

## **Balancing Professional Duties, Doctoral Research, and Family Responsibilities: A Study of Female Librarians at Bayero University, Kano**

By

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated how female librarians at Bayero University, Kano manage the complex interplay between professional duties, doctoral research, and family responsibilities. Employing a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from 20 female librarians through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, achieving a 100% response rate. The findings revealed that the primary challenges faced by the respondents included heavy workload, limited time, and competing family obligations, which collectively hindered their academic progress and professional productivity. To navigate these challenges, participants employed various coping strategies such as effective time management, prioritization of tasks, and support from family members, highlighting the importance of both personal and social resources in managing multiple roles. The study also revealed that all respondents benefited from institutional study grants, indicating a strong commitment by the university to support women's academic advancement. Despite this financial assistance, the lack of flexible work schedules and limited administrative support contributed to heightened role conflict, adversely affecting both academic performance and job efficiency. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the university adopt gender-sensitive institutional policies, including flexible working arrangements, structured mentoring programmes, and targeted support initiatives to alleviate role conflict. These measures are expected to enhance the work–study–life balance of female librarians, improve job productivity, and contribute to broader goals of gender equity in higher education institutions. The study further underscores the need for ongoing institutional interventions and research*

**Keywords:** Female Librarians, Work–Life Balance, Doctoral Research, Academic Libraries, Bayero University, Kano.

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the pursuit of advanced academic qualifications among library professionals has gained increasing attention, especially within Nigerian universities. Librarians, as information specialists, are expected to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills to meet the changing demands of higher education. This growing desire for professional development has led many librarians particularly women to enroll in doctoral programs as a means of improving their competence, professional recognition, and opportunities for career advancement (Adebayo and Olumide, 2024). However, this ambition often coincides with multiple societal and family

responsibilities traditionally associated with women, making the experience more demanding than for their male counterparts.

Female librarians in Nigerian universities often play several interconnected roles: as professionals serving the academic community, as doctoral students conducting research, and as wives or mothers responsible for family welfare. Balancing these overlapping responsibilities can lead to fatigue, time pressure, and emotional strain, which may negatively affect job performance, academic progress, and personal well-being (Oloyede, Ajani, and Lawal, 2024). The problem is further compounded by institutional factors such as rigid work schedules, inadequate staff welfare provisions, and limited access to formal support structures. For instance, a study by Adebayo & Olumide (2024) found that most female library staff in Nigerian universities experience work–family conflict arising from insufficient organizational support and lack of flexible work arrangements.

Globally, research indicates that women in academia face systemic barriers to career advancement due to the intersection of professional expectations, research demands, and family responsibilities (Mordi, Simpson, and Adisa, 2023). In the Nigerian context, these barriers are intensified by sociocultural expectations that place domestic responsibilities primarily on women, leaving them with little time for academic pursuits (Eze, 2022). Studies conducted in universities across Nigeria have shown that female academics who undertake postgraduate studies often depend heavily on family and spousal support to maintain balance between work and study (Adefarakan and Odiase, 2025). Nonetheless, such support may not always be consistent or adequate, leaving many women to struggle with burnout and delayed academic progress.

At Bayero University, Kano (BUK), female librarians play critical roles in supporting the university’s teaching, learning, and research missions. They provide essential services such as reference assistance, cataloguing, user education, and research support. Yet, despite their professional commitment, many of these women also aspire to pursue doctoral studies to advance their careers. This dual commitment creates significant tension between meeting professional expectations and fulfilling academic and family obligations. Unfortunately, there is limited empirical research exploring how female librarians at BUK specifically manage these intersecting roles. Understanding their lived experiences is important for improving their productivity, well-being, and retention in academic library service (Yakubu and Salihu, 2023).

Previous research has emphasized that effective work–life balance depends on both personal coping mechanisms and supportive institutional frameworks (Adefarakan & Odiase, 2025). Strategies such as time management, emotional resilience, and social support from family and colleagues have been identified as key factors that help women manage multiple responsibilities successfully. However, where institutional policies such as flexible scheduling, study leave, or workload adjustments are absent or poorly implemented, female staff members are more likely to experience role conflict and reduced academic engagement (Ajibade and Ogunyemi, 2023).

Therefore, this study seeks to examine how female librarians at Bayero University, Kano, balance their professional duties, doctoral research, and family responsibilities. It aims to identify the

challenges they face, the coping strategies they employ, and the institutional supports available to them. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on gender, work–life balance, and academic career development in Nigerian universities, and to inform policy reforms that promote equity and productivity among library professionals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigerian universities, obtaining a doctoral degree has become essential for librarians seeking academic and professional advancement. However, for female librarians, this pursuit often coincides with the demands of full-time work and family responsibilities, resulting in multiple role conflicts. The challenge of balancing professional duties, academic obligations, and domestic expectations frequently leads to stress, time constraints, and reduced productivity (Adebayo and Olumide, 2024).

At Bayero University, Kano, female librarians play vital roles in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities. Yet, many of them experience difficulties in managing their doctoral research alongside professional and family responsibilities. Institutional support mechanisms such as flexible work arrangements or research leave remain limited, making it harder for women to cope effectively (Oladejo, 2021). Despite their growing presence in academia, little research has explored how these women navigate the intersection of work, study, and family life. This study, therefore, investigates the experiences of female librarians at Bayero University, Kano, focusing on the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to achieve balance.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to examine how female librarians at Bayero University, Kano, balance their professional duties, doctoral research, and family responsibilities. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the major challenges faced by female librarians in balancing work, study, and family roles.
2. Examine the coping strategies adopted by female librarians to manage their multiple responsibilities.
3. Assess the level of institutional and family support available to female librarians pursuing doctoral studies.
4. Analyze how role conflict affects the academic performance and job productivity of female librarians at Bayero University, Kano.

### **Literature Review**

Balancing professional, academic, and domestic responsibilities has been widely recognized as a persistent challenge for women in academia and the library profession. Female librarians often experience increased pressure due to the gendered expectation of household and caregiving duties, which frequently co-exist with demanding work schedules Eze, (2022). For librarians pursuing

doctoral studies, these pressures tend to intensify, as postgraduate research requires sustained concentration, time commitment, and emotional energy. Studies from African universities indicate that women commonly face structural constraints such as limited time, insufficient financial resources, and overwhelming workloads (Adefarakan & Odiase, 2025). Within Nigerian academic libraries, female staff often encounter rigid institutional schedules that limit their ability to manage study-related tasks effectively (Salihu & Baffa, 2023). Additionally, cultural expectations concerning marriage and motherhood can create further strain, as women are expected to prioritize domestic roles even when engaged in full-time employment or doctoral work (Aina & Ajayi, 2023). For female librarians in universities such as Bayero University, Kano, these challenges may also be compounded by inadequate staffing levels, increasing service demands, and the need to engage in research output for career advancement. Such pressures foster role overload, emotional fatigue, and reduced academic progress (Nwosu & Chukwuma, 2022). Overall, literature consistently highlights that women navigating multiple roles face complex, intersecting challenges requiring institutional and societal understanding.

Coping strategies are vital mechanisms through which female librarians balance their overlapping roles. Research shows that many women adopt time management, prioritization, and task delegation as primary strategies to mitigate stress (Yakubu & Salihu, 2023). Effective scheduling such as setting aside specific periods for research, work tasks, and family care has been shown to enhance productivity among doctoral students who are also full time workers. Another widely documented approach is social support, which includes assistance from partners, extended family, colleagues, and peer networks (Adebayo & Olumide, 2024). Emotional encouragement and practical help with childcare or household tasks often enable female doctoral candidates to sustain their academic momentum. Some librarians also rely on technology-based coping, using digital tools to streamline work processes, access online research materials, or conduct virtual meetings, thus saving time and reducing physical strain (Tella & Oladapo, 2023). In academic environments, self-care practices, including rest, mindfulness, or participation in religious and community activities, are increasingly recognized as essential coping mechanisms for women experiencing role strain (Adebayo & Ojo, 2022). Overall, literature suggests that coping strategies among female librarians are multi-dimensional, combining personal resilience with external support systems.

Institutional and family support significantly influences the ability of female librarians to balance their various responsibilities. Family support whether financial, emotional, or practical plays a foundational role in enabling women to pursue advanced study while remaining productive at work and at home (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2021). Spousal support, in particular, has been linked to higher academic satisfaction and improved time management outcomes. On the institutional side, universities that provide flexible work schedules, research grants, mentorship programs, and study leave opportunities contribute positively to female staff advancement (Olaopa & Akinwale, 2020). Unfortunately, several studies note that such provisions are often insufficient or inconsistently implemented in Nigerian universities. According to Suleiman and Tijjani (2023), many female librarians report limited access to funding, inadequate professional development opportunities, and a lack of administrative understanding of the dual responsibilities they manage. Supportive workplace culture is also critical. When supervisors acknowledge the pressures faced by women pursuing doctoral studies, employees experience lower stress levels and demonstrate higher job

satisfaction (Eze & Nwosu, 2022). Conversely, unsupportive environments often exacerbate role conflict, decrease research productivity, and may lead to burnout. Thus, institutional and family support remain central to the success of female librarians engaged in both career and academic pursuits.

Role conflict occurs when the expectations of two or more roles become incompatible, creating tension and hindering performance. In academic settings, such conflict often leads to reduced concentration, slower academic progress, and diminished research output (Olayanju & Adeoti, 2022). The library profession itself is characterized by tasks that require precision, user engagement, and adherence to institutional policies. As workload increases, role conflict can negatively influence job productivity, causing delays in service delivery and reduced efficiency (Igbeneghu & Popoola, 2020). For women pursuing doctoral degrees, the mental load associated with balancing competing demands may hinder their ability to meet academic deadlines or maintain consistent progress in dissertation writing. Recent Nigerian studies show that role conflict is strongly associated with emotional exhaustion and lower organizational commitment (Salihu & Baffa, 2023). Female librarians at institutions such as Bayero University, Kano, may experience heightened stress when research expectations overlap with peak work periods or family needs. Ultimately, literature confirms that unresolved role conflict undermines both professional performance and academic achievement, emphasizing the importance of structural and interpersonal support.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of how female librarians at Bayero University, Kano, balanced their professional duties, doctoral research, and family responsibilities. A descriptive survey design formed the basis of the quantitative aspect, while semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data that provided deeper insight into the respondents' experiences. The population of the study consisted of 40 female librarians working in various sections of the university library system. From this number, twenty female librarians who had completed or were currently pursuing their doctoral degrees were purposively selected. Data were gathered using two instruments: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on demographic characteristics, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and sources of support, while the interview guide was used to obtain detailed explanations and personal reflections that could not be fully captured through the questionnaire. All questionnaires were duly completed and returned, representing a 100 percent response rate, while interviews were successfully conducted with all participants. Data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency counts and percentages, while the qualitative data obtained from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes.

**Results presentation and interpretation**

**Table 1: Challenges Faced by Female Librarians in Balancing Professional Duties, Doctoral Research, and Family Responsibilities**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency (n=20)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Inadequate time for academic work	17	85
Family responsibilities interfering with study	15	75
Heavy workload at work place	14	70
Financial constraints	13	65
Lack of institutional support	10	50
Emotional or psychological stress	12	60

The results in Table 1 show that the most frequent challenge among respondents was inadequate time for academic work (85%), followed by family responsibilities (75%) and heavy workload (70%). The data suggest that time pressure and multiple obligations are the main difficulties faced by female librarians combining professional, academic, and family roles. Interview feedback further revealed that participants often felt “stretched between deadlines and family expectations,” with many reporting a lack of work flexibility that made it hard to maintain a stable balance.

**Table 2: Strategies Used by Female Librarians to Cope with Multiple Responsibilities**

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency (n=20)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Effective time management	18	90
Support from family members	16	80
Prioritizing tasks	15	75
Seeking emotional or social support	12	60
Delegation of household duties	11	55
Use of study leave or flexible scheduling	10	50

Table 2 indicate that effective time management (90%) and support from family members (80%) were the most frequently adopted coping strategies. Other approaches included prioritizing tasks and delegating household duties. Interview narratives supported these findings, as respondents explained that creating daily study schedules and receiving help from spouses or relatives enabled them to stay organized. One librarian noted that “without proper time management, it’s almost impossible to keep up with both research and library work.” The results suggest that strong personal discipline and supportive family structures are vital for balancing multiple responsibilities.

**Table 3: Level of Institutional and Family Support Received by Female Librarians**

<b>Sources of Support</b>	<b>Frequency (n=20)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Encouragement from supervisors	12	60

Study leave or flexible hours	9	45
Study grant from institution or foundation	20	100
Emotional encouragement from spouse or relatives	14	70
Mentorship or peer support	11	55

Table 3 shows that all respondents (100%) benefited from study grants provided either by the university or external foundations. This indicates a strong institutional commitment toward supporting the academic advancement of female librarians at Bayero University, Kano. In addition, 70% reported receiving emotional support from family members, while 60% acknowledged encouragement from supervisors. However, only 45% benefited from study leave or flexible hours. Interview responses revealed that although institutional grants were widely available, respondents still faced challenges balancing time between work and academic commitments. Some participants noted that the availability of funding eased financial burdens but did not necessarily reduce workload or family pressure.

**Table 4:** Role Conflict, Academic Performance and Job Productivity of Female Librarians

<b>Effects of Role Conflict</b>	<b>Frequency (n=20)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Reduced concentration on doctoral research	15	75
Decline in job productivity due to stress	13	65
Frequent lateness or absenteeism from work	10	50
Delay in completion of academic programmes	12	60
Emotional exhaustion or burnout	14	70

The results in Table 4 show that 75% of respondents experienced reduced concentration on doctoral research due to overlapping roles, while 70% reported emotional exhaustion and 65% noted a decline in job productivity. Interviews revealed that most participants struggled to maintain focus, describing feelings of constant fatigue and pressure. One respondent remarked that “the stress from juggling work and studies sometimes affects how well I perform at both ends.” These findings indicate that role conflict has a tangible negative impact on academic progress and job efficiency among female librarians at Bayero University, Kano.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study sought to understand the major difficulties female librarians face while trying to balance their job responsibilities, academic work, and family life. The results showed that many of them struggled to find enough time for their doctoral studies, and a large number also felt that family responsibilities placed heavy pressure on them. These findings highlight that managing time effectively remains a central challenge for women academics in Nigeria and in many other countries. Eze (2022) note that female librarians in federal universities often encounter significant work–family conflict, which can negatively affect their job satisfaction and slow down their research activities. Likewise, Oni, (2023) reported that the overlapping between professional duties and home obligations tends to lower productivity and heighten emotional stress for working mothers.

Insights from the interviews conducted for this research further supported these patterns. Participants described moments when academic deadlines, job expectations, and family tasks all collided. Several shared that they frequently worked late into the night or used weekends to complete their schoolwork. These experiences align with role theory, which explains that conflict occurs when individuals are expected to fulfil multiple roles that demand attention at the same time. In librarianship where timely service is essential this tension can be even more intense for women who are pursuing advanced degrees. Similar situations have been documented globally. Biedma-Ferrer and Medina-Garrido (2023) observe that women in academic settings still carry most of the unpaid domestic workload, leaving them with reduced time for research and career development. The challenges faced by female librarians at Bayero University, therefore, reflect a much broader pattern of gendered labor divisions that continue to shape women's academic progress.

In exploring the coping strategies employed by female librarians to balance their multiple responsibilities, the study revealed that many participants relied heavily on deliberate time-management practices and strong family support networks. These approaches reflect considerable self-efficacy and adaptability among the respondents. Participants frequently described creating structured personal schedules, identifying priority tasks, and delegating certain domestic duties as ways to maintain stability across their professional, academic, and family roles. This pattern aligns with the observations of Okolie and Uwayah (2024), who argue that Nigerian women professionals commonly adopt individualized coping methods particularly self-regulation and cooperative family strategies to manage overlapping demands. Despite the usefulness of these personal strategies, the findings indicate that such measures remain insufficient in the absence of flexible institutional structures. Interview accounts revealed that several librarians encountered challenges in securing formal study leave or accessing workload adjustments from their workplaces. This suggests a continued reliance on informal, self-generated coping mechanisms rather than institutionalized forms of support. Similar conclusions were drawn by Ali and Gabasa (2022), who noted that gender norms and workplace culture within Nigerian libraries often discourage open conversations about workload difficulties, thereby pushing women to depend on self-help strategies.

Within this environment, family support emerged as an especially important factor enabling persistence. Emotional encouragement and practical assistance from spouses and extended family members played a critical role in helping participants maintain motivation and sustain their academic progression. Ifijeh and Popoola (2025) likewise report that social and familial support positively influences job engagement and reduces burnout among librarians in Nigeria. Accordingly, the resilience demonstrated in this study reflects both the personal determination of the participants and the strength of the support systems surrounding them. In assessing the extent of institutional and family support available to female librarians enrolled in doctoral programmes, the study identified a noteworthy development: every participant indicated that they had received a study grant, either from their university or from external funding bodies such as TETFund. This outcome highlights a growing institutional commitment to encouraging academic advancement among female professionals. It also aligns with broader initiatives across Nigerian universities

aimed at strengthening staff development through sponsored research opportunities (Oladejo, 2021s).

Despite this encouraging financial support, the findings show that monetary assistance alone was insufficient in addressing the broader challenges associated with doctoral study. Only a small portion of the participants reported having access to flexible work arrangements or formal study leave, revealing a clear disconnect between financial and practical institutional support. This pattern supports the argument by Biedma-Ferrer and Medina-Garrido (2023), who contend that genuine institutional support for women in academia requires not only funding but also flexibility in work structure and inclusive organizational policies. Participants further explained that although the grants eased their financial obligations, they continued to struggle with time constraints and considerable fatigue due to the simultaneous demands of work and study. This suggests that institutional support within Nigerian universities remains predominantly financial, with limited structural mechanisms to help female academics manage multiple responsibilities. The lack of provisions such as flexible scheduling, mentorship opportunities, and temporary workload reductions continues to perpetuate gender-related disparities in academic career progression.

The findings regarding the impact of role conflict on the academic performance and job productivity of female librarians reveal that competing responsibilities significantly hinder both areas. Many participants acknowledged that the constant need to balance professional duties with academic commitments weakened their ability to concentrate on research. Several also described experiencing emotional strain and a noticeable decline in their work output. These observations support the conclusions of Oladejo (2021), who argue that unresolved role conflict among working mothers often results in persistent stress and reduced performance. Similarly, Saka & Salma, (2022) note that prolonged imbalance between work and personal responsibilities can lead to lower job satisfaction and weakened organizational commitment, particularly for women. The experiences shared by participants in this study—feelings of fatigue, challenges meeting deadlines, and mental exhaustion—closely reflect the symptoms of role overload frequently cited in earlier research. Despite these difficulties, many librarians demonstrated considerable determination and persistence, encouraged by institutional funding opportunities and personal academic goals. This perseverance aligns with the idea of “career resilience,” described by Ifijeh and Popoola (2025) as an essential trait among librarians who thrive in challenging work environments. While this resilience helped buffer some of the adverse effects of role conflict, it was not sufficient to eliminate them entirely. The results also reinforce the argument by Okolie and Uwayah (2024), who observe that although Nigerian women professionals often display strong self-discipline and motivation, rigid institutional structures and entrenched social expectations continue to restrict their progress. Overall, the study highlights the importance of combining individual effort with meaningful structural reforms to effectively address the consequences of role conflict.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that female librarians at Bayero University, Kano face persistent challenges in balancing professional responsibilities, doctoral research, and family roles. Despite their determination and academic commitment, issues such as workload pressure, time constraints, and

overlapping duties negatively affect their productivity and academic success. The findings also showed that institutional study grants have significantly supported women's educational advancement, highlighting the university's dedication to gender development. However, financial assistance alone has not addressed the problems of rigid work schedules and inadequate administrative support. The study concludes that role conflict remains a major factor influencing both academic and job performance among female librarians. It recommends the adoption of gender-sensitive institutional policies, including flexible work arrangements, formal mentoring, and supportive management structures, to enhance productivity, reduce stress, and promote gender equity within academic environments

### **Recommendations**

Bayero University, Kano should introduce flexible work schedules and reduced workloads for female librarians pursuing doctoral studies to enable effective balance between professional, academic, and family responsibilities.

The university should organize mentorship and time-management programmes to strengthen female librarians' coping abilities and foster mutual support networks that reduce stress and burnout.

Beyond study grants, the institution should provide research leave, adequate academic resources, and continuous supervisory encouragement to promote effective academic progress among female librarians.

The university should adopt gender-sensitive and family-friendly policies—such as childcare facilities and flexible deadlines—to minimize role conflict and enhance both academic performance and job productivity.

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