenges brought about by balancing multiple roles of mother, student, and employee that was not demonstrated by role theory. As a result, the researcher employed structuration theory to complement role theory through role strain hypothesis. Role strain hypothesis is primarily based on structural functionalism, which focuses on the part played by social structure in directing human behavior.

1.8.3 Structuration Theory

One way of understanding the experiences of post-graduate student mothers is through the use of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory is based on the premise that the actions of individuals help to both shape and maintain structures, and neither subject (human agent) nor object (social institutions) has primacy as 'each is constituted in and through recurrent practices' (Giddens, 1982). Further, Giddens (1984) describes the structural properties of a social system as the set of enacted rules and resources that mediate social action through three modalities - interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms.

According to Giddens (1984), agents in their regular societal actions recall information from past practices to inform current circumstances, the amenities accessible to them (such as technology, real estate, structures), and the rules that lead to their current actions. This is how agents utilize such information, amenities, and customs to configure their ongoing practices. In this manner, they reconstruct the norms and means that configure their actions (Orlikowski, 2000). For this study, post-graduate student mothers' experiences and coping strategies are informed by the rules existing at the University and workplace, facilities available to them and the societal norms about mothers who are pursuing post-graduate studies.

A vital area of investigation by sociologists, as per the hypothesis of structuration, is neither what every participant in social action goes through, nor the presence of any social action, but societal activities arranged through space and time (Orlikowski, 2000). His consideration regarding "social practices" coordinates the investigation of structure and the person. For this

study, an initiative to seek postgraduate education has elements of structure beginning with the University as an institution. Others include the family and economic (work) institutions.

However, the actual practice of access to post-graduate education at any given university is powerfully affected by both the academic and non-academic staff as they determine the manner in which courses of study are implemented and those that are eligible to take those courses, in this case, the postgraduate student mothers. Structuration theory, therefore, presents not only a probability for appreciating the connection of the specific post-graduate student mothers to a societal configuration which brings harmony between accepting the influence of lethargy associated with social organizations but also the likelihood of people to institute transformation.

Since Giddens conjectures social configuration as characterized by the generation and propagation of specific social action participants, the societal organization does not assume the nature of an immovable, monumental influence. In the cases above, choices by both University administration and post-graduate student mothers configured or structured the experiences of motherhood and post-graduate education. Therefore, post-graduate student mothers who participated in this study used the social structure by employing positive coping strategies like support systems that enabled them to balance their roles as mothers, students, and employees.

Family support emerged as the critical support system that assisted post-graduate student mothers in managing their roles as mothers, students, and employees. Many post-graduate student mothers agreed that they received help from their spouses, parents, and children. However, few got support from their employers and university supervisors as well as from the

university administration. These included: Instructor support that is, students' view of the exhaustiveness and convenience of reaction, scholars' consolation, and lecturers having the capacity to help postgraduate student mothers distinguish difficult issues with their research.

Help from academic departments translated to post-graduate student mothers' view of the data or information that the respective departments gave to post-graduate student mothers when they sought information about their educational needs and correspondences that connected post-graduate student mothers and their lecturers. This indicated that agency played a pivotal role in the challenges experienced by post-graduate student mothers who participated in this study as they tried to balance their family responsibilities, student roles, and work-related duties.

1.8.4 Summary

Social learning theory conceptualizes a situation where an individual, environment, and behavior interact dynamically and reciprocally. Individuals can actively seek information and in the process learn or passively get information just by observation. Social learning theory focuses on the process of learning as dynamic and interactive. It perceives an individual as an object whose behavior is shaped by the environment where learning is taking place. This theory is relevant as far as explaining the learning environment is concerned as it shows the relevance of context in shaping behavior. However, the perception of an individual as a passive object fails to recognize critical role individual play in shaping the environment where learning takes place.

In higher learning, it is not only family and work that form the environment in which postgraduate student mothers operate in but also post-graduate student mothers as individuals

determine the kind of learning environment they will have. Role theory perceives society as structured with individuals being assigned roles and responsibilities to perform. In that sense, the expectations from individuals and groups to fulfill the roles, duties, rights, and responsibilities define behavior. In this case, the hopes that the managers, lecturers, school administration, family, and society, in general, have from postgraduate student mothers shape the behavior of both postgraduate student mothers and the society in general.

Role theory is therefore crucial in recognizing that the society is structured and out of those structures there are expectations for different members of society to fulfill their assigned roles. However, the role theory does not go further to demonstrate and explain how the different roles interact to shape behavior. Such interaction is well captured by structuration theory which just like role theory recognizes that society is structured and various members are assigned different roles. However, structuration theory goes ahead to add the expression of will or agency, and it also shows how structures and agency interact to shape behavior.

Structuration theory shows that experiences of post-graduate student mothers are neither dictated by societal structures alone nor are they a function of individual expression of will (agency) solely but an interaction of meaning, standards, values, and power. The structures which comprise of rules and resources are both medium and outcome of reproduction of social practices. This is what Giddens calls the duality of structure.

According to Giddens, (2009), structures exist internally within agents as memory traces and externally as a manifestation of social actions. Structuration theory is suitable for this study as it

has a well-captured learning environment as expressed by social learning theory and the structures in society as well as their roles as expressed by roles theory. The structuration theory further adds the role of the agency which the other two theories failed to capture and demonstrates how it interacts with structures to shape behavior.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Academic Visibility: This is maximizing the role of a good student outside of the scholarly world. For this study, academic visibility means attempts by post-graduate student mothers to make their actions as expressions of their identities as scholars known to others.

Coping Strategies: It means investing own conscious effort to solve personal problems. For this study, coping strategies denotes postgraduate student mothers' ability to deal with issues and troubles encountered in their effort to pursue their studies.

Gender Roles: They are behaviors learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms. In this study, gender roles refer to the responsibilities played by post-graduate student mothers at home, at school and at their places of work.

Maternal Visibility: This is an indication of self as a mother. For this study, maternal visibility means attempts by post-graduate student mothers to make their actions as expressions of their identities as mothers known to others.

Motherhood: It is a cultural invention that reflects a belief adopted by a society that is passed down from one generation to the next. For this study, motherhood describes the vital connection that exists between a post-graduate student mother and her child (ren).

Motherhood Experiences: This is the awareness of or concrete understanding emanating from situations that one has seen, engaged in or passed through as a mother. For this study, motherhood experience means the practical wisdom of being a post-graduate student mother.

Multiple Roles: Being involved in more than one duty at a time. In this study, multiple roles refer to the many responsibilities associated with the post-graduate student mothers both at home, school, and work.

Non-traditional Students: This refers to a group of scholars in the universities aged 25 years or older. In this study, it refers to post-graduate student mothers at the University of Nairobi.

Patriarchy: This is a system of society in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it. For this study, patriarchy describes the way in which post-graduate student mothers pursued their careers in a society dominated by men.

Post-graduate Studies: Any professional learning that an individual acquires from a recognized institution after earning the first degree. For this study, post-graduate studies describes the professional training received by post-graduate student mothers after their first or second degree.

Post-graduate Student Mother: This is a female student enrolled in a post-graduate program at the University of Nairobi who has dependent child (ren). In this study, ‘child (ren)’ includes anyone below 18 years of age.

Role Conflict: This is when the performance of one role interferes with performance of another role. For this study, role conflict is the stress that is caused when motherhood role by post-graduate student mothers interferes with their studies and their work related duties.

Role Overload: This is the concurrent fulfillment of multiple roles and lack of resources to accomplish them. In this study, role overload exists when accomplishments of different roles of mother, student and employee by post-graduate student mothers are too high to perform thereby causing stress.

Role Strain: This is stress caused by one's inability to fill a particular role as an increased commitment to one role limits the performance of another role. For this study, role strain is the subjective, tension, frustration, and anxiety post-graduate student mothers experience when inappropriate behavior, expectations, or obligations are associated with a particular role.

Role Stress: It results from problems encountered in role performance. For this study, role stress means the problems faced by post-graduate student mothers as they play different roles at home, school and work.

Studentship: This is the role or position of a student. For this study, studentship means scholarship by post-graduate student mothers.

Support Systems: These are resources available to assist post-graduate student mothers in accomplishing their assigned responsibilities and roles. For this study, support systems mean the various sources of help to post-graduate student mothers.

Traditional Students: This refers to undergraduate students who enroll in college immediately after high school and pursue college studies on a continuous full-time basis. In this study, it relates to the broader University of Nairobi undergraduate student population which was not the focus of this study.

Triple Role: This refers to reproductive, productive and community managing roles played by women in the society. In this study, it relates to the multiple roles of child care responsibilities, school roles and work-related duties performed by post-graduate student mothers.

Work Role: A work role is an analytical organizing concept. For this study, a worker role is made up of many activities performed by post-graduate student mothers each of which had outcomes that defined by the managers of the role.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study as well as an overarching background to the study. It introduces the problem of the study as well as

research objectives and questions. It also justifies the need for the research and outlines delimitations and limitation of the study. Lastly, it presents theoretical framework informing the study ending with operational definition of key terms and organization of the study.

The second chapter is a review of relevant literature. It begins with an overview of post-graduate studies in Kenya. It then explores perceptions of post-graduate student mothers on multiple role combinations, benefits of post-graduate studies on post-graduate student mothers, challenges post-graduate student mothers face in balancing motherhood and education as well as coping strategies employed by post-graduate student mothers in their professional and career pursuits.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study. It clarifies the manner in which post-graduate student mothers were recruited and the method in which data or information obtained was processed. Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings of the study are provided in chapter four. Information regarding response rate and respondent demographics is reported followed by results of data analysis as per the four study objectives namely: Multiple roles of post-graduate student mothers, benefits of post-graduate student mothers, challenges post-graduate student mothers face in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies and coping strategies of post-graduate student mothers in their career pursuits.

Chapter five presents a summary of the findings of the study, deductions from those results, and prescriptions that emerged from the research. The first part of this chapter consists of a summary of key results arising from the study. The second section highlights the conclusions drawn from the significant findings of the study while the final section outlines the research

recommendations that emerged from the results of the study. These sections are discussed in cognizance of the study's objectives described in chapter one of the study regarding motherhood experiences of postgraduate students at the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature presented in this chapter focused on relevant research and documentation done in the field of study of motherhood and post-graduate studies. The literature highlights critical areas on global, regional and Kenyan situations related to multiple roles of women in post-graduate studies, benefits of post-graduate studies to post-graduate student mothers, challenges post-graduate student mothers face in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies and coping strategies they employ in their motherhood, studentship and career pursuits. The conceptual framework is also presented in the last section of this chapter.

2.2 Overview of Post-graduate Education

Collins English Language Dictionary (2014) defines post-graduate studies as education for a student who has obtained a degree from a university and is pursuing studies for a more advanced qualification. This section reviews the status of higher education from a global, regional and national perspective on, access, participation and enrolment in both public and private universities as indicated next:

2.2.1 Overview of Post-Graduate Education Enrollment

Many reforms have occurred in post-graduate education globally over the last few decades. A notable change is the growing student enrolment in both public and private universities (Adu, 2015). Total global tertiary enrolments are forecast to grow by 21 million between 2011 and

2020, or 1.4 percent per year on average (British Council Analysis, 2012). Unfortunately, the rise has not been uniform across regions.

The middle and upper-income countries have registered the most notable increase in post-graduate students' enrolment. Some of the countries of interest in this rise in higher education enrolment are Britain, Canada, and Germany. In these three countries, enrolment tripled leading to overstretching of available facilities in the institutions (UNESCO, 2016). In Sub-Saharan Africa however, only 6 percent of young people are enrolled in higher education institutions compared to the global average of 26 percent. Nonetheless, universities in many African countries are experiencing a surge in enrolment; that enrolment doubled between 2000 and 2010, increasing from 2.3 million to 5.2 million students (The Africa-American Institute-AAI, 2015).

In a study on higher education in Asia, the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2011) noted that a significant surge in gender equity had matched the rise in access to higher education. Indeed, the ADB report showed that in about a third of all Asian countries, women now outnumber and outperform men. Interestingly, UNESCO (2016) observed that women enlistment in postgraduate studies had developed twice as quickly as that of men for the last four decades in many nations. Despite social versatility, upgraded salary potential and universal emphasis on the need to limit the gender disparity in higher education, there are signs that gender balance will still require concerted focal consideration post-2015.

As indicated by Edward Fiske, chief writer of UNESCO's 'World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education', emerging nations, for example, Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of

Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Niger have higher education enlistsments intensely skewed in favour of men. Conversely, a scope of little island states in the Pacific including Anguilla, Antigua, Belize, Bermuda, Dominica, Jamaica and St Lucia, have a more significant number of women than men in their advanced higher education framework. Additional nations in this classification are Iceland, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

2.2.2 Overview of Higher Education in Kenya

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), set up in July 2012 to work as an autonomous administrative body to manage university and non- university education providers and oversees higher education in Kenya. TEQSA also monitors and evaluates the quality and standards of university and non-university higher education providers. Similarly, the Universities Act of 2012 sets up the Commission for University Education (CUE) to plan for the establishment and development of university training, University Funding Board (UFB) to coordinate financing of universities and Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) to handle admissions to public universities and colleges (University Act, 2012).

In Kenya, the current number of universities stands at sixty-eight. Twenty-three are public chartered universities; ten are public university constituent colleges; seventeen are private chartered Universities; five are private university constituent colleges, while twelve are Universities with letters of interim authority (KNBS, 2016). Higher education in Kenya comprise of technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training institutions as well as

research and development institutions (Education Survey, 2008) above the existing institutions of higher education and their colleges.

Post-graduate scholarship is offered in both public and private universities in Kenya. The first kind of post-graduate training incorporates advanced certification and diploma qualifications, most appropriate to individuals desiring to expand abilities as well as information acquired in their first degrees. Given a blend of coursework and research, the second kind of post-graduate training is a Masters degree. Masters degrees equip individuals with specific learning and preparation in a particular area of training as an expert (Education Survey, 2008).

Thirdly, doctorate training as a category of post-graduate training in Kenya comprises of main investigations in an area of one's specialization. Students are required to make a noteworthy unique contribution to a field of research after finishing their doctoral degree. Post-graduate coursework is alluring because it connects investigation and utilization of results by associating analysts and expert specialists, inquiry, and implementation, scholarly assignments and specialized instruction (Forsyth et al., 2009). Long lasting students and more established scholars trying to update, invigorate or supplement their insight, are entering institutions of higher learning in huge numbers (Yelland, 2011) to meet the labor market demand shift.

The current university population stands at 512,924 with the number of males at 302,585 as compared to 210, 338 females (KNBS, 2016) in Kenya. The high enrolment is mainly due to infrastructure development, the introduction of new courses and the opening of more satellite campuses especially in Nairobi. The steady rise in gross enrolment in both public and private

institutions of higher learning (KNBS, 2015) is due to the expansion of universities. Enrolment in public universities stands at 427,034 (Males: 257,326; Females: 169,708). In private universities, enrolment stands at 85,889 (Males: 45,259; Females: 40,630).

At the University of Nairobi, enrolment stands at 98,713 (Males: 60,102; Females: 38,611) (KNBS, 2016). A total of 15,393 students are currently enrolled at University of Nairobi for doctorate, masters and post-graduate diplomas (Males: 8,670; Females: 6,723) at the post-graduate level (Graduate School 2018). The literature review on higher education in Kenya has established disparities between male and female enrollment and population in Kenyan universities. These could be an indicator of underlying problems that need to be investigated and addressed to raise women enrolment and retention in higher education in Kenya.

2.3 Multiple Roles of Mothers in Post-Graduate Studies

Both women and men have frequently invested in multiple roles (Christina, Ahrens & Ryff, 2006). However, women are treated as subordinates (Adebayo, 2006) and, conceptualized as necessary labour needed to produce the desired products (Rothman, 2004). This devalues women's role outside of the home (Mottarella et al., 2008) since they have to decide what to prioritize between their family responsibilities and work-related duties (Hakim, 2005). Undeniably, women experience more stress while managing their multiple roles (Artazcoz et al. 2001).

2.3.1 Social Construction of Motherhood and Post-Graduate Studies

The role of being a mother is possibly a woman's most persistent role (Allan, 2004) that significantly contributes to the worsening emotional and bodily wellbeing of womenfolk (Sarafino, 2005), increased prevalence of unhappiness, apprehension, enduring exhaustion, and other strain associated disorders in women's welfare. This results if a woman fails to be a good mother whose behaviours and actions are subject to scrutiny in ways that do not occur for men and fathers (Jackson & Mannix, 2004). Also, women are more likely to develop protracted health complications such as prolonged exhaustion, despair, nervousness, and auxiliary ailments attributable to strain (Sarafino, 2006).

A socially constructed expectation of society is that women should act as primary caregivers (Ranson, 2004). As such, if they choose to go back to study for whatever motives, their responsibilities as mothers might conflict with those of students, generating inconsistency and incongruity among these roles and the home set up (Lamanna & Reidmann, 2000). This notion diminishes women's role outside of their homes (Ranson, 2004). That said, balancing these roles may either result in additional positives or negatives as specific circumstances generate progressive and advantageous outcomes regarding the welfare of employed womenfolk, but the opposite could also be true (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Societal creation is therefore accountable for shaping the invention of the responsibilities and duties of mothers as well as the way to break down those same problematic idealizations (Walls, 2007). The subsequent anticipations are, however, created and renovated with every transitory dogmatic, societal and traditional movement (Allan, 2004). As a result, women choose to go

through challenging phases of their roles and responsibilities as mothers individually and not taking chances of facing repercussions of being perceived by society as having failed in these roles.

Similarly, when a woman perceives herself as not having achieved the standard of what it means to be a good mother, regardless of how the role is defined, the result is feelings of guilt, blame, shame, and marginalization (Allan, 2004). Thus, the celebration of motherhood is firmly combined with blame and condemnation and cannot be disconnected from the societal creation of upright and wicked child rearing (Williams, 2009). The suggestions which have come about because of these developments have had straight outcomes on the character advancement of women in their part as mothers.

The two roles of women and mothers take an interest as monetarily beneficial subjects. But child-care and household obligations still tremendously seem to remain the primary duty of the mother, putting a vast 'twofold weight' on women (Eveline, 2001). That said, very little attention has been paid to the cultural, economic and social forces that work along with patriarchy to define appropriate motherhood. The social construction of motherhood therefore, has an impact as the characteristics attributed to good mothers have been used to subordinate millions of women in the society (Holmes, 2006). This is because motherhood is seen by many as a natural stage in most women's lives and it is therefore, considered beyond discussion (Holmes, 2006).

Motherhood is an idealized role symbolizing an unusual move in the domestic lives of women and their position in the public eye (Heisler & Ellis, 2008). However, most societies have

particular procedures that characterize the role of women in this manner regulating mothers' duties and responsibilities (Walls, 2007:5). A good mother is typified as one who remains at home and makes the primary focus of her world the development of her children (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). As this culture continues; a growing number of womenfolk who are employed and work outside the home notwithstanding.

Furthermore, working mothers remain accountable for day-to-day maintenance and welfare of families and for other domestic duties and responsibilities irrespective of being out eking a living away from their houses (Lynch, 2008). “This result from the dominant cultural assumption of motherhood which is continuously redesigned in response to changing economic and societal factors that change with time and place” (O'Really, 2004:5). African value systems emphasize the role of women as mothers and homemakers (Kobia, 2012). Any activity associated with women education is deemed contradictory and inappropriate for success in the family.

Not surprisingly, women experience tension between education and family roles thus increasing stress and depression (Oates, 2007), making balancing childcare and post-graduate studies overwhelming (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). Such a scenario may negatively impact on their performance at school, cause absenteeism at work and affect their overall life satisfaction (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Conversely, the capability to resolve difficulties and take the necessary resolutions regarding different duties and responsibilities is associated with the level of inter-role conflicts by women and their overall health and well-being (Odouard, 2005).

The social construction of motherhood has been highlighted in this section of literature in that, despite women's higher educational attainment levels, cultural challenges persist. Case in point is the view of women as homemakers, and an ideal mother is defined as the one who remains home and takes care of her children. The extent of these cultural pressures and how they impact completion of post-graduate studies by student mothers is evaluated. Recommendations for improving completion rates by post-graduate student mothers are put forth as well.

2.3.2 Combining Multiple Roles of Motherhood and Education

Post-graduate student mothers face many juggles and struggles as they experience inconsistent outlooks around the issue of being students at the same time trying to minimize the undesirable effects of such scholarship on their families. To cope with competing demands and the feeling of guilt regarding limited time spent with their families, post-graduate student mothers have to persevere a lot (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Lynch's (2008) study on student mothers indicated that multiple roles created emotional feelings, discord, and stress in attempting to succeed in both roles simultaneously. Similarly, in a study by Offstein, Larson, McNeil, and Mwale (2004), female students experienced higher stress and overwhelming levels of work that resulted in feelings of guilt over one's chosen priorities. Moreover, managing multiple roles does not give many women time they require to participate in school related activities (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

A study by Lynch (2008), revealed that the conflict of duties and responsibilities as well as the burden of these roles were the two types of role strain that affected graduate student parents,

especially mothers. Graduate student parents necessarily embodied multiple roles that became overwhelming to those without proper support. Once societal anticipations of duties and responsibilities clash with other potentials and opportunities, post-graduate student mothers experience inter-role conflict.

Even in developed countries, household chores have remained primarily assigned to women even where both husband and wife are employed. It is only a few countries including the USA and Canada where husbands help with childcare. In Kenya, doing household chores is not something many men are familiar with (Daily Nation, 2015) and getting them to do the tasks is difficult. Van Emmerik (2002), while examining women education, found that a supportive climate was beneficial. Also, practical help was necessary for reducing dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion by female students. .

Although men and women have frequently invested in multiple roles, the literature review on combining multiple roles of motherhood and education has revealed that women are still responsible for childcare and household chores, which results in feelings of guilt on the issue of not having adequate time with family. To overcome this challenge, post-graduate student mothers have to cede a lot of their time.

2.3.3 Conflicting Demands of Child Care and School Roles

Post-graduate student mothers face many juggles and struggles as they experience inconsistent emotional states of being students at the same time trying to minimize the undesirable effects of such scholarship on the family. Post-graduate student mothers have to cope with competing

demands and the feeling of guilt on the issue of not having adequate time with family (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Women go through inter-role conflict once societal anticipations of duties and responsibilities clash with other potentials and opportunities (Oates, 2007).

To some women, studying at post-graduate level while raising children is made possible with partner support (Bosch, 2013). However, little support has been found for an assertion that males and females who perform unconventional duties and responsibilities will have difficulties. Females who harmonize education and motherhood experience role conflict. Studies have shown that an association exists between progressive education achievement through generations and improved access to schooling by women (Bhalla et al., 2003). This result in the empowerment of women through health promotions (Malhotra et al., 2003) in female fertility and mortality, formal labor forces participation (Aromolaran, 2002) and formal employment (Dowling & Worsick, 2001).

The literature review highlights the conflicting demands of childcare and educational roles of post-graduate student mothers. These mothers are in a unique position where they share with their school-age children the critical and demanding role of student. These ‘conflicting demands’ is a way to characterize the conflicts that emanate from work, family and academic roles.

2.3.4 Effects of Gender Roles on Postgraduate Student Mothers

Women have decided to pursue and solicit linkages for backing their cause within and outside institutions of higher learning. Lynch’s (2008), study, examining post-graduate student mothers

in higher education revealed that financial support and childcare were the most significant challenges post-graduate student mothers faced as a result of a structural mismatch between their status as post-graduate student mothers and their work. The university did not offer any on-site childcare options.

A study by Barnett & Hyde-(2001) on a combination of different and numerous duties and responsibilities demonstrated that womenfolk, who engross themselves in such roles, had reported reduced levels of strain and increased levels of individual health. For example, womenfolk with satisfying jobs, particularly those related to thought-provoking situations, counterbalance the undesirable implications of childrearing load. The outcomes suggested that stress, clash or the lack of backing in the household unit may be a cause of inter-role conflict. As a result, these women experience increasing stress and depression which results to lower completion rates by women as compared to men who have fewer roles (Oates, 2007).

Although some post-graduate student mothers have been successful in gaining academic status, literature review on effects of gender roles on post-graduate student mothers has revealed that postgraduate student mothers often encounter societal related impediments. This is because, the perceptions of their duties and responsibilities, and anticipations that the society has of them clash. In every instance, the challenges are ascribed to the twin accountabilities of being a wife or a mother and career woman. In some cases, the customary duties and responsibilities are established devoid of the problem, but the career obligations are perceived to be unimportant.

2.4 Benefits of Post-Graduate Studies on Student Mothers

Higher education is associated with significant benefits to individual post-graduate student mothers. Several studies have revealed how post-graduate student mothers have benefited from post-graduate studies in some ways. They include elevation of student mothers' positions in the household, role modeling for the children, positive social change in gender roles, and a professional identity for the student mothers as further illustrated next:

2.4.1 Elevates Position of Student Mothers

The level of education access by women can signify their position in any civilization. Past research worldwide demonstrates that educating women is critical for the wellbeing of the entire household as well as for better prospects in the coming future. Increased mother's level of education has more significant impact on the health of children their education and opportunities for growing up to be productive adults than increased father's level of education. Traditionally, the universal depiction has been one of prejudice against females as compared to male in schooling, largely due to traditional outlooks of the duties and responsibilities which women are assigned by society as mirrored in their level of educational access.

In every society, sex differences are given social meanings, and that society still places its values on the idea that a woman's place is in the home caring for her children. In addition, the idea that working mothers neglect their offsprings, despite the lack of verifying research evidence, still exists. In essence, this value orientation places the working mother in a dilemma (Hettinger, 1965). A study by Polson, (2003), suggests that it is critical to understand the capacity of

students who are also mothers to manage their multiple roles and responsibilities to prevent attrition.

In Kenya, however, many fathers concentrate on acquiring a livelihood for the household which may sometimes directly affect the relations in the family as there is no time to bond with children and spouse. The obligation of the youngsters then falls on the shoulders of the two spouses not merely on the mother. If mothers depend excessively on day-care service providers for their offsprings and there is no time invested on their offsprings as many fathers do, a similar disconnect may happen to mothers as well.

The literature on the positive effects of studying by post-graduate student mothers indicates that every aspect of a woman's life is affected by combining post-graduate studies with motherhood. However, it is rewarding regarding self-awareness, pride and a feeling of accomplishment. Studying also provides post-graduate student mothers with a sense of independence and enthusiasm for exposing them to an immense volume of information as revealed in this literature.

Postgraduate studies also enhance tolerance and expansion in social networks of post-graduate student mothers. Also, it better career prospects by improving post-graduate student mothers' income level and financial safety upon graduation. Therefore, this study helps in identifying how mothers would better be able to grow a career niche apart from being a mother by evaluating how the societal transformation in gender roles has played a significant role in the improvement of women enrollment, retention and completion rates in post-graduate studies.

2.4.2 Role Model for the Offsprings

Post-graduate studies are associated with the positive impact on post-graduate student mothers in that many student mothers aspire to be role models for their offsprings. In Moreau and Kerner's (2012) study, students reported being positive 'role model' to their offsprings. Polson's (2003) study also indicated that post-graduate student mothers were able to overcome their challenges by having a realistic assessment of their workload and planning accordingly. In this, they utilized their capabilities emanating from their traits and acquired skills. The workload also helped the post-graduate student mothers in expanding their capabilities.

The literature on the positive impact of studying by post-graduate student mothers revealed that duties are responsibilities based on gender are assumptions for people in their respective genders to behave in a certain way as provided by specific traditions as suitable for male and female. However, a feeling of opportunity and energy from the experience of postgraduate student mothers was revealed by the literature. Their heightened prospects could be associated with acquired knowledge in their learning process as well as a projected placement that their qualifications will accord them after completion of their studies.

2.4.3 Positive Social Change in Gender Roles

More women's access to education has seen social change in gender roles. This trend of increase in number of women taking up higher education was confirmed by Kuperberg (2009) who reported that women constituted 45 percent of all grandaunds receiving doctoral degrees in the United States as compared to only 10 percent in the year 1970. Lynch (2008) however observed that household roles are still as highly likely to interfere with a woman's post-graduate studies.

Childcare obligations influence the rate at which universities produce post-graduate student mothers. This is because, many post-graduate student mothers value both motherhood and education roles to avoid a clash between the two roles (Barnett and Hyde, 2001).

The literature on social change in gender roles revealed that studying provides post-graduate student mothers with a feeling of independence and enthusiasm for exposing them to an immense volume of information. This gives them great prospects in the future and empowers them to contribute to society's wellbeing due to the duties and responsibilities based on gender that are anticipations or assumptions for people in their respective genders to behave in a certain way as provided by specific traditions as good for male and female.

2.4.4 Professional Identity

Mothers are acquiring professional identity besides motherhood as revealed by Vanderslice and Litsch (1998) whose study indicated that women's increased education was positively correlated with self-confidence, open-mindedness, and competitiveness. Combining post-graduate studies with motherhood seems to have rewarded post-graduate student mothers with becoming more self-aware, increased confidence and a sense of achievement. Vryonides and Visilakis, (2008) also confirmed that post-graduate student mothers got better prospects in life, increased energy and learning from their post-graduate studies.

A feeling of individual accomplishment and self-advancement were some of the significant reasons behind post-graduate student mothers pursuing post-graduate studies (Walkup, 2004). Thus, Post-graduate studies not only act as a catalyst for personal growth for post-graduate

student mothers but also as a source of pride that increases their self-esteem (Haleman, 2004), which is beneficial to their self growth.

The literature on professional identity by post-graduate student mothers helped identify how post-graduate studies have equipped women with critical capabilities that are essential to their professional and career growth. This literature brought out the benefits of combining academics and motherhood roles albeit challenges that post-graduate student mothers encounter in their day to day lives.

2.5 Challenges Facing Women in Balancing Motherhood and Education

Post-graduate student mothers face multiple challenges in balancing motherhood and education resulting in them lagging behind in participation, access and in educational achievement (Masanja, 2010). The barrier to participation includes lack of capacity to cope with the demands of academics and motherhood, stress from multiple roles, the poor wellbeing of student mothers, the clash of multiple roles and social-cultural challenges. All these factors contribute to lower completion rates by post-graduate student mothers (Greiner & Burke, 2008).

2.5.1 Demands of Academics and Motherhood

Post-graduate student mothers who have household duties and responsibilities also have specifically different necessities from the rest of the population that many institutions of higher learning are considered to work for. They spend more time on child care and also work more to meet their many financial obligations as they are expected to make significant contributions both in their families and in their learning process. This takes away crucial time they should spend

studying. However, several university activities have not adapted to the necessities of this category of scholars (Commission for a Nation of Learners-CNL, 2000).

Globally, there has been a gender gap in educational participation especially in postgraduate studies and particularly in developing countries (Masanja, 2010), as women bear more burdens of marriage, family, and child-rearing than men (Mason & Goulden, 2004). In Europe, women who find themselves balancing roles of parenting and studentship often struggle and sometimes fail due to tensions and contradictions including bad relationships with advisors, financial insecurity, career uncertainty, and closed or inflexible timelines.

However, most institutional efforts devoted to retaining and recruiting parents in higher education tend to focus more on bachelors level students rather than graduate students who also require the much needed support to succeed in their education. This is because, these policies are primarily designed to aid scholars who have already attained academic jobs, while there is even less systemic help in place for graduate students (Kennelly & Spalter-Roth, 2006).

In sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, admission and accomplishment of higher learning by women is still the major impediment that dents women's scholarly attainment, welfare and professional progression. In Senegal, for instance, womenfolk constitute just about 35% of higher learning enlistments. In Ethiopia, women are about 24% of the total enlistment in university, several of them being beneficiaries of government policies that promote affirmative action aiming to improve enrollment of more women scholars (Forum for African Women

Educationalists - FAWE, 2011). In 2009, enrolment of female students stood at 30% of the total students in selected universities and colleges in Kenya (Masanja, 2010).

To make matters worse, a significantly high proportion of women drop out after their first year in the university (FAWE, 2011). This is due to lack of measures accompanying policies to increase female enrolment in post-graduate studies which can back them to effectively finish their learning and get abilities pertinent to circumstances of their job market. Additionally, women are likely to get late or miss occasional classes, arrive late or leave early, need irregular hours, and are subject to last-minute changes and late provision of timetables (Masanja, 2010).

As a result, women are sometimes penalized by strict attendance targets which do not take into account their circumstances. This is associated with the fact that society maintains specific expectations of motherhood and caregiving that takes away crucial time that woman would otherwise spend on their studies (Mottarella et al., 2009). This impedes women's ability to socially integrate and adjust upon their return to school after childbirth; thus presenting a powerful barrier to female success (Mottarella et al., 2008).

The literature review on post-graduate studies and motherhood has identified several challenges facing post-graduate student mothers in coping with their multiple roles. In sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, most services on campus are not supportive of student parents due to the ways that extra-curricular events are organized and how orientation sessions are conducted. Also, extra-curricular activities are not always family friendly as student parents may not be made aware of appropriate resources for specific to their unique needs as student parents.

2.5.2 Stress from Multiple Roles

Stress emanating from the management of multiple roles assigned by being scholar and wife or mother in a household, together with undesirable traditional practices is a shared experience by female students enlisted for higher learning globally (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006). The customary duties and responsibilities of women in rustic Kenya are to be a mother, deal with family or household obligations, and to be engaged in agrarian undertakings that need annual devotion such as land preparation, reaping, culinary tasks, or storage of farm produce (Wane, 2003).

The policy framework is a crucial hindrance to enrollment of women scholars in universities (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Globally, many countries lack rules and guidelines that promote women involvement to provide organizational support structures for womenfolk in their different duties and responsibilities as mothers, wives, and professionals. The institutions of higher learning barely support the choices of post-graduate student mothers as they mostly expect household obligations to be catered for with no interruption of post-graduate mothers' studies and with the limited necessity for higher institutions of learning adaptation if any (Home & Hinds, 2000).

In Kenya, gender policy in education published by the Ministry of Education (2007) revealed various gender inequalities in admissions inclining towards male scholars in public universities. In a study by Leong, (1992), female students reported more problems in balancing time commitments as compared to their male counterparts since they were anticipated to handle more duties and responsibilities of a scholar or an employed partner without any change of their roles as spouse, mother and taking care of the household. This role overload resulted in 'superwoman

syndrome,' which is caused by expectations that are impossible to fulfill, thus contributing to role strain (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015).

Robin (2008) notes that several contemporary university learning activities are ill prepared to address the requirements of student mothers. Majority of post-graduate student mothers face many stressors like employment demands, time pressures and social and family responsibilities (Adebayo, 2006). As a result, managing these roles creates tension and conflict that comes up once job requirements and household obligations become irreconcilable with one another. Impediments to involvement, for instance, include the absence of flexibility in timetable and programming, scholarly content, methods of tuition, and accessibility of education facilities, all of which yield poor completion rate of women graduate scholars.

Further, challenges exist for gender equality in higher education through opportunity cost, socio-cultural factors, distance, quality and health (Watkins, 2000). Similarly, post-graduate student mothers face challenges as they juggle multiple roles of education and motherhood that prevent them from moving along the academic path as mothers. This is as a consequence of social and self-expectations, physical and psychological demands of pregnancies and policies with specific standards of practice (Robbin & Morag, 2008). These challenges may result from women's primary role as child bearer and higher education structures that have excluded women in general and specifically women who are mothers and wives (Wolf & Ward, 2006).

The literature on motherhood challenges alongside studentship at a post-graduate level has revealed that difficulties experienced by post-graduate student mothers resulting from women's

primary role as caregivers and higher education structures pull them away from their schoolwork. However, most men are yet to increase their share of domestic duties despite women's greater participation in the workforce.

2.5.3 Wellbeing of Post-Graduate Student Mothers

Women have to balance between their school, working and family due to a combination of multiple roles. In a study by Barnett & Hyde (2001), women attempted myriad prospects to triumph and to cultivate a sense of self-assurance and motivation. These multiple roles may result in being overburdened by responsibilities as well as clashing of those responsibilities that contribute to increased stress. These mothers struggled to balance between being a mother and a professional in role fulfillment, personal goals, and expectations and academic demands resulting to stress that had dire consequences on their physical, psychological and interpersonal selves (Robbin & Morag, 2008).

Great scholars, especially at advance levels of education, are determined by their commitment to their respective professions while great mothers are judged on their dedication to their youngsters. Along these lines, every role needs full commitment to duty bringing about innate clash for women who have attempted to fulfill both of them (Lynch, 2008). A study by Grady; McCarthy; Darcy; & Kirrane, (2014) revealed that role conflict resulted from the disagreement between roles that seem to be mutually exclusive such as simultaneously embodying student and parent role. Role overload was similar and involved challenges of navigating multiple roles that just become too much for student parents to manage successfully.

The literature on motherhood challenges and wellbeing of post-graduate student mothers has revealed that many of them have a life divided between contending structures of household and university. This situation further affects post-graduate student mothers by causing conflicts between spouses. Also, post-graduate student mothers face challenges to fulfill their own goals and expectations. This study investigated how the challenges faced by post-graduate student mothers affect their performance both in school and at home.

2.5.4 Clash of Multiple Roles by Postgraduate Student Mothers

Amalgamation of different duties and responsibilities implies that post-graduate student mothers need to strike a balance between their scholarly work, professional or career roles and roles associated with the household or the family (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). These multiple roles produce a sense of being overburdened by responsibilities as well as clashing of those responsibilities that contribute to increased stress. On the other hand, the roles offer post-graduate student mothers multiple opportunities to experience success and to develop a sense of self-confidence and self-agency (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

An atmosphere sympathetic to the plight of post-graduate student mothers increases the welfare of career women as this is connected to collective backing from spouses, community, managers, and colleagues (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Research by Hochschild, (2003), on multiple roles of the workplace and home on modern couples found that workplace and home are incredibly similar to the obstacles women face when managing family and education. Hochschild concluded that females have a life divided between contending structures of household and workplace.

There exist detrimental impediments to gender parity in higher learning through opportunity cost, socio-cultural factors, distance, quality and health (Watkins, 2000). Similarly, post-graduate student mothers face challenges as they juggle multiple roles of education and motherhood that prevent them from moving along the academic path as mothers through social and self-expectations, physical and psychological demands of pregnancies and policies with specific standards of practice (Robin et al., 2008). The challenges may result from women's primary role as caregivers that pull them away from their school work (Stalker, 2001).

Despite women's greater participation in the workforce, most men have yet to increase their share of domestic duties. The way women view their education situation has enormous implications for their attitudes about work and life. When women self-identify themselves as having a career, they report being more satisfied and feeling more positive in every area. However, inter-role clash is one of the circumstances that decrease their advantages of taking part in many different roles (Oates, 2007). These could be attributed to the sum of different roles, parity, age bracket of the children, whether they are married or unmarried and household backing.

Inter-role clash has demonstrated the influence of strain and employee retention in the workplace. This is because women tend to abandon their professional aspirations and choose to have time with their families and to raise children or their job ends up hurting their families (Guendouzi, 2006). Looking for methods to avoid such a clash has repercussions regarding societal transformation through the lessening of strain and harmonizing of different roles.

The literature review on challenges in multiple role combinations by post-graduate student mothers has revealed that women are perceived as primary caregivers, and any other role played outside motherhood seem irrelevant. Therefore, women professionals continue with their roles in the households even though most of the time they are out of their homes earning a living. This is not the case to their male counterparts.

2.5.5 Socio-cultural Stereotypes affecting Post-graduate Student Mothers

Women participation in higher education is hindered by traditional attitudes and stereotypes about their roles and abilities that portray them as wives and mothers and the notion that higher education may hinder women's chances of a good marriage (UNESCO, 1993). Therefore, their sole responsibility is caring for sick children, and if a mother is enrolled in tertiary institutions, childcare has to be arranged (Family Matters, 1991). In a study by Barnett & Hyde (2001), women tried many different prospects to triumph and to cultivate self-assurance and motivation.

Literature on socio-cultural challenges affecting post-graduate student mothers has revealed how post-graduate student mothers experience tension as they try to balance the multiple roles of family responsibilities, work and student roles. The literature further revealed that school and family roles increase marital tension, time conflicts, stress, anxiety, and depression for post-graduate student mothers in addition to stressors like employment demands, time pressures, social and family responsibilities.

2.6 Coping Strategies by Postgraduate Student Mothers

A strategy is a pattern of activities that describes how the end (goals) will be achieved by the means (resources) (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1996). Coping, on the other hand, denotes investing one's conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems to minimize stress (Weiten & Lloyd, 2008). By coping, postgraduate student mothers can confront and adapt to situations enabling them to react to behaviors, thoughts, and emotions caused by stressful events.

An approach adopted to deal with a challenge is conceptualized as a coping strategy. It is a survival skill to manage challenges (Anspaugh; Hamrick, & Rosato, (2003). The efficacy of the surviving strategy depends on the kind of stress, the person, and the surroundings (Carver & Connor, 2010). However, utilization of any adapting methodology does not generally prompt or necessarily result in progress. Regardless, problem-focused coping strategies are typically prescribed.

There are three forms of coping strategies: Problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies. The problem-focused coping strategy seeks to change the source of problems by gathering information, analyzing and making rational decisions to deal with the problem. Problem-focused strategy tries to change the wellbeing of issues by collecting social actions data, breaking it down and settling on reasonable choices to manage a specific issue (Hox & Boeije, 2005), while emotion-focused coping strategy aims at reducing the emotive anguish connected to difficulties by looking for emotive backing (Lane, Jones & Stevens, 2002).

The problem-focused strategy emphasizes on currently managing the issue at hand while emotion-focused strategy is concerned about managing the enthusiastic misery evoked by the problem (Pienaar & Rothman, 2003). Avoidance coping strategy removes the individual from the distressing condition. It is dissimilar to problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies where the individual stays in the problem and tries to deal with the situation (Kowalski & Crocker, 2001).

According to Kashden et al. (2006), group evasion is an emotion-focused strategy that can incorporate either individual situated or assignment based systems. Avoidance varies from the issue, and emotion-focused strategy in that evasion of a circumstance indeed expels the individual from the distressing condition, though problem-focused strategy and emotion-focused strategy empower a man to stay in and deal with the situation (Kowalski & Crocker, 2001). In any case, Kashden et al., (2006) grouped evasion as an enthusiastic based strategy procedure. The present study isolated a few emotionally supportive networks as key in helping post-graduate student mothers in adapting to their multiple roles as mothers, employees, and students as highlighted by institutional and social support next:

2.6.1 Institutional Support

Institutional support for student mothers can be seen as a problem-focused coping strategy to deal with the situation. A study by Armstrong and Burden (2010) that focused on e-learning and what students went through in their first year revealed several methods in which universities can back post-graduate student mothers more successfully to deal with their challenges and balance multiple roles of child care, studentship, and work. These include modifications in the delivery

of programs to help in providing for flexible academic tasks, expand faculty mindfulness and taking into account the plight of post-graduate student mothers. It also encompasses upgrades like information provision and guidance as well as skills training to assist post-graduate student mothers in meeting the requirements of post-graduate studies.

A study by Lynch (2008), regarding the experience of post-graduate student mothers in the university, revealed that childcare services were expensive and collided with their studies. In response, post-graduate student mothers employed Problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies for survival. To this end, Gitau (2004) observed that difficulties regarding female student parents must be deliberately figured out to empower them to meet their higher education attainment objectives.

The literature on institutional support to post-graduate student mothers revealed that they require a type of help to empower them to accomplish their scholarly goals. Currently, the resources and rules shaping post-graduate student mothers' experiences are not favorable to them. The people, as well as institutions such as family, university, and marriage that they interact within the course of their study, are also sometimes not supportive of promoting their goals as they compete for time allocated for various duties and responsibilities.

a) Family Support

Family support is a critical pillar in emotion-centered coping strategy to postgraduate student mothers. An investigation by Scott et al. (1998) gave an account of the many-sided experiences that womenfolk confront while managing the needs of households, job, and scholarly work. A

noteworthy aspect recognized by the present investigation was the significance of support from the family. Many women arranged their academic work in such a way that it did not interfere with the necessities of their households. In many cases, this implied that they enrolled for part-time learning. Many women were prepared to take more time to finish their degree to lessen the effect that their learning time would have on the family.

The principal theme identified with family support was that although some spouses and families demonstrated their support and some attempted to give practical help, many of the women felt that they had to take care of their households first. There was a notion, for some, that learning was something of a self-actualization pursuit and must be embraced when their families' needs have already been met. Delegation of family roles was a coping strategy identified to help postgraduate student mothers deal with their multiple roles. Postgraduate student mothers cited mothers, grandmothers, siblings and their grown-up daughters as their fundamental help suppliers to take up their duties and responsibilities for them.

In the absence of post-graduate student mothers, few of their spouses sorted out and directed others in the household to attend to their family tasks. Furthermore, they watched over their offsprings. The post-graduate student mothers kept in mind the end goal to improve the quality of family life. They called their spouses regularly to motivate them in overseeing or doing house chores for them. Post-graduate student mothers who passed on their duties and responsibilities to other household members additionally pointed out that they expanded their phone conversations with individuals in their families to make sure all domestic tasks were well taken care of. Nonetheless, they regularly went home deliberately to satisfy household or marital commitments.

The study further revealed that students who pre-arranged family activities before seeking higher education did not have a problem once their lectures commenced. Post-graduate student mothers sought information regarding life in the university and consulted more experienced students on handling post-graduate studies and motherhood. Some post-graduate student mothers enlisted services of housekeepers while others sent their youngsters to relatives or set aside cash or sought credit for laundry equipment to make household chores manageable.

In other pre-arranged plans, some post-graduate student mothers held off their enrollment until their children were old and did not need much care. Others sent their children to boarding schools to enable them to concentrate on their studies. Some rented houses nearer universities but regularly visited their families on weekends and during holidays to particular family and marital commitments. The post-graduate student mothers kept in constant touch through phone calls to ensure all was well with their family. In any case, some of them were, from time to time, called home to deal with some of the tasks that relatives could not deal with, for example, dealing with sick children or spouses.

An investigation by Ansah et al. (2007) on coping strategies by post-graduate student mothers uncovered that they connected with house-helps to assist them in their household tasks and arranged family work alongside school timetables to create an opportunity for their learning. Be that as it may, the kind of household laborers employed and how the scholars arranged their work routines were not expressed. This investigation additionally uncovered those scholars who merged family and scholarly work set aside some time for both family life and academic work by going home every now and again, at weekends, when they did not have lectures.

As confirmed by an investigation by Ansah et al. (2007) post-graduate student mothers relied on their peers for support in academics when they missed lectures. The instructors did not often recap what they lectured in post-graduate student mothers' absence hence they were left to rely on their colleagues to update them. The post-graduate student mothers needed to play their role in the family as there were no other people to perform such tasks as childcare. Even though they had rooms in the hostels, some female students kept on offering shelter to some of their family members off university premises in the towns nearby as they needed to take care of family needs while others prompt some family members on the telephone to perform obligations on their behalf.

The literature on family support to post-graduate student mothers revealed that various families struggled to uphold fully functional households through household members. However, the agents coming to help could sometimes jeopardize the interests of the family and student mothers. Family members and society, in general, may not sustain their support for post-graduate student mothers to continue with their studies. Post-graduate student mothers' studies were therefore affected when such support was lacking.

b) University Support

Governments can do a lot in improving conditions to favor childcare for post-graduate student mothers at the university level. If the university can minimize the trouble student mothers go through, the students would avoid trouble entirely. In a study by Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), university support to student mothers helped them in coping with their multiple roles. Scholars' diligence and achievement were identified with the degree to which they associated with active

scholars in college within and out of their classes (Kuh, 2003). Scholars who had constructive cooperations with college staff and other workers within the university had better scholarly achievement and were happier with their academic experience than those who did not have constructive cooperations (Amelink, 2005).

In their investigation, Kuh & Hu, (2001) established that the impacts of scholars and staff cooperation were contingent on scholars experience at the university. For instance, those scholars who showed better preparedness for their scholastic work and those who put their best efforts to their learning interfaced more often with the employees of their respective faculties. It is not evident whether this is because such scholars were more decisive in reaching out to employees or whether the employees welcomed scholars who did well scholastically. In all probability, both ways could be possible.

Campus centers for taking care of youngsters can be of great assistance in meeting the needs of post-graduate student mothers by giving them an opportunity to take care of their offsprings adequately as they go for their lectures. An investigation at Monroe Community College (MCC, 2013) on the impact of campus childcare access on student mothers' scholastic results shows the essential part it can play in scholars' academic achievement. MCC scholars with youngsters less than six years who utilized the campus center would probably come back to class in the future than their colleagues who did not use the childcare center.

Further on institutional support, for most scholars more often than not, interaction with staff is recommended as much as possible. Scholars' formal and informal interactions with employees

appear to emphatically impact (however by implication) what scholars get from their school experience, their perspectives of the prevailing circumstances in college (particularly the nature of personal relations), and their fulfillment. The conceivable special cases are meeting with employees about enhancing their official work and interfacing with staff casually outside the classroom (Kuh and Hu, 2001).

Fries-Britt & Turner (2002) established that scholars at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) credited their accomplishments to the consolation and boost they got from personnel in their respective faculties. In the same way, stable associations with faculty personnel seemed to add to Latino scholars' feeling of having a place they belong and their feeling that they are esteemed and "matter" in the society (Dayton et al. 2004). In like manner, among the unique attributes credited to Tribal Colleges are excellent scholar-personnel associations that give scholars special consideration and chances to coordinate universal principles into the learning environment (Sallie Mae Education Institute-SMEI, 2000).

Contact with staff focused on better performance was identified with the measure of time given to scholarly activities. These contacts may fortify a scholar's underlying objectives and extend the responsibility regarding completion of academic work to graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). They can be for different exercises, for example, getting expeditious criticism, talking about evaluations and assignments, and examining thoughts outside the classroom, the more regular the contact, the better (Kuh, 2004).

An investigation by Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) uncovered that co-curricular exercises were emphatically identified with diligence. Involvement in co-curricular activities impacted perseverance by associating scholars both mentally and socially to a liking bunch that is accomplishment-oriented and strengthens the aspiration to graduate, and participating in exercises that assist them to create abilities and capabilities that empower them in prevailing in the university. Although contribution in co-curricular activities is connected with diligence (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005), more than two-fifths of scholars at four-year universities and 84 percent of scholars at two-year universities invested no efforts in these exercises (NSSE, 2005).

Shanahan, (2000) proposed that teachers can give critical help to develop scholars by assisting them in investigating questions in their capacities when these emerge, underscoring the benefits of their more noteworthy beneficial involvement in moving toward their learning, and also promising social and study groups between these scholars, to encourage peer support. Furthermore, she recommends that early developmental criticism would assist in building self-esteem. Bowl, (2001) likewise concentrated on the part of faculty personnel in unraveling college aspirations for the advantage of non-customary scholars such as post-graduate student mothers.

Thomas (2002), investigated the manner by which college support could add to continuation among full-time scholars of any age. She underlined the significance of universities' principles and actions in upholding cultural variety. She distinguished top problems to be the congeniality of personnel and their willingness to create comprehensive instruction models that acknowledged and regarded diversity. Universities' capacity to encourage interpersonal organizations and

consolation from colleagues through arrangements that created chances to mingle and to learn cooperatively was also identified.

An investigation by Tones et al. (2009) in Queensland uncovered a progression of possible ways to assist scholars. These ways incorporated a specific course focused on older scholars through the college's instructing and learning improvement program. The other method was staff mindfulness training. Elderly scholar survival reference was also vital for giving a reasonable comprehension of the college. Another important thing was the accessibility of amenities for older scholars and the possibility for scholars to choose to study in university or remotely for each selected unit toward the beginning of every semester.

An investigation by Moss, (2004) that concentrated on 17 females in the UK (not all mothers) asked them questions, after their completion, to investigate their encounters and view of higher education. The sample comprised of 33% black females. From the sociology of time and space, Moss created three ideas which attract consideration regarding distinctive 'levels of occasions' in female scholars' lives. Reduction in social security and the availability of credit for higher education made numerous women work, with a noteworthy wellspring of work for the female scholars being care-related work, frequently scheduling this around learning, and jobs in the evenings and ends of the week.

Further, many female students were confronted with questions by other relatives and regularly needed to rationalize the time spent learning. Many likewise felt under more strain to legitimize any absences at school. Scholars endured the impacts of expanded numbers, semesterization, and

constrained access to personnel in significant circumstances, for instance when assignments were expected (Moss, 2004).

An investigation by Sweet & Moen, (2007) on student mothers uncovered that regardless of the efforts by new labor to promote higher education among marginalized groups, the circumstances that enabled scholars to learn viably (more remarkable time, space and cash) were declining. For these females, 'space and time for learning was grabbed from space and time for a job, domestic chores, recreation and others'. The income generating capability of female scholars and how cash was overseen in their households was imperative too, with guardians as well as spouses denying cash individuals who veered off from their expectations and traditional roles.

The study further revealed that the greater part of the females kept on doing the same measure of domestic work as they did before gaining employment or starting on their studies, reverberating US researchers (Sweet & Moen, 2007). There was likewise a requirement for the female scholars to legitimize the advantages of increased schooling to the family unit, despite the fact that the individuals who had employment had more control over what goes on inside the home. Recreation time was regularly given a low priority, with different exercises within the household outweighing everything else.

In their investigation on auditing extending interest, *Gorard et al., (2006)*, presumed that auxiliary adaptability in the conveyance of projects is of highest significance in empowering scholars to consolidate learning with different obligations, for example, job and domestic chores.

They recommended distance learning, early accessibility of timetables and flexible timetabling that could all contribute to making this less demanding.

Nectar & Botterill's, (1999) study established that the essential worries of the hospitality management scholars in their investigation were necessary to all scholars and entailed great facilities, good offices and libraries, open and functional associations with scholarly staff and speedy and sufficient marking on composed assignments. For this situation, the older scholars favored full incorporation with others and were cautious than being dealt with as a different category would fuel a feeling of distinction.

The impact of the scholarly help empowered the scholars to create scholastic self-assurance. This agrees with an investigation carried out by Murphy & Roopchand, (2003) who recommended that if postgraduate scholars new to college accomplished great scholastic outcomes and increased positive criticism; they would develop self-assurance and turn out to be progressively inspired to learn. This was a solid idea in the results with many scholars saying that they accomplished higher results than they expected and this gave them more impetus to learn.

A study by Urquhart & Pooley, (2007) discovered that most scholar groups look for societal, emotive, and data support to enable them sail through their college to professional life. The same was valid for the females in this investigation who regularly revealed their first encounter with the college life as inaccessible and hostile. Specifically, female scholars detailed a requirement for more personal acknowledgment and affirmation towards the beginning of their course.

Induction support emerged as one of the significant topics in relations to joining college and spanned around the absence of individual interfaces with the college (Urquhart & Pooley, 2007). Many female scholars revealed that the choice to come back to the University for higher education was troublesome and intricate. For many, it had taken quite a long time while of inquiries and foresight. The application procedure was genuinely clear. However, it spoke to the possibility of real change in female scholars' lives.

An investigation by Armstrong & Burden, (2010) at the University of Surrey with post-graduate scholars to pick up their point of view on the familiarization procedure and their first-year encounter uncovered post-graduate scholars' desires and discernment. Scholars were extremely baffled by an absence of social encounters at the college. Freshers' week was seen to have generally been a misuse of their time. Post-graduate scholars sensed that there was no endeavor to separate them from more youthful scholars or furnish them with data that was particularly significant to them. Some detailed a similar issue as far as they could tell of learning, with some personnel certainly expecting that all scholars were 18 years of age.

Literature shows that university support as a coping strategy to post-graduate student mothers is key to their academic success as they generally considered themselves to be exceptionally well supported academically and well beyond their expectations by the support system around them. However, some were not ready to seek support or were too busy to approach academic staff, non-academic and university management for assistance.

2.6.2 Social Support

In the current study, social support was identified by majority post-graduate student mothers as a viable coping strategy. They revealed that they were not searching for it and were not anticipating that they would create a friendship with others or enter into social groups. Their desire concentrated on scholarly work, completing their work on time and not letting any associations distract them. As far as 'socio-cultural identities' are concerned, the representation of an ideal mother and that of a good post-graduate student are regularly in strife.

In an investigation by Mills (2008), respondents concocted adapting techniques that sought to stay away from such a social clash and guaranteeing achievement in the two roles. Such techniques included ignoring the role of a mother in the scholastic domain (maternal invisibility) and also minimizing the role of a good post-graduate student outside of the scholarly world (academic invisibility).

Many fortified the societal anticipations that children ideally should exclusively be taken care of by their mothers with many leaving out their male spouses in childcare responsibilities. The consolidated impact of such actions is to freely fragment the identities of women as mothers and as post-graduate students. Thus, even though respondents individually characterized themselves as 'post-graduate student mothers,' they never displayed their mixed personalities, either to the scholarly realm or the society in general.

In a study by Pedersen & Ivey, (1994), creation of new social boundaries was a strategy used by post-graduate student mothers to balance their multiple roles. The post-graduate student mothers

sought services from distant relatives and hired house help in their households to assume domestic roles. The other sources of support were from close family members; domestic house helps who came into post-graduate student mothers' households to assist in domestic chores.

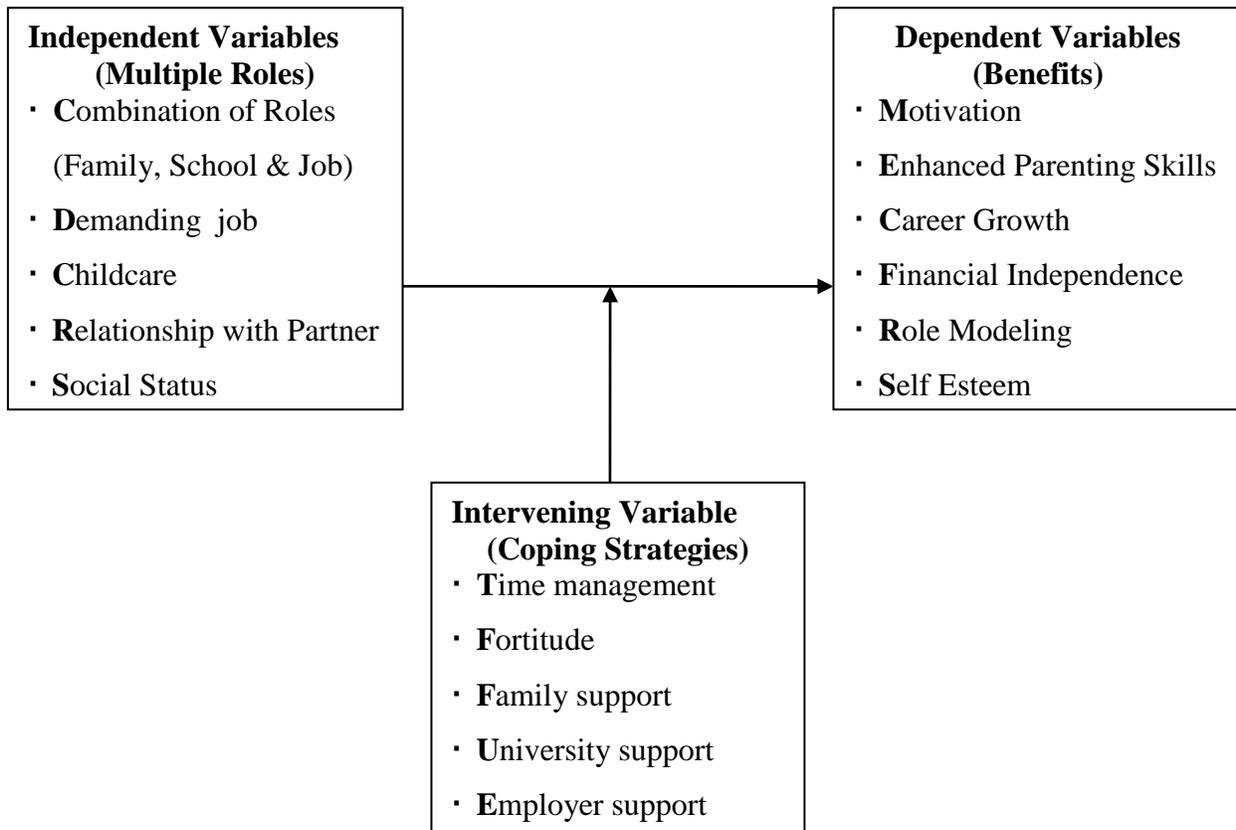
Prioritization of activities was a strategy used by post-graduate student mothers. Cuthbertson *et al.*'s (2004), study in eastern Australia found that scholars with household/domestic and scholarly work emphasized duties of the former to detriment their scholastic work. An investigation in eastern Australian colleges demonstrated that the burden of household duties and absence of comprehension of subject substance, caused dropouts in colleges.

Postponement of responsibilities is a strategy used by students in a study by Carter & McGoldrick (1980). In this study, the student quit playing out their specific household duties and focused on their scholastic work. Women in the post-graduate students' households performed additional errands, and in situations where there were no women sufficiently able to assume the obligations, some household duties were not done. Subsequently, the better the increased schooling of relatives the better situated they were in dealing with their domestic tasks without the post-graduate students' presence.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

In the current study, the multiple roles experienced by post-graduate student mothers at home, in school and at work are explained. In addition, personal and situational variables that influence multiple role performance by postgraduate student mothers have also been illustrated in the conceptual framework as illustrated in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Role stressors are produced due to the performance of multiple roles which interfere with the performance of roles by postgraduate student mothers. The role stressors are a clash of responsibilities, stress brought by these responsibilities as well as the burdens. Challenges, problems, issues, or concerns post-graduate student mothers confronted as they dealt with their multiple roles was as a result of role stressors.

Post-graduate student mothers attempting to meet work requirements, school timetable, domestic tasks or societal expectations attributed to performing a variety of duties and responsibilities found it straining, engaging and at times challenging to accomplish. To address challenges that

arose as they tried to balance their family responsibilities, student roles and work-related duties, post-graduate student mothers in the present study developed coping strategies and support systems.

To explain why relationships between various structures in the society are vital in maintaining functional equilibrium the current study relied on social learning, role and structuralism theories for more profound insights. This was because the theories presume that the individual decision-making unit like the university setup is representative of some larger group. For the enhancement of student learning through opportunities to observe and interact with others, social learning theory specifically created the framework.

Role theory informed the gap between goals set by post-graduate student mothers and the means they used to achieve these goals resulting in role strain. In explaining student roles and work-related duties, structuration theory was applied to understand how social structures affected post-graduate student mothers to balance school roles, work related duties and home responsibilities. By occupying distinct positions of students and mothers respectively, post-graduate student mothers played key roles in school, family, and work.

The structures in society assign individuals duties and responsibilities based on their demographic characteristics such as gender. Some rules dictate what is expected of each member of a society. Also, the resources are allocated based on power relations of different members of society in various roles. It is the expression of will or agency that determines the interaction of structures, rules, and resources in society. Therefore, post-graduate student mothers power

relations in the household and the societal, cultural norms are seen to determine the extent domestic chores interrupt their post-graduate studies.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined enrollment or access to higher education for women. Although the trend shows an increase in access, much remains to be done to attain desired levels of gender parity in higher education across many parts of the world, Kenya included. Many studies reviewed did not tie access to higher education or lack of gender parity in higher education to multiple roles of studentship, worker and a mother. This study explored evidence of such a connection. The review examined multiple roles of student mothers that are socially constructed and assigned by society.

Postgraduate student mothers had to combine multiple roles which in a way affected their post-graduate studies. The multiple roles of academics, work and motherhood sometimes clashed or conflicted giving student mothers a hard time. Student mothers, therefore, had challenges coping with demands of multiple roles while some of them were strained by these roles and others' wellbeing was affected.

Apart from the clash of roles, there were socio-cultural stereotypes that pose challenges to student mothers. Irrespective of these challenges, those who manage to access post-graduate studies accrue benefits from it. First, it elevates the position of student mothers, creates role models for the offsprings, brings positive social change and enables student mothers to acquire a professional identity. There are coping strategies that student mothers utilize to cope with the

challenges that they face. They include problem-focused, emotion-centered and avoidance strategy. The problem-focused coping strategy is applied in the institutions where student mothers seek help on how to deal with their problems in the course of the study.

In emotion-centered coping strategy, student mothers find moral support from their social networks such as family and friends. Avoidance coping strategy is also used when student mothers engage a system aimed at eliminating their problems rather than understanding how postgraduate student mothers can solve the problems. Such a strategy is employed through the university support system.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and research instruments employed in the current study. The section describes the research site, sample size, sampling procedures, procedures for data collection, exploitation of data and ends with ethical considerations made throughout the study.

3.2 Research Site

Site selection refers to location of facilities to be considered for research and taking into account their nature. The current study was conducted in Nairobi County which constitutes many institutions of higher learning including University of Nairobi (UoN) which is the research site. Other universities in Nairobi include: Kenyatta University (KU), Strathmore University (SU), United States International University (USIU)–Nairobi, Aga Khan University Hospital-Nairobi, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), KCA University (City County of Nairobi, 2015) among others.

University of Nairobi is a collegiate research university based in Nairobi which is the largest and oldest institution of higher learning in Kenya. It was established in 1956 as part of the University of East Africa that became an independent university in 1970. University of Nairobi is a corporate body established under the Universities Act of 2012 of the Laws of Kenya and University of Nairobi Charter. The inception of the University of Nairobi dates back to 1956,

with the establishment of the Royal Technical College, which admitted its first group of A-level graduates for technical courses in April of the same year.

The Royal Technical College was transformed into the second University College in East Africa on 25th June 1961 under the name Royal College Nairobi and was admitted into a special relationship with the University of London preparing students in the faculties of Arts, Science and Engineering for the award of degrees of the University of London. On 20th May 1964, the Royal College Nairobi was renamed University College Nairobi as a constituent college of inter-territorial, Federal University of East Africa, and henceforth enrolled students were to study for degrees of the University of East Africa. In 1970, the University College Nairobi transformed into the first national university in Kenya and was renamed the University of Nairobi.

3.2.1 Selection of University of Nairobi

In the current study, University of Nairobi was selected purposively as the research site due to its perfect blend of all critical elements of an ideal institution of higher learning. These elements made the university the ideal choice for the researcher targeting institutions of higher education in Kenya. The university has six colleges namely: Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, Architecture and Engineering, Biological and Physical Sciences, Education and External Studies, Health Sciences, and Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Nairobi, 2013). Therefore, purposive selection of University of Nairobi as an institution ensured diverse views of postgraduate student mothers from all the sampled colleges were captured.

The university has quality infrastructure that helps in achieving its desired goal of becoming an international center of excellence. It has well-built premises with well-equipped classrooms, restrooms, learning centers, libraries and eateries (Magutu; Mbeche; Nyaoga; Onserio & Ogoro, (2010). All other necessary facilities are also available for the students within the campus like the Library and the services it offers such as reference materials. The university is also big enough to accommodate students comfortably and live up to students' expectations. Purposive selection of this institution ensured the researcher was dealing with a more relaxed postgraduate student mothers since almost all the required services were available within the institution.

The University's main campus is conveniently located at the heart of the city of Nairobi with the nation's diverse population and the 42 different communities well represented. It is only a ten-minute walk from the Central Business District (CBD) where most Government offices and institutions are located like the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS), National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and Ministry of Education headquarters (MoE). This situation made it easier for the researcher to access educational records. Also, from the main campus she was able to conveniently travel to other towns, regions, and colleges affiliated to the University of Nairobi.

University of Nairobi being a public institution has responded to national, regional and Africa's high-level workforce training needs by developing and evolving strong, diversified academic programmes and specializations in basic sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts. It records the largest number of student admissions for degree courses per annum. The range of programmes offered are approximately two hundred (Magutu et

al., 2010). Therefore, purposive selection of University of Nairobi as a research site ensured diverse views of postgraduate student mothers enrolled for all these programs were captured.

The University of Nairobi offers both parallel and regular programs in modules I, II and III and invaluable opportunity has been opened to thousands of Kenyans and foreigners on a paying basis. Majority of students in Module II and III programs were previously unable to access the university education due to restricted intake into Module I or regular programmes that is determined by limited resource allocation by Government. Students in the three programs come from different walks of life with different interests and skill sets (Postgraduate Handbook, 2015). Therefore, purposive selection of the University of Nairobi as a research site ensured diversity as the researcher was able to capture diverse views regarding role strain.

The University of Nairobi is characterized by rapid information change and intense information flow leading to management of the institutions financial and human resources as well as students. The university management determines needs and provides resources to cater for training to satisfy competence needs. It ensures personnel are informed about the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of quality objectives (Magutu et al., 2010). Therefore, the selection of the university as the research site ensured all rounded postgraduate student mothers who responded appropriately regarding role strain.

The University of Nairobi has the most qualified lecturers and professors who impart knowledge to the students in a way that helps them understand concepts easily. The university management is also capable of managing students and taking care of all their educational and security needs

and enhancing customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements. Therefore, the selection of this institution guaranteed a secure environment for the researcher to conduct research.

3.3 Research Design

The study employed phenomenology study design which is a method of conducting qualitative studies. This design concentrates on the similarity of experience in a particular group with the aim of arriving at a clear explanation of the situation of the specific occurrence (Creswell, 2013). In the current study, post-graduate student mothers were interviewed since they had firsthand experience on how it felt to study while taking care of child (ren) below 18 years and work related duties.

Overall, the design was concerned with understanding and describing social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of postgraduate student mothers involved in the study by capturing their lived experiences on bringing up dependent child(ren), 18 years and below while taking up study roles and work-related duties. These children have more demands due to their age, and therefore the researcher was interested in knowing how postgraduate student mothers balanced study roles and work-related duties while taking care of their young child (ren).

This design analyzed the relationship between multiple roles of post student mothers and their career pursuits. The findings showed postgraduate student mothers had to simultaneously fulfill their multiple gender roles in the realm of reproduction, production and community relations. The study also examined the benefits of post-graduate studies to postgraduate student mothers that demonstrated how post-graduate education granted them direct individual advantages and

indirect advantages to their families.

The phenomenological design further explored challenges postgraduate student mothers faced in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies. It was clear that balancing in-home care needs, work and school responsibilities presented enormous challenges to postgraduate student mothers with young children forcing them to look for childcare arrangements to manage the many demands on their time while pursuing higher education. The design also evaluated coping strategies employed by postgraduate student mothers in their career pursuits that revealed that they used strategies that best fitted their unique contexts.

The use of phenomenological study design enabled the researcher to examine the uniqueness of each postgraduate student mother's lived experiences at home, school, and while at work. To collect this information, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with each of the 32 postgraduate student mothers. The researcher relied on their perspectives to provide insight into their motivations in balancing complex duties and responsibilities of motherhood, student, and worker. Through phenomenological research design, common themes emerged.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the post-graduate student mothers to answer two broad questions what student mothers experienced regarding the phenomenon and what situation typically influenced their experiences of being in active motherhood while studying as well as taking work-related duties. The information gathered from post-graduate student mothers was read and reread and culled for like phrases and themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning.

Through this process, the researcher constructed the universal meaning of the experiences by postgraduate student mothers and arrived at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Through memos, the researcher extracted the purest, untainted data while documenting personal experiences with postgraduate student mothers that helped in removing them from the process. This provided a platform to understand how societal structures and the roles assigned to postgraduate student mothers by society interacted with their own to determine their behavior or actions.

3.4 Study Population

University of Nairobi's graduate school is responsible for the coordination of postgraduate programmes concerning syllabi, monitoring student progress, admission of students, administration of scholarships, research grants, examinations and the general welfare of postgraduate students. Ph.D. programmes are offered in two ways; the first is by coursework, examination, and thesis and the second is by thesis only. Masters programmes are offered by coursework, examination, and thesis (Postgraduate Handbook, 2015).

University of Nairobi has over 15,000 postgraduate students enrolled for various programmes and the population of postgraduate students continues to increase. The current study targeted student mothers enrolled for post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi. Of the 15,393 post-graduate students, 6,723 were female students of which, 32 postgraduate student mothers participated in this study. The distribution of post-graduate students at the University of Nairobi is shown in Table 3.1 next:

Table 3.1: Sample Table of Postgraduate Data by College at the University of Nairobi

COLLEGE	POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMS								
	DIPLOMA		MASTERS		FELLOWSHIP		PhD		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
CAVS	4	2	213	161	00	00	74	49	503
CAE	8	0	284	129	00	00	52	18	491
CHS	3	2	415	298	17	15	55	68	873
CBPS	34	11	378	261	00	00	118	73	875
CEES	9	5	270	153	00	00	65	51	553
CHSS	97	35	869	763	00	00	274	178	2216
TOTAL	220	82	693	5608	17	15	1503	1018	15,393
	Male/Female		Male/Female		Male/Female		Male/Female		
	302		12,538		32		2521		
Total Female Population									6,723

Source: University of Nairobi, Graduate School, (July, 2018)

3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Post-Graduate Student Mothers

The subjects in the current study were student mothers enrolled for postgraduate studies since 2005-2015 at the University of Nairobi with child (ren) below 18 years. Selecting these student mothers enabled the researcher to understand why they enrolled for graduate school instead of focusing on their careers and families. The post-graduate student mothers were more mature with the likelihood of having dependents to cater for thus more responsibility that mitigated against their studying as well as making it less likely to participate and be involved in university life.

Post-graduate student mothers with children below 18 years were considered to be in active motherhood due to many demands by the younger children who required more time and other resources to care for. The young children were also vulnerable to sicknesses that forced many post-graduate student mothers to miss classes to care for them. They did this by seeking health care and follow-up services that demanded extra time to accomplish.

The ten-year time frame was key as majority post-graduate students at University of Nairobi graduate within ten years of enrolment. This was revealed during pretesting of the research tools by the researcher. In Kenyan history, 2005-2015 marks the inception of free primary and secondary education. The initiative reduced fee budget to many parents especially postgraduate student mothers and they instead used that money to further their education. Free secondary education also increased the enrolment rate that translated to higher student numbers in high schools and universities. This means more women were expected to have enrolled for university education within this period.

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for qualitative research is largely dependent on the methodological approach used. Morse, (2008) recommended that ethnography and ethnoscience should use 30-50 interviews. Bernard (2000) recommended samples of 30-60 for ethnoscience studies while samples of 20-30 were recommended by Creswell (2013) for grounded theory methodology. For phenomenology studies, Creswell (2013) recommended samples of 5-25 while Morse (2008) recommended samples of at least six. Bertaux (1981) noted that for all qualitative research, the

least recommended samples are 15. Given recommendations by authorities in qualitative research, this study targeted 50 participants.

A criterion was formulated to select study postgraduate student mothers from six colleges. The criterion used was based on three conditions; be a mother, the child (ren) be below 18 years of age; and be enrolled for post-graduate studies from 2005-2015. Forty five post-graduate student mothers enrolled from 2005-2015 were identified across all the six colleges through college administrators. However, seven of them did not have children below 18 years and were dropped. Thirty eight post-graduate student mothers met the set criteria to participate in the study. When approached to participate, six post-graduate student mothers declined due to various reasons. The study therefore relied on responses from 32 post-graduate student mothers who met the criteria.

Sampling is a procedure, process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study (Ogula, 2005). Each member or case in the sample is referred to as subject, respondent or interviewee. Collecting a smaller amount of data from individual post-graduate student mothers ensured the reliability of information, enabling the researcher to measure the opinions of the post-graduate student mothers who participated in the current study.

The current study adopted non-probability sampling technique where postgraduate student mothers were selected in a process that did not give all equal chances of being selected (Saifuddin, 2009). Specifically, the purposive technique was employed to select study participants and the researcher relied on her judgment to select postgraduate student mothers who were representative of the postgraduate population (Bernard, 2002). The researcher's

judgement was based on a pre-determined criteria formulated to select the most suitable postgraduate student mothers for achieving study purpose that evaluated motherhood experiences of post-graduate students studying in the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

Specifically, the researcher approached the college administrators from the six colleges at the University of Nairobi to assist in purposively identifying postgraduate student mothers. Through purposive sampling, the researcher reached the targeted number of postgraduate student mothers easily as identified by college administrators who knew the student by their departments. However, some students gave consent while others declined. On the other hand, some students did not meet the study criteria of being enrolled for postgraduate studies since 2005 to 2015 and having dependent child (ren) below 18years.

For instance, the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, none of the purposively identified postgraduate student mothers met the study criteria. On the other hand, College of Biological and Physical Sciences had the most students who withdrew from the study citing personal reasons like fearing confidentiality. The researcher however allowed them to withdraw at any point of the interview and that none of them was forced to respond to the study questions as indicated in Table 3.2 next:

Table 3.2: Sample Table of Selection of Postgraduate Student Mothers by College

College	Postgraduate Student Purposively Identified	Postgraduate student mothers interviewed	Postgraduate students NOT interviewed		Reasons why Postgraduate student mothers
CEES	9	7	PhD		Did not meet the study criteria: All her 3 children were above 18yrs
				Master	Was not ready to give her personal experiences to strangers
CHSS	24	22		Master	Did not meet the study criteria: Her children were grown ups.
				Master	Did not meet the study criteria: Both her children were above 18yrs
CAE	2	1		Master	She declined at the middle of the interview citing that the researcher asked too personal questions
CBPS	4	1		Master	Was not ready to answer personal questions
				Master	Did not meet the study criteria: Her son was above 18yrs
				Master	She declined at the middle of the interview citing that the researcher asked too personal questions
CHS	3	1	PhD		She demanded to be co-author of the document something the researcher could not guarantee
				Master	The researcher did not manage to interview her due to tight schedules. She postponed three interviews due to her duties at KNH where she worked as a nurse
CVS	3	0		Master	Did not meet the study criteria: None of her 2 children was below 18yrs
				Master	Did not meet the study criteria: Her only daughter was above 18yrs
				Master	Did not meet the study criteria: None of her children was below 18 yrs.
Total	45	32	2	11	Not meeting the study criteria was the main reason for decline

Source: Researcher, (October, 2016)

3.7 Research Tool

Interview protocol is a procedural guide for directing qualitative researchers through the interview process reminding them of the information that one is interested in collecting (Stacy & Paige, 2012). In this study, the researcher used an interview protocol (Appendix III) to guide the administration and implementation of the interviews, to ensure consistency between interviews, and thus increase the reliability of the findings. In line with Jacob & Furgerson, (2012) the interview protocol helped to remind the researcher the information that she was interested in collecting from postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study.

In the current study, interview protocol included what postgraduate student mothers said before the interview, at the conclusion of the interview and reminded the interviewer the information to collect. The instructions included in the interview protocol were: What the researcher was expected to say to postgraduate student mothers when setting up the interview at the beginning of the interview, including ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of postgraduate student mothers. The interview protocol also included what the researcher was expected to say to postgraduate student mothers in concluding the interview and what to do during the interview, i.e., taking notes and what to do following the interview.

The researcher used the interview protocol with a list of questions that would help in answering the questions posed as part of the evaluation. It was used in the initial step of data collection to aid in screening suitable students who were to proceed to the next stage of the interview in that only student mothers with child (ren) below 18 years enrolled for post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi from 2005-2015 were eligible to in the interview as indicated in table 3.3.

The 32 postgraduate student mothers were selected from two postgraduate programs namely: PhD and Masters Programmes. PhD student were 11 in number and masters students were 21 as indicated in tables 3.4 and 3.5 respectively.

Table 3.3: Sample Table of Demographic Information on Postgraduate Student Mothers

S.N	Age	Degree	Degree Specialization	Marital Status	Religion	No. of Kids	Age of Children	College	Family Support	Additional Notes (Balancing Gender Roles)
R1	32	Master	PPlanning	Married	Protestant	1	2	CEES	Support	Family duties greatly affect by study
R2	33	Master	Sociology	Married	Protestant	2	9 and 5	CHSS	Support	Time and work overload constraints
R3	47	Master	CD	Married	Protestant	2	18 and 10	CHSS	No Support	Disappointments from Department
R4	38	Master	CD	Married	Catholic	4	15,11, 9, 11	CHSS	Support	Ability to balance conflicting roles
R5	34	Master	Finance	Married	Catholic	2	9 and 7	CHSS	Support	Coping well with studies
R6	29	PhD	Finance	Married	Protestant	1	4	CHSS	Support	Challenged by Financial constraints
R7	32	PhD	Antropology	Married	Protestant	2	8 and 3	CHSS	Support	Exhaustion from conflicting tasks
R8	33	Master	H.R	Married	Protestant	1	2	CHSS	Support	Baby reduces my concentration
R9	44	Master	P.Planning	Single	Protestant	2	15 and 17	CEES	Support	Conflicting roles reduces study time
R10	35	Master	CD	Single	Protestant	1	3	CHSS	Support	Money is the problem
R11	44	PhD	Finance	Married	Catholic	2	15 and 13	CHSS	No Support	Insufficient reading time
R12	47	PhD	Nursing	Married	Protestant	4	23,20, 17, 9	CHS	Support	Supervisor has issues with my tribe
R13	37	Master	CD	Married	Protestant	4	13 and 10	CHSS	Support	Uncooperative/unfriendly lectures
R14	34	Master	Strategic Mkt	Married	Catholic	2	6 and 9	CEES	Support	Unsupportive employer
R15	32	Master	CD	Married	Protestant	1	1	CHSS	No Support	discouragement from my department
R16	43	PhD	Bus Admin	Married	Catholic	3	21, 17, 13	CHSS	Support	Ability to balance Conflicting roles
R17	33	Master	Sociology	Married	Protestant	2	9 and 5	CHSS	No Support	Guilt of squeezed family time
R18	29	Master	P.Planning	Married	Protestant	2	5 and 3	CEES	Support	Coping well with roles
R19	32	Master	Sociology	Married	Protestant	1	7	CHSS	No Support	Ethnicity is a big Challenge
R20	58	Master	Disaster Mkt	Married	Protestant	4	36,32,31, 18	CHSS	No Support	Money issues is my challenge
R21	28	Master	Journalism	Single	Catholic	1	3	CHSS	Support	Coping well with roles
R22	35	PhD	Journalism	Single	Catholic	1	12	CHSS	Support	I prioritize work school then family
R23	38	PhD	Education	Married	Protestant	3	9, 6 and 3	CEES	No Support	Great Support by employer
R24	46	PhD	P.Mkt	Married	Catholic	2	13 and 9	CEES	Support	Coping well with roles
R25	35	Master	Bus Admin	Married	Protestant	2	5 and 3	CHSS	No Support	Demands from family roles
R26	34	Master	Architecture	Married	Protestant	2	6 and 3	CAE	Support	Challenges from children
R27	40	Master	Sociology	Married	Protestant	4	16, 12, 8, 4	CHSS	Support	challenge in balancing roles
R28	44	Master	Law	Married	Catholic	2	13 and 8	CHSS	Support	Unable to balance Roles
R29	31	PhD	Bus Admin	Single	Protestant	2	4 and 1	CHSS	No Support	Difficulties combining roles
R30	25	PhD	P.Mkt	Single	Protestant	1	2	CEES	Support	Difficulties in paying fees
R31	28	Master	C. Change	Single	Catholic	1	2	CBPS	Support	Money issues is my challenge
R32	46	PhD	Finance	Married	Protestant	3	16, 12, 8	CHSS	No Support	Guilt of squeezed family time

Table 3.4: Sample Table of PhD Students

SN	Age	Program Title	Stage	Marital Status	Religion	No. of Kids	Age at time of Study	College	Additional Notes
1.	29	Finance	Thesis	Married	Protestant	1	4	CHSS	Supportive Family
2.	32	Anthropology	Course Work	Married	Protestant	2	8 and 3	CHSS	Supportive Spouse
3.	44	Finance	Thesis	Married	Catholic	2	15 and 13	CHSS	Supportive supervisors
4.	47	Nursing	Exam	Married	Protestant	4	23, 20, 17 & 9	CHS	Supportive Spouse
5.	43	Business Administration	Data	Married	Catholic	3	21, 17 and 13	CHSS	Moral support from Family
6.	35	Journalism	Exam	Single	Catholic	1	12	CHSS	Support
7.	38	Education studies	Proposal	Married	Protestant	3	9, 6 and 3	CEES	Great Support by employer
8.	46	Project Management	Thesis	Married	Catholic	2	13 and 9	CEES	Supportive Spouse
9.	31	Business Administration	Course Work	Single	Protestant	2	4 and 1	CHSS	Difficulty Combining Roles
10.	25	Project Management	Course Work	Single	Protestant	1	2	CEES	Great Support by Parents
11.	46	Finance	Proposal	Married	Protestant	3	16, 12 and 8	CHSS	Family Time Squeezed

Table 3.5: Sample Table of Master Students

S N	Age	Program Title	Stage	Marital Status	Religion	No. of Children	Age at time of Study	College	Additional Notes
1.	32	Project Planning	Proposal	Married	Protestant	1	2	CEES	Supportive Family
2.	33	MA Sociology	Course	Married	Protestant	2	9 and 5	CHSS	Supportive Family
3.	47	Community Development	Proposal	Married	Protestant	2	18 and 10	CHSS	Supportive Family
4.	38	Community Development	Course Work	Married	Protestant	4	15, 11, 9 and 1	CHSS	Supportive Children
5.	34	Finance	Proposal	Married	Catholic	2	9 and 7	CHSS	Great support from Husband
6.	33	Human Resource	Course Work	Married	Protestant	1	2	CHSS	Supportive Husband
7.	44	Project Planning	Thesis	Single	Protestant	2	15 and 17	CEES	Supportive Children
8.	35	Community Development	Proposal	Single	Protestant	1	3	CHSS	Supportive Boss
9.	37	Community Development	Proposal	Married	Protestant	4	13 and 10	CHSS	Good counsel by Lecturers
10	34	Strategic Management	Proposal	Married	Catholic	2	6 and 9	CEES	Understanding Spouse
11	32	Community Development	Data	Married	Protestant	1	1	CHSS	Mutual relations
12.	33	Community Development	Course Work	Married	Protestant	2	9 and 5	CHSS	Sacrificed Family Time
13.	29	Project Planning	Thesis	Married	Protestant	2	5 and 3	CEES	Supportive Husband
14.	32	Community Development	Proposal	Married	Protestant	1	7	CHSS	Ethnicity is a big Challenge
15.	58	Disaster Management	Exam	Married	Protestant	4	36, 32, 31, 18	CHSS	Financial Challenges
16.	28	Journalism	Course	Married	Catholic	1	3	CHSS	Coping well
17.	35	Business Administration	Thesis	Married	Protestant	2	5 and 3	CHSS	Great Demand from Family
18.	34	Architecture	Proposal	Married	Protestant	2	6 and 3	CAE	Family understanding
19.	40	Sociology	Proposal	Married	Protestant	4	16, 12, 8 and 4	CHSS	Challenge-Balancing Roles
20.	44	Masters of Law	Course Work	Married	Catholic	2	13 and 8	CHSS	Supportive Spouse
21.	28	Climate Change	Course Work	Single	Catholic	1	2	CBPS	Supportive Parents

3.8 Pretesting of Research Tools

The current study employed qualitative research techniques in the collection of data that facilitated research into how postgraduate student mothers balanced their multiple roles of child care responsibilities, school assignments, and work-related duties. In-depth interviews were conducted with the 32 postgraduate student mothers and the tool for collecting data was an interview guide. The design further illustrated the method that the study used in the data collection process, setting guidelines on whom to study, what to be observed and when the observations were done. It further illustrated site selection and description, unit of analysis, sampling procedure, data collection methods and data analysis (Prophat & Mishra, 2015).

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world (Creswell, 2013). In the current study, this research method allowed direct interaction with postgraduate student mothers. The qualitative research focused on a world in which the experiences and perceptions of individual post-graduate student mothers were socially constructed (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007).

The qualitative design allowed the researcher to engage with postgraduate student mothers in their day-to-day organizational contexts, therefore, providing more authentic and open answers. Through qualitative design, the researcher came up with solutions that guided her in various stages of the research and obtained responses to research questions. As an action plan, qualitative design helped the researcher to get from one point in research to the other and was able to answer the research questions of the study (Yin, 2003).

The researcher reviewed data collected from in-depth interviews with postgraduate student mothers made sense of it and organized it into categories or themes. The researcher focused on the meaning postgraduate student mothers held and interpreted what she heard and understood regarding their experiences. The researcher tried to develop a complex picture of the problem of balancing dual roles of motherhood and studies by reporting multiple perspectives and identifying multiple factors involved.

The researcher further used qualitative research to understand the social world in which postgraduate student mothers lived in, why they lived that way, why they behaved in that manner, know how they formed opinions and attitudes as well as how the multiple roles of mother, students, and employee affected them. Qualitative research involved examining the way postgraduate student mothers interpreted and made sense of their experiences and the world in which they lived. This assisted the researcher in gaining a rich, in-depth understanding to why these mothers returned for post-graduate studies and their experiences in combining the multiple roles of motherhood and education.

The qualitative method enabled the researcher to use open-ended questions in the interview, where post-graduate student mothers provided their answers to the subject of investigation. This allowed their meanings and experiences to be captured allowing more freedom to give honest and specific responses. Here the researcher maintained direct contact with participants by asking and clarifying questions as needed (Creswell, 2009). By using qualitative research, the researcher gained greater insight into the behavior of postgraduate student mothers adapting to multiple roles of mother, student, and employee and the reasons that govern such behaviors.

Creswell, (2009) stated that in selecting a research methodology, it is proper to choose that paradigm whose assumptions are best met by phenomenon being investigated as applied in the current study which was about human adaptation to multiple role combinations. In the current study therefore, qualitative methods were the best suited to carry out this kind of research as they are not only concerned about the result but also the procedure to the outcome as stated by (Price, 2002).

The researcher undertook critical procedures that entailed analyzing and recording in detail, the unique experiences of individual student mothers in combining multiple roles of motherhood and education. This approach allowed for ‘thick narrative descriptions’ of the phenomena under study and gave the researcher an opportunity to take into account the views of postgraduate student mothers. The researcher found that qualitative description of postgraduate student mothers’ experiences as most appropriate for this research because all these procedures enhanced objectivity which would be lost if quantitative or experimental strategies were applied.

3.9 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is an essential component of methodological design that depends upon the research goals and advantages and disadvantages of the method (O’Leary, 2004). This study was purely qualitative with postgraduate student mothers from the University of Nairobi. Qualitative data sources included interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, as well as the researcher's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009).

The researcher strived to study meanings postgraduate student mothers gave to their experiences as they tried to balance the multiple roles of motherhood and education. Also, the researcher was able to understand the post-graduate student mothers who participated in the study in their social and cultural contexts within which they lived. How they experienced and carried out their motherhood roles, for example, and how they interacted with their significant others in fulfilling their multiple roles of mother, student, and employee.

In the current study, in-depth personal interviews were conducted with post-graduate student mothers to explore their perspectives on how they balanced motherhood and their studies and the process for conducting the interviews included identifying the post-graduate student mothers at the University of Nairobi. The process also involved developing instruments such as the interview protocol and interview guide, collecting data as well as disseminating of findings by writing a report. The role of in-depth interviews included: exploring the boundaries of the problem of post-graduate student mothers, obtaining a context for the problem, evaluating potential solutions, managing the research process by supporting the interpretation of results from the qualitative methods (Prairie Research Associates-PRA, 2001).

Specifically, the researcher conducted open-ended, in-depth interviews of about 60-90 minutes each using an interview guide with the selected post-graduate student mothers at a pre-arranged venue. During interviews, the researcher used probes to communicate to the post-graduate student mothers that she was interested in their responses and wanted to hear more. The probes were predetermined before interviewing to ensure that probing was more reliable. Steering

probes, confirmation probes, and elaboration probes were developed for the current study so that the probing was consistent among all interviewees, therefore, creating more reliable results.

Steering probes were used to bring the conversation back to the topic when a student mother's response "went off track". The researcher also used confirmation probes by repeating and summarizing what was heard to confirm the interview response was appropriately understood. Finally, elaboration probes were used by the researcher when the student mothers shared something of particular interest, but the response lacked adequate details.

In the current study, in-depth interviews assisted the researcher to explore and understand the student mothers' thoughts, ideas, and behaviors. Through in-depth interviews, outcome data was obtained, thus understanding what was happening in the lives of post-graduate student mothers in their efforts to balance motherhood and their studies. In-depth interviews created a friendly environment for the researcher and post-graduate student mothers to interact making it easier to obtain results and feedback more accurately.

In-depth interviews allowed the researcher to understand post-graduate student mothers more deeply therefore gaining more detailed information and insight on how they balanced their family responsibilities, work-related roles and school duties. Gaining insight on how student mothers balanced their multiple roles enabled the recruiting and scheduling process easier and faster for the researcher.

In-depth Interviews provided a more relaxed atmosphere in that while collecting information the students felt more comfortable having a conversation with the researcher about their experiences as mothers, students and employees at the same time. In-depth interviewing gave post-graduate student mothers the opportunity to express their answers in their own words with as much detail as they wanted. It also allowed for complex responses and for the use of self-selected vocabulary that was unique to each post-graduate student mother.

3.10 Explication of the Data

In phenomenological studies, the heading ‘data analysis’ is deliberately avoided as Hycner cautions that the term ‘analysis’ means ‘breaking into parts’ often means a loss of the whole phenomenon. On the other hand, ‘explication’ refers to the investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1999:161). With Hycner’s clarification, the researcher employed five steps of Hycner’s (1999) version of explication process. These steps are bracketing and phenomenological reduction, delineating and clustering of units of meaning to form themes, summarize each interview, validation and modification as well as extracting general and unique themes.

Phenomenological reduction is a deliberate and purposeful opening by the researcher to the phenomenon by not allowing the researcher’s meanings and interpretations to enter the unique world of the participant (Sadala & Adorno, 2001). In the current study, the researcher used bracketing to categorize and organize the phenomenon from postgraduate student mothers and for direct interpretation of what was experienced and reported by post-graduate student mothers

in search of patterns, critical themes and meanings that emerged from the data, while at the same time preventing researcher's personal views or preconceptions.

To achieve phenomenological reduction, the researcher read through the transcripts and jotted down comments, notes, and thoughts in the margins. The researcher read field notes and the responses from post-graduate student mothers severally to become familiar with the words used they used to develop a holistic sense of their experiences. The researcher further made a direct interpretation of what was experienced and reported by post-graduate student mothers. Bracketing aimed to discover patterns, concepts, themes, and meanings. In these processes, useful information that was closely linked to the experiences of post-graduate student mothers emerged.

The individual responses were categorized and subsequently interpreted. In the process, the researcher concentrated on the whole data first, then took it apart and reconstructed it again more meaningfully. Bracketing helped the researcher to make comparisons and contrasts between patterns, to reflect on specific patterns and intricate threads of the data profoundly and make sense of them.

The researcher delineated units of meaning by extracting and isolating statements that were seen to illuminate the researched phenomenon. At this stage, the researcher scrutinized the interview guide with responses from post-graduate student mothers while eliminating unnecessary components while summarizing the marginal notes by grouping data into various themes. To do this the researcher considered the written content, the number of times a meaning was mentioned

and also how it was stated. This was important because, the actual meaning of two seemingly similar units of meaning might be different regarding weight.

The researcher clustered units of meaning to form themes assigning codes to each section. With the list of non-redundant units of meaning in hand, the researcher grouped the presuppositions to remain true to the phenomenon. By rigorously examining the list of units of meaning, the researcher tried to elicit the essence of the meaning of units within the holistic context. This, however, called for even more judgment and skill on the part of the researcher.

At this stage, the researcher formed clusters of themes by grouping units of meaning together while identifying significant topics, also called units of significance. To avoid overlap of themes which can be expected, considering the nature of human phenomena, the researcher interrogated the meaning of the various clusters to determine central themes which express the essence of these clusters.

Summary, validation, and modification were done by the researcher for each interview to get a synopsis that incorporated all the themes elicited from the data to give a holistic context. At this stage, the researcher examined themes for overlap and redundancy aimed at reconstructing the inner world of experience of post-graduate student mothers. The researcher noted that each post-graduate student mother had their way of experiencing motherhood that must be understood about the others and the entire inner world.

Extraction of the general and unique themes was done by the researcher from all the interviews conducted with post-graduate student mothers. At this stage, the researcher looked for themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variations. This was done by eliminating redundant codes and also collapsing similar codes, which enabled the codes to be constructed in the early stage and to be narrowed down to broader themes. The new list of code words was then used to examine whether these codes revealed common themes and recurring patterns. The researcher continuously read to refine the categories and to ensure that no text section was overlooked by bringing out the unique voices.

The researcher concluded the explicitation by writing a composite summary, which reflected the context from which the themes emerged. At this point, the researcher transformed participants' everyday expressions into expressions appropriate to the scientific discourse supporting the research, as highlighted by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), that good research is not generated by rigorous data alone 'going beyond' the data to develop ideas." The findings were presented in narrative and prose form. The next paragraph contains a few pointers regarding the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

In qualitative research, many doubts occur during and after the research process, and questions of credibility arise which are minimized through the aspect of trustworthiness (Bryman, 2012). Schurink & Poggenpoel, (1998) list several means of achieving the truth and emphasize the truth-value of qualitative research. The researcher bracketed herself consciously to understand the phenomenon studied regarding perspectives of post-graduate student mothers interviewed on an insider perspective.

The researcher continuously organized the categories and formed in-depth views of the conceptual meanings of the categories under the framework until no new themes were identified and no further issues arose. This ensured that this study had reached its saturation point with 32 interviews as (Greg et al., 2006) indicates. Where necessary, participants were contacted for clarification or additional information. Field notes made during each interview further contributed to the truth.

When the researcher detected bias through personal beliefs, perception, questioning, and probing, member checking was used to ensure that post-graduate student mothers' feedback was interpreted appropriately. Peer debriefing was also used by presenting at two seminars organized by AWSC-UoN. During these seminars, supervisors and other committee members reviewed the research findings by asking questions about the study that ensured interpretation beyond that of the researcher.

The researcher further minimized bias that resulted from the manner in which the questions were asked by standardizing all queries and wording them in the exactly same way for all post-graduate student mothers. All the items were scheduled so that all post-graduate student mothers were asked questions in the same order. Standardizing and recording interviews helped address the potential limitations of face-to-face interviewing as (Seale, 2012) indicates.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are considered when conducting research (Patton, 2000) that involves human subjects. These guidelines deal with voluntary participation, no harm to respondents, anonymity,

and confidentiality among others. In the current study, the researcher was aware of the various potential ethical concerns that may arise in the course of the research and abided by the professional ethics that govern the practice (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Ethical considerations, including the design, data collection, data analysis, data reporting, and writing, were addressed throughout all stages of this study to be sensitive to participants and stakeholders. Each guideline was addressed individually with explanations to help eliminate or control any ethical concerns.

First, the researcher sought permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before going out to the field and also sought informed consent from the research respondents before conducting the interviews and explained candidly to each respondent the purpose of the research. This ensured that interviews were not used as a devious means of selling something to the respondent as indicated by Gray, (2004). If respondents became uneasy and upset, the interview was canceled or postponed and that the post-graduate student mothers were free to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview without explanation.

Second, in conducting interviews, the researcher ensured that confidentiality was withheld by concealing the identity of post-graduate student mothers. There was no name mentioning, and any identification information was removed in the final report. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym (Letter R) that was used throughout the process of investigation and in the final report to conceal their identity.

All informed consent forms and assigned of post-graduate student mothers numbers were stored separately from the data in a different locked cabinet in the researcher's office away from where the interview guides were stored. This was done to protect against accidental disclosure. Upon completion of data collection, the master list containing the names of postgraduate student mothers and assigned study numbers were destroyed (all files deleted) thereby eliminating any link between postgraduate student mothers and their responses. The data that remained will be kept for a minimum of five years before being destroyed. The names and references that the researcher used to identify student mothers were removed from the files.

Third, in purposive sampling, there are potential limitations to be considered such as researcher bias (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). In this study, the researcher selected the research site (UoN) while the college administrators therein helped in identifying post-graduate student mothers who participated in this study. Since the researcher thought that post-graduate student mothers referred by the administration could be biased, the researcher established previous contacts with postgraduate student mothers in some colleges at the University of Nairobi to keep the information flow going throughout the target group.

During the interviews, the researcher identified with the student mothers since they shared many experiences with the researcher who studies in the same institution (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). To minimize interviewer bias, the researcher did not allow personal experiences to stand in the way of providing unbiased data as well as analyzing data according to established ethical standards for conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the researcher was

well aware that the experiences of post-graduate student mothers were affected by individual social conditions.

The researcher further ensured credibility of qualitative inquiry through reflexivity. Reflexivity is the awareness that all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced, grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In the current study, the researcher was well aware that experiences of post-graduate student mothers were affected by individual social conditions. Therefore, different socio-economic backgrounds were compared to establish the extent to which such backgrounds affected their experiences. This ensured that results were presented in the right context taking into account post-graduate student mothers socio-economic circumstances.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses findings from the data collected as per the four study themes namely: Multiple roles of student mothers in postgraduate studies, benefits of post-graduate studies to student mothers, challenges they face in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies and coping strategies in balancing motherhood and postgraduate studies by student mothers are presented and discussed.

4.2 Multiple Roles of Student Mothers in Post-Graduate Studies

In the current study, the experiences of postgraduate student mothers can only be comprehended if isolated identities of ‘scholar’ or ‘mother’ are dropped as indicated by (Moreau & Kerner, 2012). Combination of many roles means doing many different things at the same time while trying to allocate enough time to all of them. In the current study, all 32 postgraduate student mothers reported that they had many responsibilities of school, work, and family that they tried to give enough attention to each of them, making significant efforts to deal with the difficulty in each role. This was confirmed by **R26** who noted,

“Although my course was very demanding, my young children and husband also demanded equal attention as well as my job. This created a lot of strain trying to satisfy all the demands at the same time. At times, I forgot about my husband who earlier got full attention before I enrolled for my studies and before I got my two children who are now six and three years, respectively.”

Marital status did not have a significant influence on how postgraduate student mothers balanced their multiple roles in that although being married was associated with more substantial support from the spouse; married student mothers still struggled to balance their multiple roles just as did single student mothers. For instance, although **R16** was married, she still struggled to balance home, school and work related duties just like **R29** who was single, and probably struggled due to weak support systems.

For **R16**, motherhood and work hindered her college success, and despite the challenges, she declared, *“I don’t quit.”* **R29** declared,

“I am not able to achieve a balance while going to college, working, and being a mother. There are some days where it was easier to get some of the homework done while at work by staying a little late to finish up, so it didn’t seem to impact people at home as much. It is even harder when kids could get sick and demand my attention.”

4.2.1 Mother Role

In this study, 17 out of 32 postgraduate student mothers reported that being a mother gave them a sense of new reality and caring about others while studying. These sentiments were confirmed by **R22** who declared *“Motherhood showed me that life isn’t just about me, but it also involved others.”* Motherhood impacted **R27**’s ability to complete her degree positively. She declared,

“I wanted to show my kids that you can do anything you put your mind to, no matter how difficult it may seem or how tough it might be. It is important that they see I am not a quitter and that I can overcome any problem that stands in my way.” Even in the midst of all challenges that come my way, I love that I have my children and family in addition to my schooling and my work.”

R13 defined herself first and foremost as a mother. She declared, “*My children mean everything and anything to me, I work hard for myself and them and enjoy the feeling of accomplishment I get from working outside the home.*” Sentiments by these postgraduate student mothers imply that being a mother makes women selfless. They think of the welfare of their children and family at large. The findings are in line with Reay’s (2011) observations that motherhood becomes a top priority for women after having children because women experience a transitional process of development that leads to responsibility for another human being.

The observations confirm assumptions of structuration theory that society has structures where individuals are assigned different duties and responsibilities so that when each plays their role, everybody in the society benefits. Motherhood as a role assigned to **R13**, **R22**, and **R27** enabled them to realize that apart from taking care of themselves in life, there is a responsibility too to cater to others, especially their children.

4.2.2 Provider Role

On provider role, for example, **R31** declared, “*Money is very stressful.*” **R9** and **R10** had the primary financial responsibility for their households since they were single mothers. **R10** declared, “*Some things need to be done like providing for the needs of the children that are very costly.*” When describing the tensions inherent in their roles, **R10** declared, “*There are many stressors associated with child care and costs related to raising my child, and being the primary financial provider in the home.*”

For **R21**, shortage of money was a big issue that brought difficulties in budgeting on family responsibilities. She declared,

“There are memories that I would like to create for my family-vacations, activities, experiences that help to make it all worth it but it’s not possible due to a shortage of money. I would like to advise other women enrolling for post-graduate studies that they should only do so if they are financially stable to avoid many problems with their families.”

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers show that as they fulfill their many roles as students and mothers, the role of finances is key to being able to provide a preferred lifestyle for their offsprings and families. This is consistent with the findings by Lynch (2008) that revealed how the absence of monetary support was the most widely acknowledged grievance made by student mothers.

R29 described her high workload and indicated that sometimes it affected her. She declared, *“I normally shout at my husband all the time and that my patience is short. I sometimes feel like I am managing my life well, but I later realized that there is too much going on at home and at school for me to manage.”* Sentiments by student mothers imply that women share similar experiences regarding an exceedingly high workload. These study findings are similar to those by Mills, (2009) in which it was revealed that student mothers strived to provide for their families.

4.2.3 Student Role

In this study, coordinating university timetable with school holiday was not easy as reported by 18 postgraduate student mothers who had school-age children. They indicated that they organized their offsprings around the school timetable, which resulted in emotional challenges of meeting expectations mothers and students at the same time. The postgraduate student mothers claimed their to-do list seemed endless; deadlines for submitting assignments were fast approaching. For **R32**, she had to squeeze time from her work and her kids for the sake of her education. She declared,

“My family time is much squeezed as I hardly spend quality time with my children and husband who is undergoing a difficult time after the death of his mother. I feel guilty as I cannot give my husband the extra attention that he needs but instead, I stay up studying until the early hours of the morning though I believe that my husband feels abandoned.”

The level of study, whether coursework or research, significantly influenced how multiple roles of studentship, work, and family regardless of the ages of their offsprings affected postgraduate student mothers. For instance, **R30** who was single, doing coursework and having one child aged two years, shared similar sentiments with **R28** who is married, has two children aged 13 and 8 and also doing coursework. They both complained about how stressful it was to organize their multiple roles of school, work and home considering the school timetable that demanded their presence any time as dictated. This made them sacrifice family time to study. Further **R30** declared,

“Coursework is more demanding since classes are never scheduled for the individual student, but one has to organize their roles keeping in mind the timetable. I strongly

believe that once I start my research work, things will drastically improve since I will be doing school work on my own free time as opposed to the current situation where I have to attend class as demanded by the school timetable. However, the only issues (not, major) that I will have to contend with is meeting time with my supervisor.”

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers show that their lives were hectic and that not having adequate time with family brought challenges but did not deter them from their studies. They accepted being busy as a part of their subculture of multi-tasking and prioritizing responsibilities. Mothers contemplating post-graduate studies need to learn from the results of this investigation. They should know it is doable but save for the difficulties experienced in the course of the academic journey.

The findings concur with those in a report by NUS, (2009) stating that the mismatch between taking care of children and learning schedule, vacations, targets, and assignments were the challenges mostly experienced by student mothers. The observations raise an important point that student mothers must recognize their added roles in higher learning and negotiate amicably with those that will be affected by combined roles. In this way, their interaction with all their assigned roles as well as individuals in their lives will become seamless as envisioned by structuration theory.

4.3 Benefits of Post-Graduate Studies to Student Mothers

Benefit refers to an advantage gained from something. In the current study, benefit denotes the productive results of education that enhances the well-being of postgraduate student mothers. The Campaign for Female Education-Camfed, (2005), an organization dedicated to

fighting poverty and AIDS in rural communities in Africa, indicated that when you educate a girl, she will earn up to 25 percent more and re-invest 90 percent of her income in her family. This re-investment in the family means her children will be more likely to go to school, leading to healthier, more productive individuals and communities.

In the current study, although 4 of the student mothers were not sure of the benefits they have had from their post-graduate studies, 28 others reported that their education was beneficial to themselves, their family and the whole society in general. For instance, **R20**, a teacher and head of a special education department in a school based in Nairobi declared,

“I believe the special children I handle already appreciate the knowledge am applying at my workplace where I manage this program. Through the project management training I am about to complete, my handling of programs has been very easy. For my children and especially the last born who is 18 years, I have been able to offer the necessary support throughout the year and more so with school assignments.”

Regarding benefits of post-graduate studies, **R17** declared,

“I appreciate my studies for having a significant impact in my life, my family and especially my community back at home where I apply the community development knowledge in undertaking several projects in the community initiated by development partners and donors. Many thanks to the able professors at the University of Nairobi who have been guiding us all through.”

Sentiments by student mothers imply that educating a woman translates to benefits to the individual involved as well as their families and the communities they belong to. It illustrates that women’s education is about more than just the individual but also about the future of her

family and the community at large. However, these benefits have to be explained to the family members who will be affected by post-graduate studies. It is at this juncture that the agency role of post-graduate student mothers comes in. Postgraduate student mothers ought to understand that their experience can be better if the household and the society, in general, are involved in reassigning duties and responsibilities as well as in their expectations of her.

4.3.1 Enhanced Parenting Skills

In the current study, an educational role model to the children is what 16 student mothers felt they acquired as they held that their offsprings accrued benefits from the role-modeling they delivered for them. They also felt that their studies helped them gain parenting skills and were able to provide their offsprings with a nurturing and supportive environment. Enhanced parenting skills were confirmed by **R20**, who declared,

“Since I enrolled for my studies, I have become more loving and supportive to my four children aged 36, 32, 31 and 18 years allowing them to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to become responsible citizens ready to make significant contributions to self, family, community, and society.”

R17 declared, *“I am my children’s motivator by just seeing me study and succeed in balancing studying with my other role commitments.”* This is in line with findings by Sutor et al., (2008) that confirmed that women had reported being a successful educational role model for their offsprings.

In the current study, number and ages of children were a key determining factor on whether the postgraduate student mothers described themselves as mentors or not. For instance, **R24** who had

two children aged 13 and 9 years shared similar sentiments with **R28**, who also had two children aged 13 and eight years, concerning being mentors to their offsprings. **R32** declared,

“Since I joined post-graduate studies, my main aim has been to mentor my 16, 12 and eight-year-olds reminding them to study hard like mommy and earn their second and third degree. Their responses have been positive, and they are working harder in school.”

R30 and 31 who had one child each aged two years did not comment on being mentors to their offsprings maybe because their children were too young to even to notice the importance of education. Being a mentor to her children was what **R24** identified herself with because of the knowledge she had acquired so far since she enrolled for her studies. She declared, *“I feel like I had become a better mentor now than I was before I enrolled for post-graduate studies.”*

The sentiments by postgraduate student mothers are a clear indication that they made use of experiences gained through post-graduate education to enhance the nurturing of their offsprings and especially their schooling. A study by Desforges, (2003) talks of parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' which has a significant positive influence on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation.

Going back to school made **R31** feel that she had fulfilled what she lacked in her life-additional education and overall knowledge. She declared,

“As a woman, additional education has allowed me to be more helpful with my children and better able to help them understand things as they were going through their learning and their growth. I want to show by example what is important and how to be successful in life with my children.”

R13 declared, *“By going back for post-graduate studies has enabled me to gain valuable parenting skills by acquiring proper tools for my children aged 13 and 10 years.”* **R27** declared,

“Enrolling for post-graduate studies gave me a lot of patience to the learning process of my children. For example, my second born is a slow learner compared to my first - third born sons, and I could not understand why she could not catch up with her brothers. By attending post-graduate studies and interacting with other student mothers with children has helped me to understand that although we are born of the same parents, we have different intellectual capabilities.”

This perspective shows that post-graduate student mothers gained valuable parenting skills regarding knowledge that gave them tools to guide their children. This study finding corresponds with those of White, (2008) who concluded that student mothers benefited from their studies as they made them be in a better position to help their own children’s learning processes. Post-graduate studies here are anticipated to strengthen the structures and rules in society as the student mothers are expected to advance their families through better parenting and role modeling.

4.3.2 Role Modeling to Children

A role model is a person other people look up to help determine appropriate behaviors. In this study, 19 postgraduate student mothers identified themselves as serving as good examples to

their offsprings translated by children emulating their acceptable learning behaviours. This was confirmed by **R14** who spoke lovingly about her two children aged 13 and 10 years. She declared, *“My greatest concern is my children’s education and their future. Although I have difficulties balancing roles of studying and being a good mother to them, I would like them to excel in their education.”*

R17 anticipated a thriving adult life for her offsprings even with all of the hassles she was going through. She declared,

“Although I am straining a lot with the multiple roles of family responsibilities, study roles, and work-related duties, I am hoping that my children would learn from this and do better to avoid the difficulties I am going through. All I tell them is to plan well for their future to make it in life. My struggles should serve as a good example for them to learn from.”

Female scholars in disciplines other than teaching also utilized the competencies they got to better their offsprings. **R20** declared,

“By going back to school, I motivated my firstborn son who is 36 years old, he got motivated, and he started his masters classes. He could not imagine his old mother going further with education and not him. When my son enrolled in his masters classes, I considered myself as a good role model and a good mother to him and his younger siblings aged 32, 31 and 18 years. My pursuit of an identity outside of motherhood taught my children to follow their dreams and be autonomous.”

R13 declared, *“Through confidence, I gained while presenting at coursework, I feel that I am better able to parent my own children without fear and favour and also mentor them by serving*

as a good example through education.” A study by Marandet & Wainwright, (2010) revealed that the desire to embark on higher education by student mothers was triggered by being a role model for their offsprings.

Student mothers reported that they shared their lives as students with their offsprings as well as the difficulties and happiness when they got a good grade. For **R27**, having her children see her being successful in her studies was a big motivation to her. She declared, *“I want to lead my children by example, to have them see me challenging myself, setting goals and high expectations and then reaching them.”* **R4** declared, *“Through the confidence, I gain from studying at the post-graduate level, I feel that I am better able to parent my children who identify with me as their role model.”* These study findings are consistent with those of Sutor et al. (2008) where women studies benefited their offsprings as well.

The feelings of postgraduate student mothers depict how they saw themselves as being an example for their offsprings as a good role model and an ideal mother. They understood that their offsprings would take learning seriously if they saw the same seriousness in their mothers. Also, their quest for a personality outside of motherhood enabled their offsprings to take after their pursuits and be independent. These findings are similar to those in a study by Reay *et al.*, (2002) which revealed that many student mothers spoke of a transformation in personality and becoming a worthy example for their offsprings.

4.3.3 Renewed Parenting Role by Spouse

In this study, 16 student mothers described parenting as a role that gives a stable and nurturing home environment for their offsprings, by acting as positive role models playing positive and active roles in their offsprings' lives. Also, married student mothers reported renewed parenting role by spouses. Renewed parenting role by a spouse was confirmed by **R17** and **R13** who were both married and shared similar sentiments on how their spouses got more involved with their children now that they were back to college for post-graduate studies. **R17**'s children spent quality time with their father in her absence. She declared, *"My husband spends extra time with the children because I am in school."*

Similar sentiments were shared by **R13** when she said, *"Now that I am in school, my husband has one-on-one time with the children."* **R4** further declared, *"My not being at home provided the opportunity for my husband to take a more active parenting role by spending extra time with the children because I am in school."* **R1** related, *"Now that I am in school, my husband has a one on one time with his children."*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers in the current study clearly indicate that in their absence, their partners were expected to provide moral and spiritual guidance, set limits, and provide consequences for their offspring's behavior. Postgraduate student mothers felt that their not being at home gave a chance to their spouses to take a more active child-rearing role for their children.

The findings of this study differ with those of O'Shea and Stone (2011) on parental help and involvement of the father in child care responsibilities. O'Shea and Stone's study revealed that regarding child support and daily responsibilities, fathers contributed less. They were very involved and contributed equally to the family, not childcare but financially. This study suggests that studying enhances opportunities for negotiations regarding household duties and responsibilities where spouses who ordinarily did not play an active role in child rearing do so now that mothers are engaged in post-graduate studies.

4.3.4 Hope for a Better Future for their Families

Hope refers to a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. In this study, 23 postgraduate student mothers reported that they returned to school expecting to benefit from their education after graduation. **R13** declared, *"I strongly believe that upon graduation I will get a better job with a better NGO than the current one I am working with. This automatically means an improved lifestyle for my family and a professional identity outside of motherhood."*

Further **R23** declared, *"I am becoming more qualified in my area of work. This assures me of better career prospects and higher salaries upon graduation."* For **R28**, learning empowered her to generate her income. She declared, *"I decided to return to college a second time to secure my socioeconomic standing."* **R29** declared, *"When I lost my dad who was very supportive to me, I decided to enroll for post-graduate studies because without my father I need to support myself and my children. Once I get a stable job, I am hopeful that my children will not lack anything that he provided to them."*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers in the current study show that they returned to study because of hope and a yearning to grow a professional identity separate from that of a mother. In return, they believe that this would henceforth afford a better lifestyle for themselves and their households upon graduation. This translates to an improved personal achievement and identity which is favorable to every student mother struggling to achieve a sense of equilibrium between the two tasks of being a scholar and a mother.

These findings are similar to those in a study by O'Shea & Stone (2011) on female student parents, which revealed that female scholars enrolled for higher learning to enhance their job prospects and as a way of achieving individual growth. It also helped them reinstate their personality upon graduation. Many felt they had missed opportunities in the past. O'Shea and Stone's observations concur with those of White (2008) who reported that women returned for post-graduate studies for the hope of a better job upon completing their studies.

Losing a spouse worried **R28** indicating that she would suffer financially. She declared, *“If anything happens to my husband, I will be unable to survive economically since I only have a bachelor’s degree and the job I am currently holding has no advancement opportunities for me. Also, I am interested in doing something different.”* Coupled with all these, **R28** declared, *“I need to be sure I can take care of myself should anything happen to my husband.”* **R6** declared, *“I study hard with the hope of securing a better job and earn more money to cater for my needs and those of my family.”*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers affirm that they returned for higher education to improve their career prospects, ensure higher salaries and better employment opportunities upon graduation, hence a better future for themselves and their offsprings. Resources are a critical part of society and that structures and rules cannot be applied without resources. In this study, by advancing their education postgraduate student mothers yearn for increased resources in the family so that structures, rules and their interaction can be seamless in the future. It is this hope for a better future that drives and informs their experience in their post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi where they study.

4.3.5 Networking Opportunities by Student Mothers

Networking refers to creating a group of acquaintances and associates and keeping it active through regular communication for mutual benefit. In this study, 17 student mothers reported that they interacted with each other and with other students from their colleges and shared information on various topics. Networking was important for **R23** as she declared, *“Networking is vital. I met a classmate who is currently my employer and recruited me for the current position that I hold at my workplace.”* **R25** declared, *“I met a classmate who is currently my employer. She gave me the job at her place.”*

This networking also formed a breeding ground for social support among peers. For example, **R23** declared, *“Coming back to study enabled me to meet reliable friends that help provide me with moral support whenever I am down.”* **R28** declared, *“I met a dependable friend at the course of my study.”* Marital and social status was crucial in determining how well the postgraduate student mothers interacted with their colleagues, both male and female. **R22**

declared, *“I met a reliable friend during coursework we networked, and he is my current spouse and the father of my children.”*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers indicate that they also benefited from informal networks that helped them in their career growth and financial stability. These results concur with those in a study by Trepal *et al.* (2014) which explored the combination of motherhood and revealed that student mothers easily interacted with others who were also mothers. A study by Lynch, (2012) showed that quality time and recognition that scholars have their individual lives as well as creating linkages were mutually helpful and inspiring to students.

A scholar’s social linkage was built by the institution of higher education that included meetings, social network groups, web pages containing tips and advice was very beneficial to them. Increased networks for postgraduate student mothers act as new resources added to, first, the individual student mothers and second, to their communities and households. The combined resources have an influence not only on the structures and rules but also interaction in the family, at school and work.

4.3.6 Relief from Household Chores

Household chores are daily light tasks that have to be done regularly at homes such as cleaning, washing, ironing and child care. Doing housework is just a part of life that most people don't enjoy, but it has to be done. In the current study, 16 postgraduate student mothers reported that they enlisted home cleaning services by day time workers instead of having a live-in domestic worker. However, **R27** did household chores by herself. She declared, *“Although I do my*

household work, balancing home care needs, work and school responsibilities present great challenges”.

R13 declared, *“Although I have a house girl, I take on the majority of household responsibilities.”* Therefore, divisions of childcare and domestic work are unchanged even after adding scholarly obligations. **R17** declared, *“Going back for post-graduate studies provided freedom from household chores that no longer hold me back after I organized for alternative childcare.”* **R14** indicated, *“By enrolling for post-graduate studies, I now survive on organized child care and no longer bother with house chores.”*

Since **R13** enrolled for post-graduate studies, she employed domestic workers to manage her house. She declared, *“Since I enrolled for post-graduate studies, I now survive on organized home care and no longer bother with house chores like before since my house help does it all. My husband, on the other hand, assists the children with homework.”* **R27** declared,

“Doing all chores by myself made it difficult for me to complete my degree so I decided to hire someone who assists with the many responsibilities that I previously performed all by myself. I now have time for myself and do not have to worry about everything and everyone at home. I now meet with friends that I almost lost due to many household chores and school assignments.”

These study findings are similar to those in a study by Matus-Grossman *et al.* (2002) which revealed that personal support from family members and peers were the leading factors influencing student mothers’ ability to enroll in college due to the availability of childcare. Gonzalez-Arnal & Kilkey, (2009) also reported that enrolment by postgraduate student mothers

was due to the proximity of support networks for care. A study by Gault, Lindsey, & Stephanie, (2014), revealed that postgraduate student mothers with young children relied on reasonably priced, dependable childcare services to accomplish some responsibilities on their behalf while they pursued a post-graduate education.

In the current study, whether student mothers are relieved from household chores or not depend on the kind of support system that they have. Also, postgraduate student mothers who negotiated a good support system got household members to assist them with some of the household chores such as child care, laundry, cleaning and cooking. The study further reveals that postgraduate student mothers who did not negotiate a good support system would however, had a hard time balancing all their household chores, school work, and job-related responsibilities.

Responses by postgraduate student mothers indicate that they relied on significant others like husbands and parents while some employed house helps for support. This is because managing motherhood and household chores together with academics and employment, was very challenging. Therefore, postgraduate student mothers related their experiences of not being able to do everything by themselves to addressing household and childcare responsibilities. Further, postgraduate student mothers felt that going back for post-graduate studies helped them as they had freedom from household chores by employing house help while they went to school.

4.3.7 Better Opportunities in Life

Opportunity is a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something. In the current study, favourable conditions enabled student mothers to enroll for post-graduate studies at the

University of Nairobi. Some postgraduate student mothers spoke of time being right and the being conditions good. Others explained that they had been provoked to learn at the post-graduate level since that chance was conceivable now that their offsprings required lesser care hence fewer responsibilities.

The choice made by **R13** to study at the University of Nairobi allowed her to work at her own pace. She declared, *“I still have my job and my children to take care of due to the flexibility of evening classes offered at the University of Nairobi which is ideal with my situation.”* **R17** declared

“I chose courses at the University of Nairobi because I have to work full time and evening classes offered at the institution provided the flexibility I needed to meet work duties and family responsibilities. My children still top my list in life and I know I must work around their schedules as well to succeed.” **R17** further declared, *“Being a mother means that anything I do, anything I decide, anything I say, anything I want to do even, revolves around my mothering.”*

The sentiments by the postgraduate student mothers show that the location and proximity of the University of Nairobi helped them to plan and succeed in their studies and their homes as well. This is because they could access the facility easily, go to work within town and also get to their homes easily to look after their families. In the current study, postgraduate student mothers were also motivated to pursue post-graduate studies for economic stability upon graduation. The sentiments were shared by **R30** who desired a better future upon graduation.

These responses show that postgraduate student mothers assumed that attaining post-graduate education would give them enhanced job prospects and consequently expanding their income level. Findings from this study are similar to those in a study by Davies *et al.*, (2002) which revealed that students were motivated to enroll in educational programs for career advancement and higher earnings. These students and potential students were able to translate aspirations into action that was the essential motivating factor, even for the highly ambitious students.

In the current study, better opportunities in life are translated to mean better bargaining or negotiating position in the allocation of resources. According to the structures and rules in the society, those with better education tend to get a better deal when it comes to distribution of resources and especially job opportunities. This is because they provide skills and competencies that are rare in the society hence they are better appreciated than the rest.

4.3.8 Personal Achievement and Self-development

Personal achievement is an attribute that provides accomplishment of one's objective. In the current study, 22 postgraduate student mothers reported that post-graduate education would enhance their career prospects and improve their earning power and financial security upon graduation. **R20** declared, *“Post-graduate studies will benefit my family in the long run. I am almost retiring, but once I retire, I will look for a better job in the NGOs especially Red Cross to help reconcile my short-term financial disadvantages for my family.”* **R13** declared, *“I am a good mother despite the short-term difficulties I encounter by positioning myself to provide for my children and improve their standard of living.”*

Findings from this study demonstrate that participation in post-graduate education rewarded mothers with a sense of personal identity. This provided student mothers with a feeling of self-importance and financial stability. Self-development is the process by which a person's character is gradually developed. Also, student mothers reported that post-graduate studies allowed them to build up a role outside of being a mother and spouse. For some, this was a pleasant change and part of their sustained self-advancement. These study findings relate to those in a study by Gecas & Burke, (1995) which revealed that personality was key for an individual's position in the community by their relationships to others, and is based on the meanings that individuals adopt for themselves.

R20 declared, *“I enrolled for my studies for the time is right and the circumstances favorable. I am motivated to study at post-graduate level because my children are now older (the last one is 18 years) and since I work near the university.”* **R27** declared, *“Despite a desire to study, life circumstances did not always allow me the opportunity to do so like the arrival of unplanned newborn and financial constraints.”*

R24 declared, *“Despite the support, I receive from my husband, I had no opportunity to study until my children were big enough.”* Post-graduate education was an empowering transformation and part of **R13**'s continued self-development that gave her an opportunity to examine herself, develop an identity outside roles of mother and wife. She declared, *“Post-graduate studies give me the opportunity to challenge myself academically, emotionally and physically, and each success increases my sense of personal achievement.”*

This finding is consistent with research by Pare, (2009), which established that one advantage of post-graduate studies for the female scholars was giving them a chance to grow another characterization apart from being a mother. A study by Sweet & Moen (2007), examined student mothers by investigating family relationship outcomes associated with their decision to return for higher education and revealed that student role was attributed to improving and fortifying female scholars' lives like having more resources and more meaningful lives. To Estes' (2011), female scholars were driven to complete their studies to improve their lives and that of their households.

The response by postgraduate student mothers in the current study points to the benefits of combining motherhood and studies including experiencing the growth in ways that uniquely impacted on their personal and professional roles. It shows that postgraduate student mothers in the current study were aware of themselves as being able to improve their personal growth and taking steps to better themselves through post-graduate studies as every postgraduate student mothers expressed experiences that provided validation for what they do each day, both at home, work and in school.

In the society, individual space is insufficient. Structures and rules, as well as resources allocated, are supposed to benefit the society first and the individual benefit through the society. However, the extent to which the individual benefits from the structures, rules, and resources of society also depends on their effort. They need to be aggressive and take up opportunities when they arise. This is the role of individual expression of will or agency as clearly demonstrated by structuration theory.

4.3.9 Self Esteem and Confidence

Self-esteem is the self-assurance in an individual's value or capabilities. For the current study, self-esteem is a feeling of satisfaction that postgraduate student mothers had in themselves and their abilities. The current study revealed that learning resulted in increased self-assurance and self-confidence of postgraduate student mothers. Before they enrolled for post-graduate studies, postgraduate student mothers found it difficult to speak in front of people, but they had become more confident in themselves and their abilities. After enrollment, they were proud of themselves, had a sense of power that had grown and advanced over the period of the study.

In the current study, postgraduate student mothers hoped that post-graduate studies would lead to a more satisfying career, new opportunities, a sense of empowerment, and an increased sense of self-esteem upon graduation. Enrolling for post-graduate studies improved **R28**'s self-esteem. She declared,

“Before I enrolled for post-graduate studies, I found it difficult to speak in front of people, but so far, I have grown confidence in myself and my ability over time. I am proud of myself; I have a sense of strength that has grown and developed over the period of my study here at the University of Nairobi.”

For **R27**, it was tough to make decisions in life. She declared, *‘I hardly made decisions by myself before I enrolled for my studies but this has significantly improved with time.’* The fact that a university education improved **R27** and **R28**'s self-esteem is consistent with a study by Walkup, (2004) which found that the longer women stayed in the university, they developed more confidence in life and in all their engagements.

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers indicate that they gained self-confidence through post-graduate education. Postgraduate student mothers' overall subjective emotional evaluation of their worth and judgment of themselves and attitude toward the self is reflected. These findings concur with those in a study by Brennan & Osborne, (2008) which revealed that student mothers gained self-assurance and were able to interact with other students in a better way during their stay at the institution.

Pare, (2009), identified one advantage of postgraduate studies for student mothers as the chance for student mothers to build up a character outside of motherhood. Therefore, higher education is an important resource for postgraduate student mothers in that self-esteem and confidence built in postgraduate student mothers the necessary capacity to generate more resources for their households and the society in general.

4.3.10 Professional Identity

Professional identity is the gathering of properties, convictions, and qualities individuals use to characterize themselves in a particular skill and instruction-based occupations (Ibarra, 1999). In professional identity more than half of postgraduate student mothers in the current study used attributes, beliefs, and values to define themselves in specialized-skill and education-based occupations. They developed a professional identity by attaching meanings to themselves beyond responsibilities and preparing for a role outside of motherhood.

Post-graduate learning presented postgraduate student mothers a chance for accomplishment away from motherhood or a job and was able to engineer their future. Slay & Smith, (2011)

stated that belonging to a professional association affects self-characterization and influences how a person is perceived by others. In the current study, postgraduate student mothers prepared for roles outside of motherhood by ascribing meaning to themselves beyond child-care responsibilities. For instance, the ability to raise her children and work made **R13** satisfied. She declared,

“I strongly feel personal enrichment from being able to raise my children, while positively impacting the vulnerable children at my workplace through effective leadership. I strongly have an immense sense of responsibility to fulfill these roles satisfactorily.”

In the current study, postgraduate student mothers identified with professional identity by attaching meaning to themselves beyond responsibilities and preparing for a role outside of motherhood. They were however motivated by a sense of personal ambition and desire for achievement and self-satisfaction as well as by opportunity as they wanted to achieve their degrees despite the feeling of guilt for spending less time with their offsprings. This finding is contrary to that in Pare, (2009) which revealed that women were full of guilt for studying. This is an indication that women embraced the liberal ideals of individual ambition and achievement.

According to structures and rules in the society, individuals with higher education are usually in a better position to negotiate the allocation of duties and responsibilities. In this case, therefore, postgraduate student mothers’ position in society is elevated when they acquire higher education. They are added more duties and responsibilities that are not just confined to the household but also those that are considered prestigious.

4.4 Challenges of Student Mothers in Balancing Motherhood and Education

Challenges denote obstacles that prevent movement or access. Regarding balancing multiple roles of work, motherhood and education, inability to balance these roles impedes the completion rates of women in higher education. In the current study, therefore, challenges are those circumstances that prevented postgraduate student mothers from successfully balancing the conflicting roles of work, motherhood and studentship at the University of Nairobi.

4.4.1 Difficulties in Balancing Roles

Roles are expected behaviors attached to individuals in the society. Regarding their status as employees, mothers and students, postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study had problems in balancing elements in their social lives. For example, **R28** reported that learning while nurturing offsprings involved a great deal of balancing between study roles and family responsibilities. She declared, *“The challenges I regularly face in trying to balance school work and family responsibilities are insufficient reading time and a feeling of guilt due to sacrificed family time due to inability to achieve home and career balance.”*

R28’s feeling of guilt for not being able to handle roles that are overwhelming to her is a reflection of how triple roles of reproduction, production and communal obligations affected student mothers. In the current study, inability to prioritize often created conflict due to the overlap of work, home and family responsibilities by postgraduate student mothers. For example, **R17**, while discussing the concept of balance, declared, *“I often work from home in the evenings especially in completing both office reports and school assignments.”*

The sentiments of **R28** also prove that the concept of balance shapes postgraduate student mothers' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon. A study by Alsop et al., (2008), on student parents revealed that in negotiating their responsibilities as student parents, women faced many challenges such as the implications that their choices to be scholars had on psychological perception of their nurturing role and the transformation of the mothers' role that come with the scholars' role.

Balancing caring roles for young children was identified as a challenge to postgraduate student mothers' educational pursuits. For example, when **R15** enrolled for post-graduate studies, her child made studying more difficult as she was barely one-year-old. She explained that both baby and studies demanded a lot of her attention, so she hardly slept. **R15** declared, *"My 12-month-child makes my studies very difficult since I hardly slept early because she demands a lot of my attention as a mother. I also need to create time for my studies as well."*

R13 took good care of her home and children, so she often did not start her class work until late in the evening when everyone else was asleep. She declared, *"I started my school work very late in the evening when my children slept since I had to care for them first."* **R15** declared, *"I have to sacrifice a lot of my sleep to study as I try to be there for my family as well as completing my school assignments on time. I ensure that all my children are asleep before sitting on my reading table which at times is very late at night."*

The experiences by the postgraduate student mothers show that their challenges lie in balancing their roles. This concurs with Moss's, (2004), study that explored experiences and perceptions of

the university by women students and found that several female scholars were questioned by other household members to rationalize the opportunity they engaged in learning. Due to reduced material conditions like greater time, space and money that would allow students to study effectively, several also had a sense of responsibility to rationalize their time away from home. Some study participants found themselves in very demanding circumstances. To **R27**, mothering took a lot of her time. She declared,

“My children and their demands take up a lot of my time and energy. Being a mother negatively impacts my ability to complete my degree on time. I get from work, come home, organize them something to eat, ensure they bathe and get them ready for bed, so then I start doing my homework. By this time, my energy is depleted leading to physical and emotional stress and sometimes am not able to perform well.”

The sentiments by **R27** were also shared by **R29** who described her feelings of depression as too much and that her anxiety levels at work were increasing and she was not herself anymore. She declared, *“I normally shout at my husband all the time and that my patience is short. I sometimes feel like I am managing my life well, but I later realize that there is too much going on at home and at school for me to manage.”*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers is a clear indication that women share similar experiences regarding an exceedingly high workload and emotional stress and a common understanding that obligations as scholars and their roles as mothers were both critical. These study findings are similar to those by Mills, (2009) in which it was revealed that student mothers strived to openly isolate the two identities of scholar and mother by negating clash of the two and making sure that they are performing duties and responsibilities of the two roles.

4.4.2 Good Mother Stereotype

In this study, family role was key to majority postgraduate student mothers who organized domestic and school tasks around school timetable giving lists of intended events and times necessary for their completion. Student mothers of school-age children actively engaged in harmonizing university timetable with school holiday when their offsprings would be at home. **R13**, for example, indicated that the main thing she does is making a schedule based on the children's schedule and the school timetable.

In the current study, 18 postgraduate student mothers identified the insufficient reading time and a feeling of guilt due to sacrificed family time as obstacles in balancing motherhood and postgraduate education. In addition, they had a hard time to make up for lost time with lessons instructed in their absence, so they frequently relied upon their cohorts for scholastic help. Postgraduate student mothers however confronted the assumptions to include the role of a breadwinner that is not congruent with the conventional idea of a "good mother." These findings differ with those by Pare's, (2009), which never confronted the notion of exclusive nurturing of children by their mother, as the definition of a "good mother."

R17 stated, "*Sometimes I have to put my work aside at night to let my children have their time and help them.*" This was her way of maintaining a work-life balance and managing priorities. The sentiments by **R17** demonstrate that the reproductive role of women overrides their other two roles namely productive and community management no matter their status in the society. These findings are similar to those in a study by Walkup, (2005), that specifically dealt with student mothers and revealed that they were largely affected by conventional notion of

motherhood and were preoccupied with their offsprings' needs. Also, to balance the contending obligations bestowed on them in the time available was difficult to them but they seemed to accept these as inevitable at the same time.

Findings of the current study relate to those in a study by Pare, (2009), that did not contest the idea of intensive nurturing but were presented regarding "good mother." In contrast, in a study on student mothers Stockdell & Ingalls, (2007), revealed that those who managed to balance education and motherhood roles lived in two separate and conflicting worlds. This is because under the best of circumstances, balancing professional responsibilities with the care of children was exhausting and overwhelming.

Post-graduate student mothers, on the other hand, went out of their way to become students against all the odds or expectations of society hence crossing boundaries. Further, the research uncovered that a fruitful woman combining student, mother and career roles requires significant utilitarian changes in her household. This sort of approach can undoubtedly enhance the interpersonal organization of the relatives and furnish them with chances to take in different activities from the new individuals they come into contact with. This arrangement has disadvantages. It can bring about damaged relations and conflicts. Another issue likely to emerge is that cultural hindrances may keep well-meaning individuals from relating to each other in the student mothers' households.

4.4.3 Constrained Family Time

In the current study, 20 postgraduate student mothers felt unhappy about not being able to be there for their families as required. This led to feelings of guilt and anxiety over failure to meet family demands. They discussed experiencing guilt in school, work, and family spheres and questioning their decision to combine work related duties, school roles and family responsibilities.

For **R32**, personal life added extra stress to her schooling as she had to juggle her education, her work, and her kids. She declared,

“My family time is much squeezed as I hardly spend quality time with my children and husband who is undergoing a difficult time after the death of his mother. I feel guilty as I cannot give my husband the extra attention that he needs but instead, I stay up studying until the early hours of the morning though I believe that my husband feels abandoned.”

Age of postgraduate student mothers did not affect their guilt feelings. For instance, the age difference between **R13** and **R32** was 14 years, but they both felt guilty for similar roles they played that never allowed them to spend quality time with their families. **R13** declared, *“I miss my kids and feel guilty about being away for so long and think about them a lot when I’m away. This creates a sense of urgency to get back to them as soon as classes are over, making the occurrences of spontaneous study groups and homework sessions practically non-existent.”*

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers show that women are passionate about being available for their offsprings and prioritizing them, but due to school work and work demands, they are unable to commit themselves fully to all activities. As a result, there seem to be an

acceptance of shouldering the responsibility for ‘doing it all,’ and a common understanding that keeping things in balance meant understanding that there would always be some level of overlap between work, school and home.

Also, nurturing requirements of postgraduate student mothers were frequently at variance with their studies. These findings are similar to those of a study by Trepal *et al.*, (2014), who explored the combination of motherhood and revealed that postgraduate student mothers conveyed a great deal of fault. Further, postgraduate student mothers felt responsible for conflicting school duties, family responsibilities and at times work related roles as well as described having guilt as a result of having to make sacrifices at home or work. They, however, attempted to mediate this conflict through positive self-talk. For example, **R 28** declared,

“Although balancing all my multiple roles is a big challenge that drains me physically, socially and emotionally, I take things day by day by focusing on the positive outcomes, both at home and at school. I keep reminding myself that while working and raising a family is challenging, it is not impossible because other women ahead of me have managed and succeeded.”

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers indicate that demanding roles both at home and at work caused them to experience high levels of emotional strain, intense feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed. They blamed themselves for not meeting their high standards, or for not finding ways to take better care of their offsprings. They, however, accepted these feelings as a natural consequence of managing multiple responsibilities.

These study findings concur with those by Marandet & Wainwright, (2010), which established that absence of family time and ‘discordant time’ were the most frequently identified obstructions for postgraduate student mothers as family time was over and over again forfeited as a consequence of learning. The guilt felt by post-graduate student mothers is as a result of socio-culturally assigned duties and responsibilities. When post-graduate student mothers think they have not been able to balance multiple roles, they may end up feeling guilty. Those that negotiate and interact with the roles amicably may not have the guilt feeling but a sense of accomplishment.

4.4.4 Managing Child-Care

In the current study, although 19 postgraduate student mothers reported despite great family support, they found it challenging to balance the demands of managing childcare and domestic work with studying and paid work. This was confirmed by sentiments of **R24**, who declared,

“Although my husband is very supportive both morally and financially, I am very frustrated for spending most of my time in job-related meetings and training and decreased face-to-face time with my family and especially my two children aged 9 and 13 years. Also, my 13-year-old son needs me more this time than ever as it’s the beginning of his teenagehood, a challenging stage for many boys.”

The impact of studying was severe during coursework due to the heavy workload associated with this period of study. For example, **R29** declared, *“being a single mum to my two children is not easy since I am the only mother and father figure they have. I understand when my children complain due to my long absence in the house and inability to share quality time with them. I mostly feel guilty due to sacrificed family time.”*

R13 related that family duties were greatly affected by her studies and declared,

“My children greatly miss my presence in the house and especially in helping them in household chores. My husband is also affected since I arrive home late and we rarely interact as we did before I enrolled for my studies. Although he does not complain, am always haunted by his silence since I sacrifice family time for my studies especially weekends.”

Sentiments by R29 and R13 on sacrificed family time is consistent with Estes,⁹ (2011), findings indicating that student parents believed that their offsprings were a priority. However, this changed as they tried to fulfill their responsibilities as students.

The level of study, whether coursework or research, significantly influenced how multiple roles of studentship, work, and family regardless of the ages of their offsprings affected postgraduate student mothers. For instance, **R30** who was single, doing coursework and having one child aged two years, shared similar sentiments with **R28** who is married, has two children aged 13 and 8 and also doing coursework. They both complained about how stressful it was to organize their multiple roles of school, work and home considering the school timetable that demanded their presence any time as dictated. This made them sacrifice family time to study.

Further **R30** declared,

“Coursework is more demanding since classes are never scheduled for the individual student, but one has to organize their roles keeping in mind the timetable. I strongly believe that once I start my research work, things will drastically improve since I will be doing school work on my own free time as opposed to the current situation where I have

to attend classes as demanded by the school timetable. However, the only issues (not, major) that I will have to contend with is meeting time with my supervisor.”

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers clearly show that the decision to combine work and family requires sacrifice that negatively impacted on their children, spouses, and families. This was as a result of sacrificed family time for studies whereby there was too much work to be completed by postgraduate student mothers that describe being less available at home for their offsprings and spouses.

Limited family time greatly affected postgraduate student mothers and made them very guilty for not spending quality time with their young families. For example, **R23** declared, *“I feel guilty since I no longer spend quality time with my young child.”* Family duties greatly affected **R27**'s studies. She declared,

“I am haunted for sacrificing family time as a result of many complaints from my husband who complain that I hardly have time for him and that we spend very little time together as compared to when I had not enrolled for my studies. My children also complain that I never have time for them and that I am always absent while doing their homework in the evening after school.”

The feelings by postgraduate student mothers here attest to the fact that their return to school had a strong influence on how they related to their families, and especially their children and spouses. However, duties and responsibilities of nurturing and household chores appeared unaffected for the postgraduate student mothers as they carried on doing most of such tasks along with their scholarly work. This is in agreement with Estes' (2011), observations that while

student mothers thought that their children were their primary concern, this transformed as they attempted to accomplish their obligations as scholars.

A study by Moss, (2004), revealed that experiences and perceptions of student mothers in the university showed that ‘an opportunity for learning need to be hived from allocated time for work, family, relaxation, and socialization.’ The income generation ability of student mothers and the way their resources were allocated in the household was of significance, with some guardians and spouses refusing to support those who veered off from conventionally expected roles. Many of the student mothers went on carrying out their domestic chores just as before they joined university for higher learning.

These findings are echoed in a study by Sweet & Moen, (2007), in which student mothers who were employed and had more influence on choices made in their households. However, there was still a requirement for female scholars to rationalize the advantages of increased schooling to the family. Relaxation opportunities were frequently perceived as less important. Other tasks involving the family took priority.

The observations illustrate that experience of student mothers was dependent on their position in the family and economic status. The position determined how they negotiated for resources in the family set up be they financial or time to attend to their studies. This negotiation informed their experience as they attended their studies. The more powerful they were, the more likely they were to get a better deal and vice versa.

4.4.5 Strained Relationship with Partner

Impact denotes a strong effect on someone or something. In the current study, postgraduate student mothers' return to school had a strong impact on how they related with their partners as well as taking care of the individual well being of those spouses. The pursuit of post-graduate education therefore, influenced to a large extent the relationship between postgraduate student mothers and their spouses. For the married postgraduate student mothers, their coming back to study at times put pressure on their bond with their spouses, but it did not pose any constant danger to their connection.

These feelings were shared by 17 postgraduate student mothers as confirmed by sentiments of **R26** who declared,

“Although my husband is very understanding, he regularly complains about my absence in the family and especially over the weekend when I could take the two children out. Instead, I was busy with my school assignments now that I was not at work. His regular complains concerned me greatly since he looked affected”.

For **R27**, her husband also complained of her absence in the house. She declared, *“My husband regularly complained of lack of family time, and that resulted to receiving no support from him at all and that he began coming home late in the evening without any good reason.”* **R25** who was also married shared similar sentiments. She said, *‘I feel bad anytime I find my husband home waiting for me to arrive and serve him dinner. At times am so tired even to serve him. He may not talk, but his face tells it all.’*

The sentiments by postgraduate student mothers are a testimony that due to conflicting social roles of work, student and family they experience changes in their relationships with their partners when they returned to school. For many postgraduate student mothers, return to study signifies a phase that they were after individual development or after career targets, which regularly postponed household roles resulting to negative impacts on personal relationships.

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers concur with the findings in a study by White, (2008), which observed that enrolling for higher education brought difficulties to female scholars' family relations, ending up to near collapse. Another study by Sweet & Moen, (2007), examining post-graduate scholars established that scholar duties and responsibilities acted as the driving force for altering classification and allocation of duties and responsibilities, power dynamics in the family adding to conflict due to the changed division of household work.

White, (2008), further stated that going back for higher education tested women's marriage, causing a near collapse of their relationships. Similarly, the observations show that power relations in the family set up determined the impact post-graduate studies had on scholars' spouses. In the current study however, post-graduate student mothers who were good in negotiating rules and structures had a better position in power relations hence household responsibilities impact on their studies was little as opposed to those who had not negotiated well and were coming from an inferior position. Their motherhood experiences during post-graduate studies were bound to be difficult.

4.4.6 College Proximity

Postgraduate student mothers also talked about the proximity of the college of choice. **R13**, for instance, declared, *“I am enrolled for studies at the University of Nairobi due to its accessibility from my workplace and its flexible programs offered in the evening and weekends.”* The sentiments by **R13** revealed that to some postgraduate student mothers, maintaining routines and adhering to schedules was their key priority.

These study findings are similar to those by Gonzalez & Kilkey, (2009), which revealed that the location of the university is important to student mothers in relations to their workplaces, children's schools and the closeness to social linkages. Adaptability from the office and personnel were vital in assisting student mothers in their studies. Of particular mention is the extension of assignment deadlines and granting of permission to look after sick children.

These study findings are in line with those from a study on student mothers by Alsop, Gonzalez-Arnal & Kilkey, (2008), in which planning and venue of lectures were a specific problem. For example, if student mothers had daybreak or late evening lectures with resultant organizational and cost implications entangled, those with youngsters must look for alternative care. A study by Moreau & Kerner, (2012), that interrogated college personnel recognized babysitting as critical to student mothers who engaged in harmonizing university timetable with school holiday due to difficulties managing different responsibilities.

4.4.7 Financial Constraints

Finance is the management of money matters. In the current study, twenty-eight (28) postgraduate student mothers complained that enrolling for post-graduate studies strained their family budget resulting in financial hardship while only 4 did not complain of such hardship. The dire financial impact was occasioned by the high cost of post-graduate education in Kenya. This is consistent with the findings by Lynch, (2008), citing limited resources as a significant challenge for student mothers.

Further, postgraduate student mothers complained that they strained more due to insufficient financial aid ranging from difficulties to accessing the loan offered by the Higher Education Loans Board that is typically determined by one's pay slip. They also did not apply for commercial bank loans because they attracted high-interest rates. This notwithstanding, postgraduate student mothers had to sacrifice and pay the required fees to remain in school because acquiring post-graduate training would accord them better job prospects and, in this manner, enhance their income level.

Findings of this study are in line with those by Home & Hind, (2000) which revealed that factors such as managing class assignments, job responsibilities, or family needs were not as significantly demanding as a lack of financial aid for female scholars. It is important for women to be financially stable, propelled by their wish to provide the best for their offsprings, including saving for college and providing family vacations and activities that would create positive, lasting memories for their families.

A study by Gonzalez & Kilkey, (2009), established that several student parents encountered financial challenges. Experiencing financial uncertainties was the principal purpose mentioned amongst those who contemplated dropping out. Findings of the present study affirm that resources are critical for post-graduate student mothers and their households. Prioritization of resources to be allocated for every function is determined by the structures that exist in society, rules and the negotiating power of primary beneficiary of the resources.

The socio-economic background of postgraduate student mothers investigated did not cushion them against financial challenges. For instance, although **R7** and **R30** belonged to different communities, they both had difficulties in completing their education due to financial constraints. For example, **R7** reported that her primary challenge in enrolling and finishing her degree was lack of money and completing the mandatory college projects while also taking care of her family. She got used to taking care of a myriad of problems all in one day.

R7 declared,

“I struggle to pay my school fees, and it has taken me more time to move with my colleagues. At the moment, I don’t have a job contract and that I have to put my children’s education first. My husband’s salary is not much, and he also struggles to keep our home running. This aside, I have to do my family chores and complete college projects to avoid being left behind.”

Similar sentiments were shared by **R30**. She was stressed due to financial constraints. She declared, ‘*My biggest problem is difficulty in paying fees.*’

Sentiments by postgraduate student mothers indicate that despite marital status, they had financial constraints. These findings are similar to results of a study by Lynch, (2008), who posits that mothering and monetary support along with socially constructed categorization of roles were the factors that slowed down their progress in school. Also, “cultural script” of rigorous nurturing added to increased dropout rates for student mothers. These observations have shown that allocation of resources and rules dictated by culture prolonged duration of study for many student mothers. In resource allocation, priority was given to immediate household needs and post-graduate studies took a back seat.

4.5 Coping Strategies

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve an overall aim. To cope means to dedicate own effort to enable one tolerate stress and conflict. In this study, almost all postgraduate student mothers reported ways in which they resolved the tension that affected their studies and their families by employing positive coping strategies. This corresponds with a study by Vyronides & Visilakis, (2008), in which student mothers endeavored, as much as possible, not to disrupt family time.

In the current study for example, postgraduate student mothers chose to study at night while their children were asleep. They also sought help from spouses, parents, siblings and elder children to take care of their children while they studied. They also organized their scholarly obligations to coincide with their offspring’s sleeping schedules. This is confirmed by **R17** who reported that she was well organized which enabled her to play her different roles at ease. She declared,

“By being organized I manage my school-related assignments and domestic chores especially while dealing with my two children in that, being organized helps me have an orderly life albeit with many commitments.” R32 declared, “I am who I am today for being well organized and studying at night when my children are asleep. This assists me in concentration and that I also don’t feel guilty because I work on my school assignment after ensuring everyone has eaten and is asleep.”

The sentiments made by postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study show that to increase efficiency and be able to meet their demands of education and child-rearing responsibilities, postgraduate student mothers in the current study employed specific coping strategies that best fitted their unique contexts. These findings relate to those by Estes, (2011), in which student parents used positive coping strategies to manage their multiple roles of work, family and school.

A study by Firming & Bailey (2008), on work-family conflict identified several strategies to assist in mitigating the tensions between work and home. These included flexible scheduling and educational and child-care support to student mothers. In addition, student mothers attempted to shield their families from negative effect of their educational pursuits (Vyronides & Visilakis, 2008).

Postgraduate student mothers in the current study identified two major categories of coping mechanisms namely: organization of work, academics, family duties and support system (internal and external). Unfavorable structures and rules in the society were adhered to cope with limited resources. Also, postgraduate student mothers relied on their negotiating power to get

something done to support their higher education aspirations. However, the effectiveness of their coping strategies depended on individual efforts.

4.5.1 Time Management

In the current study, time management denotes prioritization made by postgraduate student mothers around academic, family and work-related duties. The importance of time management was to harmonize study, work, and family in that postgraduate student mothers worked to a strict routine, time management, and proper scheduling, to focus on their studies and be available for their young families that demanded a share of their time. This relates to research by Estes, (2011), which revealed that student parents used positive coping strategies to deal with conflicting demands of school-related duties, family responsibilities, and related work roles.

In the current study, academic duties were responsibilities performed by postgraduate student mothers in making choices and taking actions which led them toward their educational goals. Postgraduate student mothers therefore demonstrated academic integrity and honesty as well as attending and participating in class activities and seminars. Postgraduate student mothers were regarded as engaged learners who acted civilly, respected their college learning/social environment and complied with the college policies outlined in the student constitution. With attention to the quality of work, postgraduate student mothers also completed their assignments promptly.

They avoided making excuses for their many responsibilities and communicated in a careful and respectful manner with professors, peers, and other people in the college. **R18** was also

organized and kept a strict schedule for her life. However, she scheduled only a few hours each night for sleep. Personal strategy for completing school work for **R1** was working ahead of others. She attended her classes every day and was always double-checking her assignments and schedules. She concluded by saying: *“I make sure I stay organized to ensure that I am not left behind.”*

Sentiments made by **R17** and **R18** indicate that postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study devised coping strategies by emphasizing the importance of time management for enabling them to fulfill their multiple roles when faced with myriad challenges of combining work related duties, family responsibilities and school roles. Their sentiments resonate well with those in a study by Bruening & Dixon, (2007), which revealed that postgraduate student mothers identified coping mechanisms to achieve success at work and quality of life with their families.

R18 declared, *“To ensure that I take good care of my home and children, I often don’t start my class work until late in the evening when everyone else is asleep.”* The sentiment by **R18** on not prioritizing academic duties is a clear demonstration that child care responsibilities are taken with the seriousness they deserve regardless of the student mother’s class or status in the society. These findings concur with those in a study by Marandet & Wainwright’s (2010) study, which revealed that postgraduate student mothers were often abstracted from the context of their private lives and to try and fit in at the university, some students found themselves internalizing their home situations.

In the current study, other postgraduate student mothers tried to avoid a clash with traditional beliefs and ensured success in both academic and family roles. These techniques entailed downgrading motherhood tasks in the scholarly sphere and downgrading the scholar's role in domestic chores. **R26** for example declared,

“I never carried school assignment home and also tried to keep my weekends free from homework so I can spend quality time with my family. For this reason, I worked on assignments every weekday and never bothered with family issues while at school. However, my family was still the priority for me as time with my family “re-energized” me and gave me a reason to keep up with my studies.”

Family duties refer to parents caring for their offsprings and family members caring for one another (Levin-Epstein, 2006). In the current study, family duties related to home-based responsibilities by postgraduate student mothers that included childcare, cooking, ironing and taking sick children to hospitals among others. **R32** for example declared,

“I have forfeited a lot of time with my children to get through my studies. I have no time for extracurricular activities for myself and time off during weekends with family. However, often at night, I help my children with their homework before I begin my assignments that I do till late.”

Work duties are general tasks and responsibilities of a position occupied by an individual in an organization. In the current study, work duties are defined as responsibilities of postgraduate student mothers in their workplace. Postgraduate student mothers employed different strategies to cope with their work-related assignments and to balance them with family and student roles. **R28** for example never left anything unfinished on her desk and worked ahead in her classes to

cope with studies. She declared, *“I try to work ahead so that if something does happen at home, I don’t have to worry about it or stress out too much, that I’m done or caught up.”*

On the other hand, **R13** held a part-time job that took all her leisure time to earn extra cash to pay her fees. The act by **R13** to have an extra income at the expense of her leisure time to facilitate her studies is an indication of the selfless nature of women with multiple roles by making personal sacrifices for the sake of their families. Using leisure time for a part-time job, however, may make postgraduate student mothers more stressed.

The sentiment by postgraduate student mothers in the current study clearly shows that women had to address challenges resulting from academic engagements by using various coping strategies. These study findings are similar to those by Lister, (2003), who investigated the significance of studying by student mothers and found that all the mothers’ free time was spent with children, doing homework and working.

Similarly, Walkup, (2005), in his research specifically on student mothers, found that they were engrossed with their offspring’s necessities and intensely swayed by societal anticipations about motherhood. Student mothers at times had to forego leisure time to accommodate new roles in their lives. This is a part of the negotiation in a context where everybody is expected to fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities based on the structures and rules in the society.

4.5.2 Fortitude

Postgraduate student mothers in the current study have shown resilience that has sustained them through difficulties in balancing roles of employee, student and mother. Most postgraduate student mothers mentioned ambition, discipline, determination, and persistence. To all, an innate feeling of fortitude assisted them through the troubles of learning while bringing up children. For some postgraduate student mothers, late afternoon hours offered the greatest chances for them to concentrate on scholarly work and often finalized their assignments at dusk, after putting their offsprings to sleep. For others, weekends offered the most appropriate time for them to do their college assignments.

In the current study, postgraduate student mothers excersised strength of mind that included patience, social adjustment, sacrifice and self-determination. Patience is a virtue that denotes the ability to wait for something without getting angry. Postgraduate student mothers were well aware that waiting for long-term gratification was much better than accepting instant gratification.

For **R2**, the ability to see the “bigger picture” and persevering while at the same time putting more efforts in setting and meeting objectives helped her to cope with her many obligations. **R2** declared, *“I can take everything at a time; I patiently work with my children and at the same time create time for my studies.”* Sentiments by **R2** affirm that expectation of great future rewards alleviates stress for student mothers providing them a sense of harmonizing their many obligations.

In the current study, social adjustment is the extent to which postgraduate student mothers were able to balance their roles in the family and school. **R25's** ability to interact socially, for example, changed a lot in that she barely had a social life as she spent most of her time studying and the remaining time revolved around her children. She declared, *"I barely have my own free time for self-care as I am always occupied with my studies and taking care of my children."* Sentiments by **R25** indicate that postgraduate student mothers were able to cope with their new challenges brought by multiple role commitments as workers, mothers and students.

For **R29**, her concept of social life had changed dramatically compared to what it was before the birth of her children. She declared,

"Two things have happened with my social life regarding children. First, social events require more planning and more involvement with other people for support. Also, having young children at home has caused sleep deprivation, so there isn't as much motivation or energy to go out as there was before. I do have a social life, just a different kind of social life than before the birth of my children."

The sentiment by **R29** indicates that student mothers in this study had a different kind of social life due to their ability to adjust to prevailing circumstances. This ultimately helped them to balance their roles of students, employee, and mother. These research findings are similar to those by Baxter and Britton (2001) in which student mothers often prioritized family interests.

The other internal support system element was a sacrifice. Sacrifice is defined as an act of giving up something that is valuable to get something else.

In the current study, the act by postgraduate student mothers of giving up their social life and family time to study is a form of sacrifice. Postgraduate student mothers identified several sacrifices that were necessary to manage their multiple roles of family and study in relation to home and family. However, there was a common perception by postgraduate student mothers that it was impossible to fully satisfy all of the demands placed on them.

Many postgraduate student mothers spoke of fatigue and burn out as they tried to balance work, studying and motherhood. They sacrificed sleep and time with their families and friends to focus on their studies. Postgraduate student mothers often accomplished their assignments at dusk when their offsprings were asleep, or early in the morning before they awoke. These research findings concur with those of Vyronides & Visilaki's (2008) study where postgraduate student mothers sacrificed sleep to study after their offsprings had gone to bed.

R24 described the combined demands on her roles at home and work as being 'abundant.' She said, *"It just can't all be done, that's the reality. I have to make choices and figure out what works for me because it is just too much."* Sentiments by **R24** shed more light on conscious decisions by postgraduate student mothers to forego personal needs and home-based responsibilities, a typical experience of working mothers.

R25 sacrificed family get together and got home early to stay with her children. She declared, *"I do not have time for myself and my family as I sacrifice a lot of my time to manage work, school, and home responsibilities."* Sentiments by **R25** show that although majority of postgraduate

student mothers shared challenges they encountered in finding family time, they also noted the importance of creating time for their families.

For **R23**, her particular strategy for studying involved staying up late when the house was quiet, and everyone was asleep. She declared, *“I get a lot of energy when everyone is asleep. I get little sleep which seems to work for me since I enrolled for postgraduate studies at the University of Nairobi. I don’t want to say that I was unbeatable, that I didn’t need the sleep, but it is maybe the pressure I have that could not allow me to sleep.”*

R27 saw her goal in sight and wanted to achieve it sooner rather than later. She studied whenever the opportunity arose. She declared, *“I do not have any specific time for studying but I study anytime I get free time from work and family responsibilities.”* **R17** sacrificed by ensuring that she did everything for everyone else, and nothing for herself in the family. She declared, *“From the moment I get home, I am always busy serving my family, and I am not able to take care of my needs such as sleep.”*

Self-determination is the process of making decisions for oneself without influence from outside. In the current study, self-determination was defined as the ability of postgraduate student mothers to control their own lives and to make decisions regarding their multiple roles. This is the last personal quality employed by postgraduate student mothers in the current study. For example, **R25** was determined, with or without help, not to rely only on parents or friends for support in her post-graduate studies. She declared, *“I find other forms of support through a*

personal commitment to study but not necessarily burdening my parents who did so much for me, and this is now their time to rest.”

4.5.3 Family Support

Family support is a form of internal support defined as an integrated network of community-based resources and services that strengthens parenting practices and the healthy development of children. In the current study, family support denotes the assistance given to postgraduate student mothers by their spouses, parents, friends, and house helps. The family provided the most reliable support to postgraduate student mothers covered in the current study.

For example, **R5** was very excited about sharing how her husband understood that the role of the student could conflict with traditional mothering roles. She declared, *“My husband is one of a kind. He never complain over my absence at home but instead understands that mothering roles can conflict with student roles.”* **R17**’s husband provided additional help with the children and if her school and her husband’s work schedules conflicted her neighbours were willing to help with childcare.

Sentiments by **R5** and **R17** indicate that postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study had supportive spouses that helped in managing multiple role responsibilities. They described the roles of their spouses as great support regarding lessening the impact of time-based conflicts and understanding that the women’s role as a homemaker was impacted by their academic and professional demands. These study findings are in line with those by Kirrane &

Buckley, (2004) which revealed that spousal support was an important factor in reducing conflict between work and family life.

In the current study, no one felt they were utterly alone although the level of external support was different for each postgraduate student mother. For instance, although **R29** was single and had no spouse to turn to for support in her multiple role combination, her parents especially the mother provided her with the necessary support that she required. She declared, *“My parents are always there for me when I need any assistance with the children.”*

On the other hand, **R13** worked hard to create a support system through her spouse. She declared, *“My husband is always there for me and assists me both in child-care and also in other domestic chores, which is very helpful indeed.”* Therefore, support provided to postgraduate student mothers who participated in this study was vital to their studies and young families. This is supported by findings in a study by Thorstand et al., (2006), which revealed that both practical and emotional support provided by husbands was essential to the student mothers. Single mothers on their part enjoyed support from peers, siblings, and relatives.

4.5.4 University Support

University support is a form of external support enjoyed by postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study. It involves the range of University provision regarding personal, academic development, understanding of University practices, employability, and a sense of community. University support in the current study refers to a range of University provision intended to help postgraduate student mothers in maintaining and improving their wellbeing.

Some postgraduate student mothers mainly relied upon individual faculty staff members and that students with study difficulties and those who wished to develop the ability to study effectively, academic support was offered.

In the current study, some postgraduate student mothers utilized college resources and sought for help when needed, they respected diverse ideas and opinions and identified, developed, and implemented plans to achieve their educational goals. Through personal organization skills, postgraduate student mothers were able to balance work and family demands. They employed proper scheduling and worked on strict routines to focus on their studies as well as being available to their young families. For example, **R17** declared,

“Although my biggest challenges in enrolling and completing my degree are mainly meeting the usual weekly school deadlines and completing projects while also taking care of my family and job, I am used to taking care of a myriad of problems all in one day due to proper time management.”

For **R13** her university supervisor was a key supporter during her studies in that he was a constant supporter in scheduling study time and planning her time down to gets all the assignments done due to the nature of her work and busy family schedules. She declared, *“My supervisor has always been there for me to answer technical questions and to offer guidance in both academic and professional matters.”* Findings of the current study show that the availability of support varied amongst the postgraduate student mothers as each noted individuals who served as a resource and, in some way, helped them to manage personal and professional stressors.

In supporting postgraduate student mothers in their studies, adaptability from the faculty and personnel was critical. However, many postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study complained that especially regarding time scheduling and timetabling predominantly in regards to task targets and deficiencies to take care of ailing youngsters the university admission as an institution failed to meet their needs.

R20, for example, did not utilize any services from the university, and she never found university responsive to her needs especially the financial assistance, and when she had personal questions, she had no one to communicate to. She said however that she was happy with the overall experience at the university. While appreciating the learning received, she added that she was the overall reason for her success. She declared, *“I am very determined and that when it comes down to it, I am responsible for my achievement.”*

R32 did not use the academic support and student services offered such as library services due to her busy schedules. She declared, *“I did not actively seek out university support because it was time-consuming above my already full workload.”* Sentiments by student mothers indicate that many did not get the university support during their studies in balancing their multiple roles of school, home responsibilities, and work-related duties. These findings differ with those of Springer et al., (2009), who concluded that if institutions of higher education afforded mothers more support, the troubles that they encountered could be decreased.

4.5.5 Employer Support

The final source of external support for post-graduate student mothers was employer support. This is defined as the assistance offered by employers to post-graduate student mothers. In the current study, many post-graduate student mothers were employed to meet their financial stability need as well as to manage the high fees and other needs as they studied. Majority noted that their bosses hardly supported their studies. However, for some, their employers were very encouraging and motivated them to carry on with their studies.

For example, **R23**'s employer was very encouraging and a huge motivator. She declared,

“My boss made it very easy for me to continue with schooling beyond my master’s degree by supporting me all through. She gave me time off duty anytime I needed to attend a class and also by allowing me to do schoolwork during work hours. My boss is also studying for her Ph.D. at the same time, and she thought if she could do it, so could I.”

Sentiments by **R23** indicate that external support from the boss facilitated the student mothers' performance both at school and home.

Age of post-graduate student mothers played a key role on how they coped with balancing multiple roles in the current study. For example, **R17**'s age had an impact on her studies in pursuing her Master's degree. She realized that she could not quite relate to everything younger students talked about while working on group projects. She also found they were not as serious about their schooling as she was and that her everyday problems were unlike theirs. The experiences of this student mother-**R17** imply that balancing multiple role commitments while

simultaneously studying and raising children is challenging to many older post-graduate student mothers.

Marital status of post-graduate student mothers significantly influenced the support they received in both ways. Single student mothers had no partners to support them, but they had housekeepers and other relatives who supported them as they studied. Those with spouses received support from their partners both emotionally and financially and these affected each student mother differently.

Although **R17**'s husband was initially supportive, he felt that he should be the sole economic support for the family and that **R17** should take care of all the home and childcare responsibilities. If laundry was not done or she was doing homework after the kids were in bed instead of spending time with him, he complained. **R17** declared,

“Although my husband is supportive, I believe it is all on me since I am the one to do the work, so I’m the one that has to put into my head that you need to press forward and keep doing this and get it done. I constantly tell myself that I can’t quit or give up but instead, get everything done.”

R5's husband never complained of her absence while studying but he instead understood her roles quite well. She declared, *“My husband is one of a kind, he never complains over my absence at home but instead understands that mothering roles can conflict with student roles.”* Sentiments by **R5** indicate that her husband is an example of men who give their women a chance to get empowerment but at the same time feel that they should be good mothers to their offsprings.

Although **R23** was married, she also received support from her boss. She declared, “*When I mostly felt like giving up on my studies due to stress, my boss pushed me to keep trying. My boss has an attitude of family first, and I felt fortunate to have had a job that was so accommodating.*”

Sentiments by post-graduate student mothers indicate that availability of support vary amongst them with each woman having individuals who serve as a resource and, in some way, help them to manage personal and professional stressors.

These study findings are in line with those in a study by Romito *et al.*, (2007), which revealed that positive association had been shown between women in employment, social and personal adjustments to cope with the challenges of managing multiple roles. Therefore, availability of a support system or the lack of it to post-graduate student mothers who participated in the current study depended on how a post-graduate student mothers negotiated with other concerned parties. The negotiations are on structures, rules and resources allocated. Therefore, post-graduate student mothers who took time to negotiate well ended up with a better support system than those who did not.

In the current study, postgraduate student mothers tried putting their best foot forward every time they got a chance to be home whereas their family members made individual changes in their absence. Additionally, tolerance and expands in social networks by post-graduate student mothers enhanced career prospects by boosting their income level and financial safety upon graduation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter consists of a summary of the findings of the study. The second section highlights conclusions drawn from the major findings of the study while the final section focuses on recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.2 Contribution to Knowledge in Gender and Development Studies

The motivation behind this section is to counter the pessimism that pervades previous research on the subject of student mothers in postgraduate studies. The researcher first recognizes the efforts of the women who combine motherhood and postgraduate studies. The current study uncovered that combining motherhood with postgraduate studies brought about a clash of roles in a student mother's life. Women learning at a postgraduate level were spurred by a yearning for individual accomplishment, self-advancement, and professional growth. Furthermore, post-graduate student mothers dealt with their motherhood and educational obligations by utilizing positive coping strategies.

The current study deciphers and depicts the encounters of post-graduate student mothers and shows how they settled the strain by combining postgraduate education and motherhood. From the research results, the encounters of being a student mother in Kenya include prioritization of roles to allocate time to contending demands. For instance, some post-graduate student mothers felt that concentrating on studies affected the time they had with their youngsters. This is because

they were essentially caught up with finishing school assignments and preparing for exams. This had negative consequences on their childcare roles.

Results from this study show that post-graduate student mothers were spurred to forestall the difficulties they experienced and to accomplish their dream of undertaking postgraduate studies. While the results demonstrated that role strain struggles were a piece of the experience of a mother who pursued postgraduate studies, they also showed that post-graduate student mothers esteemed education and strived to be great students. Additionally, they valued child rearing and worked hard to be great guardians.

In this investigation, the budgetary weight of studying while bringing up children was critical as post-graduate student mothers who participated in the current study experienced monetary anxiety. They, however, accommodated money related challenges with the conviction that in the long haul, they would have better career alternatives and be better able to take care of their offsprings and households.

The current study has shown social structures and rules interacted to allocate duties and responsibilities as well as resources to different members of society; post-graduate student mothers being part of them. Post-graduate student mothers who were also mothers as individuals also played a role in negotiating the resources allocated for different functions as well as support systems for the roles assigned. The ultimate aim of post-graduate studies was to achieve better lives for the scholars, their households, and society in general. The interaction of social structures, rules, resources and individual efforts conform to the tenets of structuration theory.

5.3 Summary of the Findings of the Study

The current study analyzed experiences of student mothers at the University of Nairobi. An analysis of the relationship between multiple roles of student mothers and their post-graduate studies was conducted. The findings showed that post-graduate student mothers fulfilled triple gender roles in the realm of reproduction, production and community relations. Consequently, they had roles to play at school, at work, and home. However, many of them struggled to balance multiple role commitments.

The current study examined the benefits of post-graduate studies to post-graduate student mothers. Study findings demonstrated that post-graduate education granted post-graduate student mothers direct individual advantages and indirect advantages to their families. First, post-graduate education enhanced student mothers' parenting skills. Consequently, they were able to provide their offsprings with a safe, secure, nurturing, loving, and supportive environment that allowed them to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to become adults capable of making productive contributions to self, family, community, and society in general.

The study explored challenges student mothers faced in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies. Study findings reveal that balancing in-home care needs, work and school responsibilities presented great challenges to post-graduate student mothers with young children forcing them to look for childcare arrangements to manage the many demands on their time while pursuing higher education. Managing childcare and domestic work with studying and paid work was reported as predominantly difficult for student mothers who participated in the current

study. Financial constraints was one of the biggest challenge faced by post-graduate student mothers who participated in the current study. Timetabling and location of classes were also an issue of concern.

To cope with the challenges identified, post-graduate student mothers sought help and support to manage some of their roles which in itself created more complex situations. The phenomenon is explained by structuration theory which highlights the duality of structures in being both medium and outcomes of reproduction of social practices. The role played by interactions with individuals and groups in creating meaning, standards, values, and power are seen in operation in this context.

The current study evaluated coping strategies employed by post-graduate student mothers in their career pursuits. Study findings show that post-graduate student mothers in the current study used coping strategies that best fitted their unique contexts. These strategies included time management, fortitude, family support, university support and employer support that all facilitated postgraduate student mothers cope with managing their multiple role combination.

5.4 Conclusion

The current study was an evaluation of motherhood experiences of post-graduate students at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. On multiple roles of women in post-graduate studies, findings from this study confirmed that experience of combining motherhood and post-graduate studies included difficulties, inspiration, budgetary hardship and time constraints. Keeping in mind that it affected each part of a woman's life, this combination furnished her with distinct and

immaterial benefits. Women were focused on their training and trusted that the difficulties of combining their studies and motherhood were offset by inherent advantages.

On benefits of post-graduate studies to student mothers, their choice to enroll in post-graduate studies was an important decision that did not diminish their capability as great mothers and wives. However, there was no evidence of “good mother” in the study where women are expected only to devote all their time to children and abandon additional worthwhile accomplishments. Women combined and performed roles of parenting and studying simultaneously.

The current study unearthed several challenges student mothers faced in balancing motherhood and post-graduate studies. Top on the list was managing childcare and domestic work with studying and paid work. Many post-graduate student mothers strained their budgets, harbored guilt feelings for a sacrificed family time as well as the strained relations with their partners although did not result to a total break up.

To cope with the identified challenges, post-graduate student mothers who participated in this study utilized positive coping strategies like marshaling and utilizing both internal and external support systems to combine motherhood, work, and education. Overall, university support served as a good external support system in helping post-graduate student mothers cope with their multiple roles. This is contrary to findings by Lynch, (2008), that indicated that student mothers employed negative coping strategies such as withdrawal from social activities.

Further, the researcher's labeling of 'struggles' and 'juggles' in the lives of post-graduate student mothers was not accurate. This is because while women confirmed that the experiences during their study were difficult at times, they considered it to have positive, rather than negative, impact on their lives. Therefore, the current study turned out to be a powerful utilization of cross-checking because the researcher was rectified by the post-graduate student mothers. The input unearthed from this research brought about an alternate understanding of encounters of student mothers at post-graduate level.

The researcher had considered role strain theory as a conceivable clarification unto why post-graduate student mothers were fighting to meet the needs of their study obligations and duties as mothers. As indicated by this theory, strain and challenges would be experienced by mothers on the off chance that they were going up against the greater part of domestic and childcare duties, combined with the requirements of post-graduate studies. The present observations, in any case, were not congruent with role theory, since study participants questioned gender structured generalizations in that even the single mothers were the household's only breadwinners while other married women took a more active role in their families.

5.5 Recommendations

The current study was designed for contributing to policy and scholarship in the area of mothers pursuing post-graduate studies in Kenya. It is in the light of the preceding that policy and research recommendations were generated in relations to academic divisions where faculty members are expect to offer the necessary support to student mother enrolled in their departments. Students are also expected to evaluate how to deal with emerging issues while at

policy level, sound policies on motherhood and post-graduate education are necessary to guide student mothers cope with their multiple roles as discussed in section 5.5.1 next:

5.5.1 Recommendations for Academic Divisions/Departments

The current study findings revealed that university support was a significant external support embraced by postgraduate student mothers to cope with their multiple roles of work related duties, student roles and family responsibilities. Therefore:

- In the light of postgraduate student mothers holding multiple roles, faculty members should guide them accordingly on how to prioritize and accomplish their roles without fail.
- Faculty members and the university administration should ensure that postgraduate student mothers get the best they can in terms of benefits from post-graduate studies. The skills and confidence of postgraduate student mothers should be bolstered by the university and its faculty.
- Faculty members should move with speed to address challenges that affect postgraduate student mothers. Those with young children might find it hard to attend school activities if they do not get someone to take care of their children. The university can establish a day care service to address this problem. In that way, postgraduate student mothers may not be worried about their children.
- Faculty members and the university management should provide postgraduate student mothers with the necessary support to meet the requirements of their post-graduate studies. This support could include guidance and counseling as well as provision of

necessary materials required for their studies like equipped library facilities with assistants to locate reading materials easily.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Students

The current study findings revealed that experiences by postgraduate student mothers during their studies were difficult at times resulting in their adopting positive coping mechanisms.

Therefore postgraduate student mothers should:

- Have an understanding of what they want to study before they enroll for any program at post-graduate level. They should also evaluate how to deal with emerging issues.
- Ensure other household members understand what a post-graduate studies entails regarding their multiple roles and responsibilities and how they may be impacted by their study.
- Further, postgraduate student mothers need to appeal for the support of their family members and significant others in their quest for post-graduate education.
- The current study findings therefore illustrates the benefits of complying with the aforementioned recommendation as postgraduate student mothers readily spoke about the challenge of managing multiple roles and feelings of being pulled in multiple directions.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Policy

Findings from the current study confirmed that experience of combining motherhood and post-graduate studies included difficulties, inspiration, budgetary hardship and time constraints. Therefore, development and implementation of sound policies on motherhood and post-graduate education are necessary and critical to guide mothers' cope with their multiple role combination.

It is hoped that the relevant institutions will consider the following policy recommendations emanating from the current study as reported by postgraduate student mothers: Institutions of higher learning should:

- Reflect on and respond to the high demographic presence of postgraduate student mothers making them feel understood and welcomed.
- Postgraduate student mothers in the current study had a deep desire to matter, to be welcomed, to know that they belonged there or feel validated and to feel that their instructors and advisors cared about them, their offsprings, their work and their lives.
- Come up with programs to address the unique needs of postgraduate student mothers. This policy should highlight services such as at-home teaching for scholars with medical conditions not allowing them to attend lectures or are taking care of their sick family members.
- In addition, enabling postgraduate student mothers to get such services would persuade them to carry on with their studies on and off-campus. Having an avenue for post-graduate mothers to recap on what they missed with no consequences would keep them on track with the rest of the students.
- Devise programs for identifying postgraduate student mothers with a high possibility of abandoning their studies to persuade them to carry on. Such initiatives could offer ways for postgraduate student mothers to catch up with others in the course of their studies.

5.6 Implications for Future Research

One major limitation of this study is that the sample included only thirty-two student mothers enrolled for post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi. The small sample size may be

biased towards participants who find it easier to talk about their experiences in motherhood and education. The constraints imposed on the recruitment process to mothers in a post-graduate program, who had a dependent child (ren) eighteen years of age or younger meant that it would have been impossible to sample randomly.

However, the final sample of postgraduate student mothers who participated in the current study included postgraduate student mothers with a range of socio-economic backgrounds and several children under their care. This consequently produced rich perspectives from postgraduate student mothers concerning the focus of the study with important implications for other post-graduate student mothers.

Several themes were identified from the various responses given by postgraduate student mothers that illustrated their experiences as mothers involved in higher education programs. In summary, the study was based on qualitative research, which included in-depth, open-ended interviews. Therefore, conclusions cannot be applied beyond the group of participants used in this research. Other aspects of the study were also addressed, such as the challenges that many women face while balancing the roles of motherhood and higher education.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study findings highlights critical concerns and queries that can form areas for further research. First, future scholars should investigate the kind of study-motherhood balance practices suitable for post-graduate student mothers in Kenya. Such a study will help clarify whether

postgraduate student mothers are balancing between work and life in the course of post-graduate studies as dictated by Watts, (2002).

Second, future research should potentially examine how multiple roles of motherhood and education hinder women from graduating on time. Future scholars should also investigate how postgraduate student mothers held off their post-graduate studies and how adequate support could have assisted them to complete their post-graduate studies in a timely manner and without much strain.

Third, further research should compare what female scholars go through at post-graduate level between different universities (public and private and in different set up) and university faculties in Kenya. This would help investigate how academic setting can positively impact on female scholars' experiences in balancing multiple roles of student, education duties and family responsibilities.

Fourth, future scholars should also focus on how benefits of post-graduate studies can be bolstered to ensure good parenting, building better relationships, better negotiation skills and improved welfare of post-graduate mothers in Kenya. In addition, self esteem levels should be evaluated as well as engaging significant others who form social, internal and external systems that help postgraduate student mothers cope with their multiple roles of student, education duties and family responsibilities.

Fifth, future research should explore the concept of family-sacrifice and uncover this dynamic which seems to permeate experiences of postgraduate student mothers in Kenya. Future studies could also examine ways in which postgraduate student mothers may benefit from a school-based network such as collaborating with other postgraduate student mothers who are also navigating family and study roles. Whether peer support has an impact on student mothers' stress levels is worthy of further exploration. Also, participation in a support network may serve as an activity for many student mothers who are enrolled for post-graduate studies in Kenya.

Future research should examine how institutions can help facilitate postgraduate student mothers in offering family events and orientations to improve family support, flexible course/assignment scheduling, flexible hours for registration and administrative duties. In addition, future research should ensure increased information on and availability of financial aid, and training for faculty and staff to increase awareness on unique needs of postgraduate student mothers' childcare and housing options.

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Appendix I
Information Sheet

WANJIKU MUSILI
AFRICAN WOMEN STUDY CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
P.O BOX 30197-00100
NAIROBI.

Dear Potential Participant

RE: Description of the Study

My name is Wanjiku Musili, a PhD student at Women Study Centre University of Nairobi. I am carrying out a research on "Motherhood Experiences of Post-graduate students at the university of Nairobi, Kenya".

You have been selected to take part in this study because you are a post-graduate student mother at the University of Nairobi, with children below eight years. The purpose of this study is to establish the experiences of post-graduate student mothers and the challenges they face on multiple role combination. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. The information you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used only for academic purposes. Your cooperation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely



Wanjiku Musili

Appendix II
Consent Form

Please feel free to ask me any questions, before and after the interview.

Email: wanjikumusili@gmail.com.

Mobile: 0722 480 818

I am seeking your consent to interview you about your views on Motherhood Experiences of Post-graduate students at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. This will be done through in-depth interview which I would like to tape-record with your permission. You will have an opportunity to comment on my analysis of the interviews at a later stage, if need be.

1. Your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. I will maintain confidentiality and anonymity (use of pseudonyms) throughout this study. Further, there will be no divulging identifiable information to other parties, except those directly involved in supervising and examining the study. Such parties will not be able to link the data to identifiable participants, as the data will be anonymised by using codes on the interview transcripts.
3. Arrangement for the documentation and dissemination of findings will guarantee individual anonymity through the use pseudonyms.
4. Data will be protected by keeping transcripts and interview tape recordings in a secure place for several years.

Kindly, fill in the blank Spaces below:

1. I have read the project descriptions above
2. I agree/disagree to take part in the research and agree/disagree to undertake the following:

Be informally interviewed by Lucy and that the interview to be tape-recorded.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information will lead to identifying individuals or institutions involved in this research project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any stage.

I consent to participate in this study:

Sign: ----- Date:-----

Tel: ----- Email: -----

Appendix III

Interview Protocol for Study Participants

The purpose of this survey is to obtain background information about participants in the study. Each participant will be provided a secure code to protect her anonymity. None of this information will be directly identifiable except through the participant code assigned by the researcher.

Section A: Interviewee Information

Name _____ Admission No. _____ Date _____

College/ Department _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Interviewed by _____ Place _____ Time _____

Section B: Background Information

- 1) When were you born?
- 2) What is your marital status?
- 3) What is your religious affiliation?
- 4) What is your Ethnic background?
- 5) What is the Number and ages of children?

Section C: Educational Background

- 6) Type of academic program?
- 7) When were you enrolled?
- 8) What is your current status in your studies?
- 9) What is your expected completion time?

Appendix IV
Interview Guide for Study Participants

Section D: Multiple Roles of Mothers in Post-graduate Studies

1. Tell me about when you first determine you would go on to college.

- a) What other roles do you play in life?
- b) Describe your experiences of being a mother in post-graduate school?

2. I would like to find out from you your experiences as a post-graduate student in your department.

- a) Could you describe your academic departmental climate (or "culture").
- b) How can you describe your relationship within the department?
- c) Tell me a little bit about your take of the university?
- d) Describe your experiences of being a mother in post-graduate school?
- e) What were some of you 'push' factors to undertaking a degree from here?
- f) Are there services offered at the college/university that you feel will helped you be successful?
- g) What kind of support have you received from your a) boss, b) professor as you deal with your multiple roles?
- h) Are there particular people who you feel will make a difference in your ability to complete your degree?
- i) Is there any peer group of student mothers--anybody they compare notes with?
- j) What is your sense of how mothers are viewed or evaluated both by fellow students, by faculty, and those who teach, by their own students?

Section E: Benefits of Post-graduate Studies to Postgraduate Student Mothers

3. Would you tell me a little about your career goals?

- a) How have you set to achieve them?
- b) How is your current post-graduate endeavour contributing to your career goals?
- c) What are some of the factors you feel impact your post-graduate studies? (Age, Marital Status, Ethnicity)

4. I would like you to tell me about your education.
5. I asked you to complete some demographic information prior to the interview. How has each of these factors (age, marital status and ethnic background) impacted on you and your pursuit of your post-graduate studies?

- 6. How do you tend to benefit from the program you are enrolled in?**
 - a) What is most distinct about the learning process at University of Nairobi?
 - b) How do your post-graduate studies affect you as an individual?
 - c) Do your post-graduate studies foster social responsibility?
 - d) Do your post-graduate studies heighten an awareness of difference and diversity?
 - e) As a female student, are you encouraged to think for yourself?
 - f) What do the courses and instructions provided add up to you as a female student?
 - g) Does your achievement match what your post-graduate studies imply?

Section F: Challenges Student Mothers Face in Balancing Motherhood and Studies

- 7. What challenges do you face while undertaking your post-graduate studies, and which ones do you perceive as major challenges?**
 - a) Which roles conflict most often?
 - b) Tell me about the conflict, describe this conflict.
 - c) What is the nature of this conflict
 - d) How do you deal with the conflict?
 - e) How does the role conflict make you feel?
 - f) Are there other roles that conflict? If yes, what are they? Tell me about these role conflicts.
 - g) What ways do you try that don't work well?
 - h) How do you feel when these conflicts occur?
 - i) How do you deal with them when they occur?
 - j) What ways work well for you?
 - k) What ways do you try that did not work well?

Section G: Coping Strategies of Post-graduate Student Mothers in their Career Pursuits

8. Tell me about your family/ spouse/ children?

- a) How would you describe your relationship with your family as being?
- b) What do your family / spouse/ children say about your post-graduate studies/ career goals?
- c) What kind of support have you received from your: a) spouse, b) Children, c) family as you deal with your multiple roles?
- d) How is your a) spouse, b) Children c) Family, understanding?
- e) Are there things you would wish family / spouse/ children to do / or not to do in relation to your studies/ career goals.

9. Describe your child/children to me.

- a) What are your childcare arrangements? How do you "balance" your roles as mother and student in terms of scheduling?
- b) What are your childcare arrangements?
- c) How do you "balance" your roles as mother and student in terms of scheduling?

10. Could you talk about your schedule or work plans?

- a) How do you successfully juggle work/ school/ family e.t.c.
- b) Are there particular strategies or methods of studying or schedule that you employ to help you complete your homework/Studies?
- c) Are there particular strategies or methods of studying or schedule that you employ to help you complete your homework/ Studies?
- d) What kind of support have you received from c) boss, d) professor as you deal with your multiple roles?
- e) What is the source of your motivation or drive for dealing with your multiple roles?
- f) What personal strengths or attributes do you feel you possess?

Section H: Recommendations

- 11.** What advice would you share with mothers who are thinking about starting or are currently enrolled in post-graduate studies?

- 12.** What advice would you give the college and university administrators and faculty? How can they help women like you succeed and graduate?

- 13.** What changes would you suggest to graduate school orientation and orientation material, keeping in light your situation as a mother and graduate student?

- 14.** Is there anything about you that I haven't asked that would be important to include in your experience of being a mother and a post graduate student?

Appendix V

Introduction Letter: AWSC



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
AFRICAN WOMEN STUDIES CENTRE
P.O Box 30197-00100
Tel: (+254-20) 3318262/28075; 725 740 025
Email: awsckenya@uonbi.ac.ke
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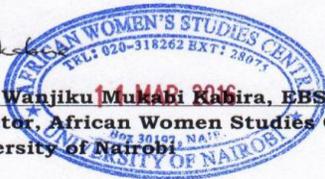
Date: March 11, 2016

To: National Commission For Science, Technology and Innovation
8th - 9th Floor, Utalii House
off Uhuru Highway, Nairobi
P. O. Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi, KENYA

SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR MS. LUCY WANJIKU MUSILI

This is to confirm that Ms. Lucy Wanjiku Musili is a registered PhD candidate at the African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi. She is currently working on her research proposal entitled, "Motherhood and pursuit of Post Graduate Studies in Kenyan Public Universities: A Case Study of University of Nairobi".

Any assistance accorded to her during her research period is highly appreciated.

Wanjiku

Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, EBS
Director, African Women Studies Centre
University of Nairobi

Appendix VI

Authorization Letter: University of Nairobi



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE - CHANCELLOR

(Research, Production & Extension)
Prof. Lucy W. Irungu B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D.

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UON/RPE/3/5/Vol.XVI/49

March 8, 2016

Lucy Wanjiku Musili
C85/99390/2015
P.O. Box 12338-001000

Dear Musili

AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH A AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

I refer to your request dated March 3, 2016 to conduct research at the University of Nairobi, for your Ph.D Thesis entitled: *Motherhood and Pursuit of Postgraduate Studies in Kenyan Public Universities: A case Study of University of Nairobi*".

I write to inform you that your request has been approved.

You are however required to share the findings of your study with the University of Nairobi by depositing a copy of your research findings with the University of Nairobi Librarian on completion of your study.

PROF. HENRY W. MUTORO
AG. DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR
(RESEARCH PRODUCTION AND EXTENSION)

c.c. Vice-Chancellor
DVC, A&F
DVC, AA
DVC, SA
Director, Library & Information Services



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Appendix VII

Authorization Letter: NACOSTI



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No. **NACOSTI/P/16/41617/10132**

Date:

15th March, 2016

Lucy Wanjiku Musili
University of Nairobi
P.O. Box 30197-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Motherhood and pursuit of postgraduate studies in Kenyan public universities: a case study of university of Nairobi,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Nairobi County** for a period ending **15th March, 2017.**

You are advised to report to **the Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi, the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nairobi County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.


DR. M. K. RUGUTT, PhD, MSc.
DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The Vice Chancellor
University of Nairobi.

The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.

Appendix VIII

Research Permit: Lucy Wanjiku Musili

CONDITIONS

- 1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit.**
- 2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.**
- 3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.**
- 4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.**
- 5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one(1) soft copy of your final report.**
- 6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice.**

RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

Serial No. A.8750

CONDITIONS: see back page



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MS. LUCY WANJIKU MUSILI

of UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, 12338-100 nairobi, has been permitted to conduct research in Nairobi County

on the topic: MOTHERHOOD AND PURSUIT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN KENYAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

for the period ending: 15th March 2017

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/16/41617/10132

Date Of Issue : 15th March 2016

Fee Received : Ksh 2000



Signature

Director General

National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation