Finding a Work-Life Balance: A Study of the Spiritual and Social Roles of Pastors' Wives at the International Church of Christ, Nairobi

Judith Awino Ouma Monda

She is a Master of Arts in Theology Candidate at Africa International University and holds a BSc. in Agriculture from the University of Nairobi. She is also a Certified Professional Mediator. Email: judymonda2@gmail.com

Abstract

The role of women in the church has been an ongoing debate. On the one hand, the complementarians maintain that women should only be supportive in church affairs. On the other hand, the egalitarians believe that the Bible expressly sets women free to be church leaders, including being ordained as church ministers. The latter school of thought and other socio-economic factors have precipitated an influx of women into the full-time church ministry. However, one unaddressed issue is how these female ministers can balance their spiritual and social roles without neglecting the other. This concern is significant because research shows that most women in full-time employment tend to suffer burnout and stress due to the inability to find a work-life balance. These challenges lead to physical and mental health, marriage and parenting challenges, and poor job performance and satisfaction. Furthermore, studies also indicate that role conflict due to playing multiple roles results in reduced effectiveness at home and work, leading to work overload. This study investigated the effect that the dual roles of the pastors' wives of the International Church of Christ, Nairobi, have on their well-being and effectiveness. The qualitative method was used, and a purposive sample of six pastors' wives with ten years of experience in that role was selected. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The results suggest that the dual roles impact each other negatively, resulting in a lower effectiveness and poor well-being. Therefore, the study concludes that a more effective model for the work of the pastors' wives is needed to enable them to be more effective and improve their well-being as they serve God and care for their families.

Keywords: Women Ministry, International Church of Christ, Social and Spiritual Roles, Pastors' Wives

Introduction

Arguably, the International Church of Christ (ICOC), Nairobi, has excelled in including women in the full-time leadership roles of the church. The pastors' wives, also known as women's ministry leaders (WMLs), serve alongside their husbands, with the former taking care of the women's ministry and the latter overseeing the men's ministry and the overall leadership of the church. This model has produced a robust women's ministry and minimised the rampant cases of male pastors being inappropriately involved in sexual scandals with female congregants.[1] In addition, Carter and Trull have argued that those ministers who spend more time at work than their families are more prone to adultery with their congregants.[2] Therefore, the women's ministry model adopted by ICOC, Nairobi, has helped to reduce such incidences in the church.

However, it is challenging for the pastors' wives to balance their spiritual and social roles. Therefore, this examines a better model that would enable the pastors' wives to be more effective in playing their dual roles while promoting their well-being and that of their families.[3] Gambles argues that without a proper balance of functions, women will give more time to paid work while their well-being, families and caregiving responsibilities suffer.[4] Cornelia and Reindl also observe that workers' well-being and happiness improve whenever they achieve a work-life balance.[5]

Background Information of ICOC, Nairobi

ICOC, Nairobi, is affiliated with the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), a worldwide family of churches originating in the United States of America.[6] Therefore, most of its practices and doctrines are the same as those of the affiliate churches worldwide. The ICOC was founded in 1979 under the leadership of Kip McKean.[7] One defining hallmark of the ICOC is a vibrant women's ministry led by women's ministry leaders (WMLs), primarily wives of male pastors,

---

[1] James E Carter and Joe E. Trull and, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders 2nd Edition.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004, 15.

[2] Ibid., 80-81.

[3] Richenda Gambles, *The Myth of Work-Life Balance: The Challenge of Our Time for Men Women and Societies.* Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2006, 72-73.

[4] Ibid., 89.

[5] Stephan Kaiser and Cornelia Reindl Eds, *Creating Balance: International Perspectives on Work-Life Integration of Professionals,* London: Springer, 2011, 32.

[6] McKean, Kip. "Revolution Through Restoration: From Jerusalem to Rome, From Boston to Moscow," *Upside Down Magazine*, 1992: 1-21, 7.

[7] Ibid., 1-21, 7.

aka evangelists.[8] The WMLs are full-time church employees alongside their husbands. However, concerning Paul's letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:34–35) and Timothy (1 Tim 2:12), ICOC believes women should only minister to fellow women but not preach to or have any authority over men.

On the contrary, the measure of a healthy church is men and women serving in various capacities with their God-given gifts to build the church without gender-based segregation.[9] Grenz and Kjesbo emphasise that ordination to ministry has always been a matter of one's spiritual gifts distributed to both men and women, as evidenced in Joel 2:28–29 and Acts 2:14–18.[10] Madigan and Osiek also argue for women's leadership in the church by citing Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2) and the "women" (1 Tim 3:11) as evidence that there were ordained women deacons in the 1st Century.[11] James R. Beck *et al*. echo these arguments, arguing that an influx of women into church leadership happened in the New Testament.[12] Based on these arguments and biblical evidence, the church should let women ministers use their gifts to help build up the church of Christ without any hindrance whatsoever.

ICOC, Nairobi, was planted in 1989 by missionaries from the ICOC branch in the United States of America. Later, after raising competent local leaders for this young church, the pioneering missionaries left in 1993. The initial local leadership group comprised young men and women, some university students, and others single adults or newly-wed. However, thirty years later, the church leadership team comprises married and ageing couples with children and grandchildren of various ages. As a result, the church membership increased tremendously, from 9 initial members to over 1500 adult members. The congregants include young children, teenagers, university students, young adults, newly married couples, parents, grandparents, and empty nesters. The unfolding realities of this church justify the need for some re-adjustment in the day-to-day running modalities of the church.

---

[8] Ibid., 18-21.
[9] Denise Muir Kjesbo and Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry.* Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995, 188.
[10] Ibid., 191-92.
[11] Carolyn Osiek and Kevin Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005, 8-11.
[12] James R. Beck et al., *Two Views of Women in Ministry, Revised Edition.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005, 39.

The numerical growth and demographic changes mentioned above have led to exponential growth in the workload of the church leaders. However, despite these changes, the core leadership structure and mode of operation of the ICOC, Nairobi leadership, has remained the same. In recent years, there have been ongoing discussions among the ICOC global church leadership about women's roles in the church, but nothing conclusive has come up yet. Furthermore, there has been no tangible re-evaluation of the responsibilities of the WMLs in ICOC, Nairobi, to date. This study is an attempt to address these gaps.

Statement of the Problem

The workload of staff leading the women of ICOC, Nairobi, has increased exponentially over 30 years, both at home and in the church. However, their responsibilities and work arrangements have not been reviewed. Therefore, this research examines how the WMLs can balance their spiritual and social roles to achieve ministry effectiveness and personal and family well-being. The study, ultimately, aims to propose a more effective model for the functions of the WMLs.

Importance of the Study

Despite the increased workload of ICOC ministers, little has been done to investigate how this affects their effectiveness and well-being. The study bridges the knowledge gap by proposing a more suitable model for the roles of the WMLs and contributing to existing scholarship on women's ministry.

Objectives of the Study

First, the study examines how pastors' wives manage their social and spiritual functions and the effect on their well-being and that of their families. Second, the study sought to suggest a more effective model for the roles of the WMLs of ICOC, Nairobi, for optimum ministry effectiveness and personal and family well-being.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative method, an approach suitable for social studies.[13] This method lets the researcher focus on one group and phenomenon at a time.[14]

---

[13] Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners 3rd Edition.* Los Angeles, California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2015, 104.
[14] Ibid., 123.

Sampling Method

The respondent sample was selected purposely from the ICOC Nairobi WMLs who have served in that capacity for at least ten (10) years. The respondents' availability informed their sample selection, experience in this field of work, and relative understanding of the subject matter. Therefore, these women stood a better chance of helping to unveil an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Sample Size

The number of WMLs who fit the criteria mentioned above in ICOC, Nairobi, was Seven (7). However, those who consented to participate in the study were six (6), making six the actual sample size. There was no *"data saturation"* point because all the respondents provided new information.[15] Those interviewed were 36, 37, 43, 44, 46, and 50 years old in 2022.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data because it gives the researcher flexibility in gathering more descriptive in-depth information from the respondents. It was a blend of structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

Research Location

Initially, the research was to be carried out at the ICOC, Nairobi church premises at Umoja II estate, Nairobi County. However, all six respondents preferred to meet online via Zoom.

Instrument Pre-Testing

The interview schedule was used for the pilot interviews. Four (4) women ministry leaders of ICOC, Nairobi, were requested to volunteer in the pilot study, and all consented. The pilot interviews helped to re-frame the interview questions making them less biased, more straightforward, shorter, and easier to understand.

Data Analysis

Data coding was done using NVivo II software before being categorised into themes and later interpreted to derive meaning. The *"Pastoral Circle"* method was then used to develop interventions.[16] The pastoral circle is a cyclic theological method of intervention used to mitigate

---

[15] Kumar, 2015, 189.

[16] Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, *Manual on Economic Justice for Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Groups: Pastoral Circle Vol 1,* Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, 21.

social injustice in communities whereby the researcher gets into an affected community and works with them through observation and asking them questions about their situation. The researcher finally analyses the problem using Scriptures to help the community develop recommendations to transform their situation.[17] The pastoral circle method has to be applied periodically to ensure that the current community situation gets closer and closer to the desired ideal.[18]

Literature Review

This section enumerates past scholarly studies on Christian women's roles discussed under three subheadings; social functions; spiritual roles; and challenges women face while playing these roles.

Social Roles of Pastors' Wives

Globally, women have generally been socialised to play domestic roles; therefore, society expects this of them regardless of whether they work outside the home. Some people have even argued that women find more satisfaction when they play their domestic roles than when they are out in the career world.[19] However, women's roles have been undergoing rapid metamorphosis over the years, and as a result, society at large is wrestling with the growing tension. Even though educated and free to take up careers of their choice, women still feel conflicted because of a desire to excel at home and in the marketplace.[20] Furthermore, even if the women were to master the art of balancing these roles, life seasons like pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing of babies, as health challenges associated with childbearing and ageing, would still put them at a disadvantage.[21]

Therefore, the dilemma persists when women leave home and venture into the career world, never to return to *the kitchen* on a full-time basis. Consequently, a better response is not to bemoan *the good old days* when gender roles were clearly demarcated but to look for ways of promoting equity so that women can find balance both in their social roles and the marketplace

---

[17] Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, 21
[18] Ibid., 21.
[19] Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective of the Evangelical Gender Debate.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016, 35.
[20] Richenda Gambles, et al., 2006, 3.
[21] Ibid., 38.

without jeopardising either of them.[22] The pastors' wives of ICOC, Nairobi, like other women, have domestic and community roles; designated in this study as *social roles*. Most of these roles are generally not clearly documented anywhere yet are well known by everyone since they are taught and passed orally from one generation to the next.

Spiritual Roles of Pastors' Wives

One primary contention in Christianity today is the role of women in the church ministry, whether women should be ordained or teach and preach.[23] However, there was no hierarchy of the sexes at creation, but rather, similarity and equality in likeness.[24] But, after the fall of humankind in Genesis 3, a patriarchal pattern came into effect, marking the beginning of gender role battles.[25] Therefore, men were the predominant leaders in the rest of the Old Testament.[26] Examples are Moses and Aaron (Exodus), Joshua (Num 27:18–23), Eli and Samuel (1 Sam 1–7), King Saul (1 Sam 10), King David (2 Samuel), King Solomon (1 Kings), all the Judges were men except Deborah (Judges 4), and the majority of the Prophets were men.

However, when Jesus began his ministry, he overturned cultural norms by uplifting women.[27] Jesus interacted with a Samaritan woman against the prevailing cultural norms (John 4:27); he was supported by women in his ministry (Luke 8:1–3); he commended a woman (Luke 10:38–42); and appeared first to a woman at his resurrection (John 20:16), among other examples.[28] Apostle Paul also raised women's position in the church. Galatians 3:28 instructs that there is no discrimination of the sexes in Christ.

The Bible is replete with accounts of women's role in the church and the religious community. For example, in the Old Testament, beginning in the book of Genesis, God created Adam and Eve in his image and likeness and commanded both to rule over his creation and subdue the earth (Gen 1:27–28). Therefore, God did not distinguish between the two sexes but expected both to play the same role of ruling over his creation and subduing the earth. Other examples from the Old Testament are Miriam (Ex 15:20–21; Deborah and Jael (Judges 4:1–16, 17–21), while those from the New Testament are Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2); Mary (Luke 10:38–42);

---

[22] Ibid., 36.
[23] James R Beck, 2005, 28.
[24] Ibid., 31.
[25] Ibid., 122-23.
[26] Ibid., 125.
[27] Christopher Bailey, and Mike Aquilina, *Mothers of the Church: The Witness of Early Christian Women.* Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Inc., 2012, 19-26.
[28] Ibid., 19-26.

Women at Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:1–11), to name but a few. Therefore, this scenario should be reflected in today's church due to numerous Scriptural evidence supporting women's leadership role. Therefore, women should be given opportunities to serve God and his kingdom in line with their spiritual gifts.

However, some contentious scriptures by Paul play into this discussion (these are 1 Tim 2:8–15; 1 Cor 14:33b–36; and 1 Cor 11:2–6). At face value, it appears to contradict the rest of the Scripture by suggesting that women should be silent in the churches and not play any active role during corporate worship. Due to interpretive issues regarding these Scriptures, some groups hold to a *complementarian* perspective whereby men alone lead the church while women only play a supportive role.[29] Complementarians believe that the church organisation is a hierarchy whereby men lead, and women support them; thus, ordaining women for ministry is against God's plan.[30]

Piper, too, takes the complementarian perspective by arguing that women should participate in church ministry, provided they do not hold positions of authority over men. He refers to the example of Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2–3), who were Paul's "fellow workers" but, he argues, were not expressly mentioned as having authority over men in the church.[31] This is a weak argument because its reasoning is only based on silence and not on specified truth from the Bible.

However, Paul supported the *egalitarian* view because he expected both sexes to serve in the church based on their spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7; Rom 12:3–8).[32] He also allowed both sexes to pray and prophesy during worship gatherings (1 Cor 11: 4–12).[33] Gordon Fee also supports the egalitarian view by arguing that Paul's instructions against women teaching men were only descriptive and specific to the Ephesians church (1 Tim 2:8–15).[34] He rightly concludes this argument by asserting that Christ's redemptive work restored the equality of the sexes that was lost at the fall.[35]

---

[29] Beck, 132-133.

[30] Kjesbo and Grenz, 173.

[31] Wayne A Grudem and John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism.* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991, 61-62.

[32] Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 107.

[33] Ibid., 111.

[34] Gordon D Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermaneutics.* Peabody, Massachussets: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991, 63.

[35] Fee, 1991, 64.

Some other groups who argue for the egalitarian view appeal to the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9–10), which includes both male and female believers having leadership roles in the church.[36] Osiek and Madigan are some of the theologians who argue for an egalitarian view by referring to Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2), whose title in the earliest manuscripts is Hebrew, "*diakonos*" which is an equivalent of "deacon" in English. They hold that the title "deaconess" was only introduced in the 4th Century.[37] Therefore, ICOC has a biblical basis for its practice, yet it still has a lot to work on.

Challenges Faced by Women in Full-Time Ministry

A story is told of a church minister who retired from ministry and one day, while looking at the family photo album, asked his wife who the two children in one of the photographs were. The wife replied, *"They are yours, my dear!"*[38] Although this narrative is hyperbole, it illustrates the first challenge Pastors face; their responsibilities do snatch them away from connecting with their families. Since we are discussing pastors' wives in full-time ministry, it is logical that they would undergo the same challenges as their male counterparts, and maybe worse, since both partners would be removed from their families and communities.

The second challenge is what Graham calls the "*Invasion of the family privacy.*"[39] He observed that the Pastor's house is rarely left to the family but is open to church members at all times, even at night! Therefore, family times often get interrupted by the congregants. It is worth studying how these interruptions affect pastors' marriages and their children.[40] This challenge will likely worsen when both spouses are in full-time ministry because each receives their fair share of interruptions from their ministries, a further disadvantage to their family.

Third, most full-time church ministers struggle to balance their ministry and family responsibilities. Gryna terms this phenomenon as "*work overload.*"[41] Some notable characteristics of work overload include long work hours, always handling crises, constant interruptions, being on call 24/7, and unspecified job descriptions, all of which frequently apply

---

[36] Grudem and Piper, 40-41.
[37] Carolyn Osiek and Kevin Madigan, 2005, 8.
[38] Patrick A Graham, *The Pastor's Problems,* Norwich: T and T Clark Ltd., 1985, 167-71.
[39] Ibid., 167-71.
[40] Ibid., 167-71.
[41] Gryna M. Frank, *Work Overload! Redesigning Jobs to Minimize Stress and Burnout,* Milwaukee, Wisconsin: ASQ Quality Press, 2004, 3.

to church ministers.[42] Research has proved that work overload stresses individuals and their families. Consequently, long-term stress leads to burnout, characterised by physical and/or emotional exhaustion, frustration, and despair.[43]

A further cause of stress for women church ministers is a conflict of roles which arises because women, especially in Africa, also have the full-time role of being nurturers and homemakers. Consequently, these women must balance both roles without compromising because both are particularly important to them. Ministry women, therefore, could easily end up in a situation called *"work-family conflict,"* whereby they are unsuccessful at balancing their dual roles.[44] Work-family conflict consequences include illness, burnout, depression, hypertension, and in extreme cases, drug and substance abuse.[45] In addition, whenever one's work life intensifies, their family life also suffers, leading to stress and burnout for the whole family. A stressed family, in turn, compounds overload at work leading to a vicious cycle of burnout.[46] Therefore, the challenges women church ministers face should be examined.

One suggested solution to these challenges is *"employee work-life balance,"* which benefits workers, their families, and their organisations.[47] The workers would then have better job satisfaction, marriage and family satisfaction, well-being, and overall joy in life. In addition, the organisation would also benefit from better worker performance, lower turn-over rates, better concentration and commitment, and low absenteeism from work, leading to better work output.[48] Therefore, achieving employee work-life balance requires a team effort between the employer and the employee; the latter communicates their unique challenges to the boss, who formulates tailor-made measures to meet that specific need.[49]

Gryna further suggests the following interventions: Flexible working hours; working from home; job sharing; part-time work; help with child-care needs; help with employee relocation; sabbatical leave; meeting mental health needs of the workers; help with retirement, and adoption processes, brainstorming with employees on how to ease work/home overload and

---

[42] Gryna M. Frank, 2004, 3.

[43] Ibid., 4.

[44] Cornelia Reindl and Stephan Kaiser Eds., 2011, 12.

[45] Ibid., 12.

[46] Gryna, 163-64.

[47] Ibid., 12-14.

[48] Ibid., 12-14.

[49] Ibid., 17-19.

creating a fun work environment.[50] Therefore, these suggestions should be explored by the ICOC, Nairobi, to alleviate work overload for the WMLs.

Theological Framework

This study is founded on the belief that a people made in the image of God ought to imitate their Maker, who worked for six days and then rested on the seventh day.[51] Therefore, all work must be followed by rest. True worship happens when we can pause and enjoy God's free gifts of life.[52] Further, Jesus came to earth and died so that we may have *life to the full* (John 10:10), and abundant life should characterise the church community. Also, God listened to his people's cries, and he responded by delivering them from injustice (Ex 3:7–12). Therefore, God's community of faith ought to emulate God's character by orchestrating change whenever there is injustice, however risky.[53]

Similarly, Jesus' mission involves releasing people from captivity and oppression (Luke 4:14–21). Therefore, Jesus' disciples should have a similar perspective toward the oppressed and marginalised. Finally, Paul, the apostle, spoke about the new community of God being one devoid of discrimination of any kind but one built on love and inclusivity (Gal 3:26–28). Therefore, this should be the blueprint for the body of Christ. These are "*Shalom communities*" characterised by harmonious and just relationships with God, neighbours, and the holistic well-being of God's people.[54] This study, therefore, explores how to rebuild sustainable shalom communities in ICOC, Nairobi.

---

[50] Gryna, 165, 183.

[51] Timothy Keller Alsdorf with Katherine Leary, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting your Work to God's Work.* New York: Dutton, 2012, 32-33.

[52] Ibid., 35.

[53] Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, 16-17.

[54] Timothy Keller Alsdorf, 2012, 35.

Results

Below are the results of the study.

Table 1; Respondents' Information

Respondent's Code	Age (Years)	Marital Status	Children	Years of Service
714	50	Married	2	23
808	37	Married	2	13
713	36	Married	2	12
777	44	Married	2	22
779	43	Married	2	13
176	46	Married	3	20

The respondents were all married women with children of different ages. Their ages range from 36 to 50, and they have served in full-time ministry between 12 and 23 years.

Table 2 Question # 1: What are your spiritual roles as a WML?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Spiritual nourishment of the female congregants	14	48.3%
Developing new leaders for the women's ministry	10	34.48%
Supporting their husband in leading the church	6	20.68%
Supporting congregants in crises	9	31.03%

The respondents consider spiritual nourishment of the women as their primary role at 48.3%, followed by developing new leaders at 34.48%, emotional support to congregants during crises at 31.03%, and supporting their husbands in church leadership at 20.68%.

Table 3 Question # 2: How have your spiritual roles changed since you joined the full-time ministry?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Through the numerical growth of the church	6	18.18%
Due to changes in the demographics of the church members, e.g. getting married and having children	6	18.18%
Due to a change in job description after the promotion	13	39.39%
Response to emerging needs in people's lives	8	24.24%

All the respondents indicated that their spiritual roles had increased. This was due to changes in job description upon being promoted at 39.39%, increased needs of church members at 24.24%, numerical church growth at 18.18%, and changes in church member demographics at 18.18%.

Table 4 Question # 3: What are your social roles?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Wife and mother	12	27.91%
In-laws and extended family	18	41.86%
Caregiver of aged parents	8	18.60%
Community participation	7	16.28%

The respondents narrated their social roles to include caring for in-laws and extended family (41.86%), the wife and mothering duties (27.91%), caregivers of aged parents (18.60%), and participating in community activities (16.28%).

Table 5 Question # 4: How have your social roles changed over the years?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Getting married and having children	20	38.46%
Growth in the size of the extended family	10	19.23%

Responsibilities arising from the ageing and/or death of parents	16	30.77%
Children growing older	6	11.53%

The social roles of all the respondents had increased. The reasons include getting married and having children (38.46%), additional responsibilities arising from ageing and/ or death of one's parents (30.77%), growth in the size of the extended family (19.23%), and additional responsibilities due to children growing older (11.53%).

Table 6 Question # 5: How do your social roles impact your spiritual functions?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Less time for ministry work due to domestic duties	7	38.89%
Childbirth and nursing make one less effective in the ministry	6	33.33%
Absenteeism due to sickness or death in the family	5	27.78%

The impact of the social roles on the spiritual roles was as follows: limited time for ministry work due to domestic responsibilities at 38.89%, childbirth and nursing at 33.33%, and absenteeism from work due to sickness or bereavement at 27.78%.

Table 7 Question # 6: How do your spiritual roles impact your social functions?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Little time and energy left for the family	25	69.44%
Stress from the ministry spills over into the family	5	13.89%
Pressure on children of pastors to be perfect	5	13.89%

The impact of the spiritual roles on the social roles was as follows: little time and energy for their families (69.44%), ministry stresses spilling into the family (13.89%), and pressure on pastors' children to be perfect at 13.89%.

Table 8 Question # 7: What is the relationship between your dual roles and your well-being?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Physical sickness due to stressful situations in the ministry	6	19.35%
Emotional trauma when a member dies or leaves the church	10	32.26%
Unrealistic expectations from society on pastors' wives and their children	7	22.58%
Trauma from nursing sick parents and their eventual death	8	25.81%

The relationship between the dual roles and the well-being of respondents was as follows: trauma following the death of a member or them leaving the church (32.26%), trauma from nursing sick parents and their eventual death (25.81%), unrealistic expectations from the society (22.58%), and physical sickness resulting from ministry stress (19.35%).

Table 9 Question # 8: What measures have you used to find balance in your dual roles?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Seeking support from others to help with housework	6	16.22%
Self-care techniques	10	27.03%
Prioritising family times	9	24.32%
Delegating some duties	6	16.22%
Spiritual disciplines	6	16.22%

The measures used by respondents to find balance were as follows: self-care techniques at 27.03%, prioritising family times at 24.32%, seeking help with housework at 16.22%, delegating duties at 16.22%, and practising spiritual disciplines at 16.22%.

Table 10 Question # 9: What would you recommend for an effective model for the roles of the WMLs of ICOC, Nairobi?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Reduce the workload for the WMLs	18	43.90%
Offer professional counselling for ministry staff	9	21.95%
Consider people's gifts before employing them in ministry	3	7.32%
Cultivate a supportive work environment	11	26.83%

Recommendations by respondents for a better work model were as follows: reducing the workload for the WMLs (43.90%), a supportive work environment (26.83%), professional counselling services (21.95%), and considering people's gifts before employment (7.32%).

Summary of Results

The results were categorised, interpreted, and discussed under the following six (6) themes:

Spiritual Roles

The data suggest that the prominent spiritual role of the WMLs is to provide spiritual nourishment to women congregants through teaching lessons, one-on-one discipleship times, and baptism classes to prospective members. In addition, the data suggests that spiritual roles are determined by the needs arising from time to time. In addition, the data also indicates an increase in the spiritual roles of the WMLs due to the numerical gains in church membership. This finding agrees with the expectation of the problem statement. This finding answers the research question, "*In what ways have the spiritual roles of the WMLs changed over the years?*"

This finding is significant in deciding the responsibilities of the WMLs in the future since the spiritual roles increase with time. Most respondents cited the times they left their children unattended to attend to the ministry. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated many online meetings, which took away more family time.

Social Roles

The data shows that the social roles include caring for extended families, wife and mothering duties, and participating in community activities. The data also indicates that these roles are influenced by society's expectations, socialisation, and emerging needs. The data indicates that

the social functions of the WMLs have increased in response to changing statuses in life. Those over 40 were more likely to be caregivers of ageing and sickly parents, while those in their 30s were more preoccupied with caring for their young children. The respondents expressed that they are sometimes too exhausted to perform their ministry duties. Thus answering the research question, "*In what ways have the social roles of the WMLs changed over time?*"

Relationship between Spiritual and Social Roles

The data indicate that both roles compete against each other by limiting the time and energy needed to perform each function. One respondent felt inadequate when her children were younger because she would be in the hospital with a sick child most of the time. Thus, her social roles made her ineffective in her ministry. Another respondent expressed that she has not given her children enough time because the church ministry always comes first. Therefore, the social and spiritual roles compete for time and energy, making the WML lack balance and suffer burnout. These findings agree with existing research as noted in the literature review, the "Role Conflict Theory*,"* and the literature review findings. The results are essential in guiding the ICOC, Nairobi, in allocating responsibilities to the WMLs.

Relationship between the Dual Roles and the Respondents' Well-being

The data shows a negative correlation between the dual roles of WMLs and their well-being. Some respondents shared experiencing intense emotional stress whenever a church member or close relative died; when nursing sick parents; when facing unrealistic expectations from their communities; and during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic. One respondent expressed getting stressed when a congregant died in a tragic accident while under her care, leading to her mental health challenges. Therefore, these findings suggest that juggling the dual roles subjects the WMLs to a vicious cycle of stress and burnout. The results concur with past research as indicated in the literature review. This finding is significant because it shows that workers' mental wellness needs to be considered when ICOC is developing a future work model for the WMLs.

What has been Helpful in the Balance of the Dual Roles?

The data indicates that therapy; eating well; taking time out with the family; and physical exercises have been a bit helpful in finding balance. Other useful measures include delegation of ministry duties and practising spiritual disciplines. However, despite implementing these

measures, the respondents still experience a persistent lack of balance in their roles. This finding suggests that the WMLs need more radical interventions to achieve a sustainable balance in their spiritual and social functions, thus, agreeing with existing research as recorded in the literature review.

Recommendations by Respondents

First, the data suggest that reducing the workload and working hours would be most helpful. The WMLs recommended employing more staff, working on shifts and part-time work, or not being in the full-time ministry at all as ways to reduce the workload. One respondent recommended that the church pays the pastors better to enable their wives to work part-time with less pay. Second, the WMLs recommended cultivating a more supportive work environment for church ministers. Thirdly, the WMLs recommended that the church hire a professional counsellor to benefit the ministers and their families. Third, the WMLs suggested that employment be based on one's passions and spiritual gifts. One respondent expressed feeling trapped in her husband's calling, thus desiring to pursue a different career path.

The results, interpretations, and discussions have answered the research questions that this study sought to answer. Most of the findings agree with previous research findings enumerated in the literature review and support the *role conflict theory*. Since this is a theological study within an African context, the next section of this chapter will focus on theological reflection and context analysis of the results.

Theological Reflection

This study was guided by a theological framework.[55] First, a people made in the image of God ought to imitate His example; He worked for six days and then rested from His work (Gen 2:2–3). The study results indicated that the WMLs are primarily on call 24/7, which does not align with God's character. Second, Jesus came to give his people life to the full (John 10:10). However, the data suggests that the challenges faced by the WMLs of ICOC, Nairobi, threaten their ability to have abundant life.

Third, just as God delivers his people out of oppression (Ex 3:7–12) and since Jesus' mission is to release people from captivity and oppression (Luke 4:14–21), God's faith community should strive to transform unjust situations. The research findings suggest that the

---

[55] See *Theological Framework* in Literature Review of this study.

working conditions of the WMLs can be oppressive, and their appreciation of the opportunity to minister full-time notwithstanding. Paul, the apostle, also argues that the new community of God should be devoid of discrimination (Gal 3: 26–28). However, the data indicates that the WMLs lack equity in their work arrangement compared to their male counterparts.

Fourth, the Scriptures record people who suffered burnout and how they dealt with it. Some examples include Moses (Num 11:11–15, Ex 18); Elijah (1 King 19:21); and Martha (Luke 10: 38–42). Each of these people became emotionally and physically drained and ineffective. The interventions involved the development of new leaders; delegation of duties; rest and prayer; and eating well. In addition, Jesus promised a holistic rest to all the weary and burdened who would go to him (Matt 11:28). Finally, when their balance was threatened, the apostles called for more workers to help with the work (Acts 6:1–7). Therefore, these biblical examples would also help mitigate burnout within the church today.

Context Analysis

Context analysis helps to understand why things work the way they do and to develop sustainable ways of transforming situations. ICOC, Nairobi, is certainly influenced by realities in the African context. First, the African family is predominantly an extended family system, contrary to the nuclear family system found in the West.[56] Kim argues that the latter is limited to a man, his wife, and children, while the former includes several nuclear families combined into one mega family.[57] Consequently, the social roles of the WMLs in Africa also include caring for their extended families, which can be overwhelming. Therefore, the work model of the WMLs in Nairobi should be contextualised to suit the African family structure.

Second, the extended family system requires solidarity during major family events like weddings, birthday celebrations, dowry payments, and funerals.[58] Therefore, these facts would also contribute to the increased workload of the WMLs of ICOC, Nairobi. Third, as discussed earlier, women in Africa are expected to care for the home and the children regardless of whether they are stay-at-home spouses or professionals. Consequently, the jobholders are more burdened than their stay-at-home counterparts. Further, the WMLs are more disadvantaged because they

---

[56] Caleb Kim C.S, *Cultural Anthropology from a Christian Perspective,* Eldoret, Kenya: Utafiti Foundation, 2019, 130.

[57] Ibid., 130-31.

[58] Ibid., 133.

are on call 24/7. As a result, they are more likely than their counterparts in regular jobs and their Western counterparts to suffer from stress, burnout, and poor well-being.

Finally, since ICOC, Nairobi was planted and initially led by American missionaries; hence, its mode of operation takes after the American ministry structure. I recently interviewed an American lady who has moved to work in Africa. She said, "I miss the convenience I had in America; a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner, a dishwasher, my own car, etc." Unlike their Western counterparts who enjoy unlimited conveniences, women in Africa must do everything manually from scratch, requiring more time and energy. Consequently, the working model for the WMLs in Nairobi needs to be contextualised with this difference in mind. The theological reflection and the context analysis have helped to shed light on critical areas of biblical truth and African context that need consideration when developing a future model for the roles of WMLs in the Nairobi church.

Conclusion

The role of women in the church has been an ongoing debate. On the one hand, the complementarians maintain that women should only be supportive in church affairs. On the other hand, the egalitarians believe that the Bible expressly sets women free to be church leaders, including being ordained as church ministers. International Church of Christ (ICOC), Nairobi, has excelled in including women in the full-time leadership roles of the church. The pastors' wives, also working as women's ministry leaders (WMLs), serve alongside their husbands by leading the women in the church. This model has produced a robust women's ministry and minimised the rampant cases of male pastors being inappropriately involved in sexual scandals with female congregants.

Nevertheless, the study noted that after more than thirty years of existence, ICOC, Nairobi, has not reviewed the working modalities of the WMLs despite an exponential increase in their ministry and domestic responsibilities over time. Therefore, a qualitative study was undertaken to find out the experience of these women leaders in their God-given roles. The Bible does not hinder women from participating in church ministry; however, these women leaders' spiritual and social demands must be considered to avoid stress and burnout. This scenario can be avoided by both the organisation and the women by partnering to achieve employee work-life balance for mutual benefit.

The results suggest that the spiritual and social roles of the WMLs have increased over the years due to church growth, changes in church demographics, and changes in their life statuses. As a result, the WMLs face the challenge of being effective and maintaining their well-being. The WMLs recommended reducing their workload to give them enough time for their families. They also suggest that the church hire a professional therapist for the ministers and cultivate a more supportive work environment to care for their well-being.

Theological reflection gave biblical examples of people who faced challenges but mitigated them through rest, proper nutrition, being with God, and developing new leaders. However, context analysis of ICOC, Nairobi revealed that the extended family structure and the absence of conveniences make it more difficult for the WMLs to juggle their roles, unlike their Western counterparts. It is, therefore, necessary to contextualise the functions of the WMLs when crafting a more effective work model for these leaders.

Bibliography

A., Mc Cabe Elizabeth, *Women in the Biblical World: A Survey of Old and New Testament Perspectives Vol 1.* New York: University Press of America, 2009.

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, *Manual on Economic Justice for Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Groups: Pastoral Circle Vol 1,* Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network.

Alsdorf, Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting your Work to God's Work.* New York: DUTTON, 2012.

Bailey, Mike Aquilina, and Christopher, *Mothers of the Church: The Witness of Early Christian Women.* Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Inc., 2012.

Beck, James R, et al., *Two Views of Women in Ministry, Revised Edition.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005.

Carter, Joe E. Trull and James E, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders 2nd Edition.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004.

Co, Stephen D. Lapan and, *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.

Fee, Gordon D. *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics.* Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991.

Frank, Gryna M, *Work Overload, Redesigning Jobs to Minimise Stress and Burnout,* Milwaukee. Wisconsin: ASQ Quality Press, 2004.

Gambles, Richenda, *the Myth of Work-Life Balance: The Challenge of Our Time for Men Women and Societies.* Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

Graham, Patrick A, *the Pastor's Problems.* Norwich: T and T Clark, 1985.

Grudem, John Piper and Wayne A, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism.* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991.

Haneef, Susann, *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims.* U.S.A: Library of Islam, 1985.

III, Ben Witherington. *Women in the Earliest Churches.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Kaiser, Stephan, and Cornelia Reindl Eds, *Creating Balance: International Perspectives on Work-Life Integration of Professionals,* London: Springer, 2011.

Kim, C.S. Caleb, *Cultural Anthropology from a Christian Perspective.* Eldoret, Kenya: Utafiti Foundation, 2019.

Kjesbo, Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry.* Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995.

Kumar, Ranjit, *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners 3rd Edition.* Los Angeles, California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2015.

Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective of the Evangelical Gender Debate.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016.

McKean, Kip, "20th Century Church: Revolution through Restoration II." *Upside Down*, 1994: 1-12.

_____, "Revolution through Restoration: From Jerusalem to Rome, from Boston to Moscow," *Upside Down Magazine*, 1992, 1-21.

Osiek, Kevin Madigan and Carolyn. *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Sheldon, Kathleen, *African Women: Early History to the 21st Century.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017.