



Understanding the Work-Life Balance of Filipino Online ESL Teachers in Their Dual Roles as Educators and Parents of Young Children

Jona Mae C. Lanzaderas

Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, Philippines

E-mail: jonamae.lanzaderas@sccpag.edu.ph ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2702-9572>

Mary Jane B. Omandam

Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, Philippines

E-mail: maryjaneomandam@sccpag.edu.ph ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6055-4850>

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Balancing professional and parental responsibilities is a growing concern for many online educators, especially those raising young children. While remote teaching offers flexibility, Filipino online ESL teachers continue to face unique challenges in managing their dual roles, an area that remains underexplored. The study aimed to examine the work-life balance of ESL teacher-parents by exploring their parenting and teaching roles, challenges, coping strategies, and sources of motivation across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Materials and Methods: This qualitative multiple case study involved 10 female ESL teacher-parents. Guided by Merriam's (1998) model, data were collected through online interviews and analyzed using coding, category development, and interpretation.

Results: Findings revealed that teacher-parents performed their professional duties by showing dedication, managing student behavior, and fostering student engagement. As parents, they maximized time with their children, shared responsibilities, and adopted parenting styles. To navigate roles, they maintained consistent teaching schedules, utilized flexible work hours, and set boundaries. Challenges included child-related interruptions, emotional strain, financial stress, sleep deprivation, and limited personal time. They addressed these through time planning, emotional support, backup plans, budgeting, and self-care. They were motivated by family, earnings, flexibility, and fulfillment.

Conclusion: It was concluded that they use a variety of strategies, shared or personal, to manage their roles despite challenges, emphasizing the need for support and flexibility.

Keywords: Work-life balance, Filipino online ESL teacher, Parenting, Dual roles, Teacher-parent

Introduction

Teaching English online is one of the most common career options among teachers as it is becoming an emerging industry in the country. The expansion of the ESL industry has contributed to increased opportunities for Filipinos, as the Philippines is considered an ESL country, and teachers are regarded for their proficiency in English (Pontillas, 2021). An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher is an educator who provides English instruction to learners whose first language is not English, commonly identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The increase in demand for ESL teachers started during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and companies continue to hire near-native English speakers like Filipinos due to affordability compared to native speakers and a strong command of the English language (Morales, 2020). Through this, along with the rise of different ESL companies and platforms, learning the language remotely, either home-based or office-based, has become more accessible for learners from across the world.

The continued integration of online teaching into education systems demonstrates broader transformations, where changes in learning interactions shaped by the pandemic continue to influence post-pandemic education, highlighting that online learning remains an integral part of modern instruction (Lockee, 2021). While face-to-face instruction remains significant, the continued preference for online learning among some students demonstrates the enduring relevance of virtual learning environments (Nurchalis & Noni, 2024). This study draws on Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance





theory, which explains how individuals manage the demands of both work and family roles through the interplay of conflict, enrichment, and balance. The framework emphasizes that achieving balance is not simply about dividing time but about reducing role interference and fostering positive connections between professional and personal life. This framework is relevant for online ESL teacher-parents, whose overlapping work and caregiving responsibilities highlight both the challenges and benefits of online teaching.

Existing studies had explored teachers' work-life balance, mostly in traditional classrooms. However, none of them focused specifically on Filipino online ESL teachers who are also raising young children while working from home. Thus, this study addresses that gap by exploring how these teacher-parents manage their work-life balance while fulfilling dual roles.

Understanding how they manage their work-life balance is important because these teachers constantly meet the demands of teaching online while caring for young children. It would help educational leaders and administrators develop more responsive policies and support systems that would promote teacher well-being and strengthen sustainable education management, as education is evolving with technological advancements, making remote teaching a long-term consideration beyond emergencies.

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate how Filipino online ESL teachers based in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao managed work-life balance. Specifically, it sought to: (1) examine how Filipino online ESL teachers perform their responsibilities as teachers; (2) examine how Filipino online ESL teachers perform their responsibilities as parents; (3) explore how Filipino online ESL teachers navigate work-life balance in their dual roles as educators and parents; (4) identify the challenges Filipino online ESL teachers encounter in managing work-life balance; (5) determine how Filipino online ESL teachers address these challenges; and (6) identify what motivates Filipino online ESL teachers to continue teaching.

Literature review

Opportunities and Challenges of Online ESL Teaching. Many individuals aspire to become online English teachers for several reasons, including flexible scheduling, the ability to work from any location with a stable internet connection, interactions with diverse cultures, enhanced digital skills, financial benefits, a growing and consistent industry, adaptive teaching methods, opportunities for career advancement, and professional networking (Esparar & Sabidalas, 2022). Most ESL companies require applicants to be English speakers with a C1 proficiency level, college graduates, experienced teachers, holders of international certificates (TESOL or TEFL), and able to meet the minimum required teaching hours. However, not all Filipinos working as online tutors are licensed teachers. Many come from other professions, and even students can work as tutors if they pass the application process, which typically includes an interview, grammar test, training, and demo teaching (Pontillas, 2021).

Despite these advantages, online ESL teaching presents several challenges. Income can be unstable because it depends on the number of reservations per cutoff, and some companies operate on a "no work, no pay" basis. Teachers may be required to work graveyard shifts to meet peak-hour demand, and booking inconsistencies caused by students' subscription renewals, vacations, or personal reasons can complicate scheduling. Additionally, penalties may be applied if a teacher misses or cannot complete a lesson due to power outages, internet disruptions, technical issues, or other factors, depending on company policies (Esparar & Sabidalas, 2022). Teachers often use backup strategies, including power banks, generators, inverters, UPS, or alternative internet providers; however, failures may still result in penalties.

Managing diverse student behaviors, providing feedback, and meeting company performance standards can also be demanding. These professional opportunities and challenges are closely linked to work-family dynamics. Positive aspects of online teaching, such as skill development and professional accomplishments, can enhance family life and personal fulfillment, reflecting work-family enrichment. Conversely, unpredictable schedules, performance pressures, and technical difficulties can interfere with family responsibilities, exemplifying work interference with family. Similarly, family obligations, including caregiving and household duties, may compete with teaching responsibilities, demonstrating family interference with work. However, most studies focus on general ESL teachers and do not specifically





examine how these challenges affect teacher-parents balancing professional and family roles. This gap suggests that Filipino teacher-parents may experience amplified work-family conflict and unique pressures that remain underexplored in the literature. These dynamics are particularly significant for Filipino teacher-parents, who navigate professional expectations alongside culturally influenced caregiving responsibilities while striving to maintain overall work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance in the Online ESL Teaching Profession. Work-life balance is essential for educators, as it enables them to allocate time and energy effectively between professional responsibilities, including preparing lessons, managing diverse student behaviors, and meeting company standards, alongside personal and family commitments (Mercado, 2019). Flexible scheduling arrangements can positively impact teachers' ability to meet these needs, while excessive workloads and stress may compromise their performance and overall well-being (Riskarini et al., 2024).

For teacher-parents, managing both roles is demanding, making it essential to cultivate the right skills and sustain a healthy work-life balance to achieve better productivity and performance (Aquino et al., 2023). When teachers experience burnout, their job performance declines, creating further strain on their personal and family life (Subhan et al., 2023). An imbalance between these domains can have negative consequences not only for the educators themselves but also for their families and work environments (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021).

Parenthood marks one of the most important transitions in the family life cycle, requiring adjustments in lifestyle, responsibilities, and relationships, which can elevate stress and affect overall well-being (Martins, 2019). For online ESL teachers, caring for young children while managing their workload can be particularly challenging. Extended parental leave may result in income loss or even account deactivation in some companies, adding financial strain. Support from spouses and colleagues contributes positively to work-life balance, whereas childcare and other family and work-related responsibilities contribute negatively (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2017).

Work-life balance among online ESL teacher-parents is influenced by workload, organizational policies, caregiving expectations, and access to support systems. However, much of the existing research focuses on general work-life balance or studies conducted outside the Philippines, and does not fully consider the experiences of Filipino online ESL teacher-parents. The combination of limited childcare support, household responsibilities, and unstable income may increase work-family conflict and stress in ways that previous studies do not capture. This emphasizes the need for research that considers local caregiving practices, company policies, and support systems affecting the professional and family lives of Filipino teacher-parents. Using Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory highlights how they experience work-family conflict (WFC) when professional and family roles interfere, and work-family enrichment (WFE) when experiences in one role positively enhance the other. This framework provides a clear basis for understanding how teacher-parents manage competing demands, reduce conflict, and build fulfilling careers while maintaining family well-being.

Cultural Perspectives on Parenting in the Philippines. Parenting in the Philippines is shaped by strong cultural values that emphasize close family ties and parental responsibility. Although extended family members, friends, or household help may provide support, caregiving expectations fall primarily on parents, especially mothers (Alampay, 2014, as cited in Alampay, 2024). For Filipino teacher-parents, balancing online teaching, which demands focus, patience, and energy, with responsibilities for their children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being creates additional strain. Nevertheless, existing studies often overlook the specific experiences of Filipino ESL teacher-parents navigating these dual roles within a collectivist cultural context. The influence of cultural expectations on work-family conflict and enrichment has been insufficiently examined, particularly regarding how mothers manage caregiving alongside professional responsibilities. These overlapping roles highlight the importance of Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance theory by showing how cultural expectations intensify both role pressures and the need for support systems that reduce conflict and promote enrichment between family and professional roles.

Policy Frameworks for Online Learning in the Philippines. School administrators and policymakers in the Philippines have increasingly emphasized online and blended learning as viable teaching modalities, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Manalo et al., 2022). For example, DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 formally introduced remote instruction as part of emergency





learning delivery (Tusi, 2023). These initiatives, along with global advances in educational technology (Kalyani, 2024), reflect a long-term trend toward digital integration in Philippine education. While online ESL teaching is delivered mostly through global platforms, it exists within the Philippines' evolving educational landscape and demonstrates models of flexibility, growth potential, and teacher support that could inform future education policies. These policy initiatives underscore the growing role of online and blended learning, providing a contextual backdrop for examining how Filipino online ESL teacher-parents manage professional and family responsibilities. Insights from this study can inform educational management practices by identifying ways to support teacher-parents in online teaching environments and contribute to the design of policies and programs that promote work-family balance, as described by Greenhaus and Allen (2011), and support teacher well-being.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in the Work-Family Balance Theory proposed by Greenhaus and Allen (2011), which explains how individuals manage the demands of their professional and family roles and achieve alignment between role performance, satisfaction, and personal values. Work-life balance is not simply a matter of time management but also reflects whether one's responsibilities in both domains contribute to a sense of fulfillment and harmony with life priorities.

The theory emphasizes two central dynamics: work-family conflict, which occurs when the demands of one role hinder performance in the other, and work-family enrichment, which occurs when positive experiences in one role enhance functioning in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Conflict can take the form of work interference with family (WIF), where job stress, schedules, or behaviors reduce energy and time for family responsibilities, or family interference with work (FIW), where caregiving and household duties limit focus and productivity at work.

Enrichment, on the other hand, is reflected in work enrichment of family (WEF), where skills, confidence, and resources gained at work benefit family life, and family enrichment of work (FEW), where emotional support and family-derived competencies enhance professional performance. These four processes are work interference with family (WIF), family interference with work (FIW), work enrichment of family (WEF), and family enrichment of work (FEW). They are influenced by workplace demands, family dynamics, and individual characteristics, shaping overall perceptions of balance, well-being, and role satisfaction.

In the Philippine context, collectivist family values and strong intergenerational ties significantly influence these dynamics. Extended family networks can help reduce conflict by providing childcare support, while strong familial obligations may contribute to family interference with work. Close family relationships also encourage enrichment, allowing teacher-parents to draw emotional support and resilience from family connections that strengthen their teaching practice. Understanding these role-related and cultural dynamics is essential to capturing the experiences of Filipino online ESL teacher-parents, who navigate overlapping home and workspaces while balancing teaching responsibilities and parenting.



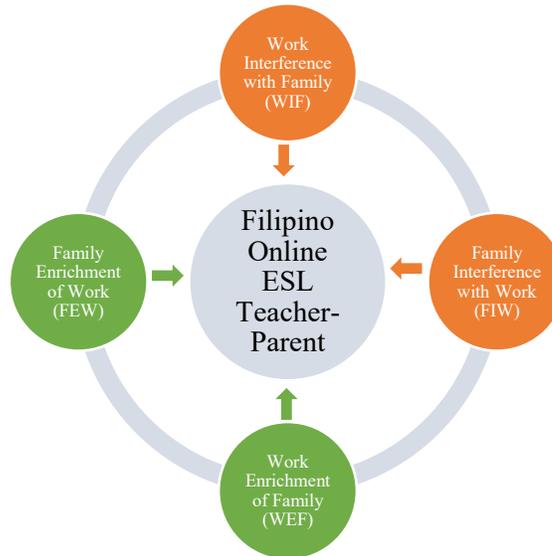


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Work-Life Balance for Filipino Online ESL Teacher-Parents*

Methodology

Research Design. The study used a qualitative research approach to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino online ESL teachers who are also parents of young children. A multiple-case study design was employed, guided by Merriam’s (1998) case study methodology. This design is well-suited for examining a bounded system, in this case, the dual roles of online ESL teacher-parents within specific regional contexts in the Philippines.

Research Participants. This study involved ten female Filipino online ESL teachers working full-time for ESL companies or as private tutors. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: currently teaching online, having at least one year of experience, and parenting children aged 0 to 5. Female participants were chosen because the ESL field is predominantly female, mothers were more accessible for interviews, and the study focused on mothers’ caregiving experiences; therefore, the findings are not generalizable to male teachers. Participants were grouped by region: Luzon LT01, LT02, LT03; Visayas VT04, VT05, VT06; Mindanao MT07, MT08, MT09, MT10. Their ESL experience ranged from 2 to 14 years. Triangulation included interviews with spouses and co-workers to enhance validity.

Research Instrument. The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide validated by two research experts. Interviews were also conducted with participants’ spouses and co-workers to gain multiple perspectives. Field notes recorded non-verbal cues, and relevant documents and artifacts, such as schedules and reflections, were collected to support triangulation.

Data Gathering Procedure. The data collection procedure followed a structured protocol to ensure accuracy, reliability, and confidentiality. Official approvals were obtained from the Graduate School Dean, the managers of the participating ESL companies, and the Research Ethics Committee of Saint Columban College (REC Reference No. 028), and informed consent forms were collected before conducting individual online interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Interview questions were validated by two research experts, and interviews were recorded with participant permission, supported by observations of non-verbal cues. Relevant documents and artifacts, such as schedules, class recordings, and photos of home teaching setups, were also collected to support triangulation. Transcripts were reviewed to identify patterns, and ethical standards were upheld by maintaining anonymity, secure data storage, and expressing gratitude to participants.

Data Analysis. This study followed Merriam’s qualitative data analysis method. Interview recordings were organized and transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were reviewed for clarity, with follow-



up questions asked when needed. Open coding was conducted manually to identify key phrases, which were then grouped into categories reflecting how Filipino online ESL teachers balance their professional and parental roles. Categories were verified through triangulation, comparing interview data with observations and additional interviews with spouses and co-workers. A cross-case analysis explored similarities and differences among participants from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with results examined in relation to the theoretical framework and research objectives.

Ethical Considerations in Conducting Research. Following the ethical standards emphasized by Cacciattolo (2015), this study maintained responsible data collection practices to protect the rights and safety of participants. Participation was voluntary, allowing individuals to accept or decline interviews without consequences. Informed consent was obtained electronically after participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Confidentiality was strictly observed, with interview data used only for research and accessible solely to the researcher. Participants could also turn off their cameras to ensure privacy. Integrity and honesty were upheld by processing all videoconferencing data truthfully, without manipulation.

Results

Filipino Online ESL Teachers' Performance of Responsibilities as Teachers

This focuses on the professional roles of Filipino ESL teachers in online classrooms.

Dedication And Passion for Teaching. This refers to online ESL teachers who build lasting relationships with students and make learning fun and worthwhile beyond the provided materials. It is their deep commitment to their students' growth and learning. The participants said:

"I teach with passion; they like the way I teach because it feels like I really want the students to learn." -LT01

"Here in (Company B), I have students who have been with me from their first day until now, five years later, they're still my students. They don't see me as just their teacher but as a big sister or a friend. I'm always smiling. I've never had a class where I didn't smile. At the end of the day, my cheeks are already hurting." -VT04.

"But with ESL, it really has a big impact and holds a special place in my heart. I've truly come to love the work, and of course, when everything is happy, and I love my dear students, thankfully, there's never any trouble or difficulty." - MT07.

The researcher observed from the class recordings that participants consistently smiled, appeared happy, and communicated warmly with students. Spouses confirmed these observations, noting the participants' enthusiasm for teaching and dedication beyond online duties. They earnestly perform their responsibilities and see it as more than an online job.

In Luzon (3/3) and Visayas (3/3), all participants demonstrated dedication and passion for teaching, while in Mindanao, this was observed in three of four cases. Overall, 9 of 10 participants in this sample demonstrated dedication and passion for teaching, indicating its importance as a key quality of effective online ESL teachers.

Applying Varied Teaching Strategies. It focuses purely on motivating and engaging students rather than addressing behavioral problems. The participants stated.

"I usually joke around a lot. I also create interactive PowerPoint presentations, games, and props." -LT02.

"With kids, I focus more on doing TPR and showing realia. Teaching aids are necessary. I really know how to play with kids, and I'm very friendly. I also vary my tone of voice. I really like to ask questions just to keep my students engaged in class. I encourage them to talk, praise them, and correct them. It's important to adjust our language and encourage students." -VT06.

"I greet the student with a big smile. I supplement with visual aids, TPR, and facial expressions to make lessons lively, and I also give them stars or digital rewards."-MT10.

The researcher observed that the teachers used various teaching aids tailored to learners' needs. The participants described strategies for managing online classrooms to keep students engaged. A co-worker confirmed these practices, validating the participants' statements.





In Luzon, two of three participants (2/3) applied varied teaching strategies to foster student engagement. In Visayas, all participants (3/3) demonstrated this practice, while in Mindanao, it was evident in three of four cases (3/4). Overall, the majority focused on diverse methods to keep students engaged.

Managing Diverse Student Behavior. This is shown by being patient and composed when dealing with students' varied personalities and moods. The participants noted.

"When there's a new student, you have to behave. Even if you're really annoyed, you still need to keep your voice soft and gentle. For example, when I get annoyed, after the class, I always ask them, 'Are you happy?' So, if they say 'No,' I will say sorry or explain my side."
-LT01

"I'm really patient, but if it really becomes too much, especially when they turn off their camera and don't respond, I repeat myself one to three times. If they still don't answer, I just read it myself. But when it really becomes too much, I leave the classroom briefly, then come back." -VT06.

"I really make sure to inform them that they need to listen because they won't learn otherwise, and I have a follow-up quiz prepared. Sometimes, I also tell them that all my classes are recorded. By the end of the class, I'll send the recording to their parents so they can see if their child is really listening or not. It also depends on the student. Some students need a strict approach, while others respond well when you speak gently because they do listen and are very good students." -MT07.

The participants highlighted the significance of being patient and professional. A co-worker confirmed that the teachers demonstrated strong emotional regulation and classroom management skills.

In Luzon, one of three participants (1/3) addressed managing diverse student behavior. In Visayas, this was also observed in one case (1/3). In Mindanao, two of four participants (2/4) reported this practice. Overall, 4 of 10 participants in this sample discussed managing diverse student behavior, making it one of the less frequently noted responsibilities across cases.

Filipino Online ESL Teachers' Performance of Responsibilities as Parents

This refers to how Filipino online ESL teachers handle their duties as parents.

Maximizing Time for Hands-on Parenting. It is about how ESL teacher-parents make time and effort to be actively involved in their children's lives. The participants expressed.

"When I have a break, I really dedicate it to my child. Even though I could ask my mom to take care of them, I don't want to because I miss my child. I really want to hold them during my break or after my class." -LT01.

"I really give the time that my child needs. I also play with my baby. I choose to be the one who feeds and bathes them." -VT07.

"In the morning, I really handle my children." -MT07

The spouse confirmed that despite a busy schedule, the participant makes every moment count to care for and spend time with her children. The participants skillfully utilize every available time outside their teaching responsibilities to engage in caregiving and bonding activities.

In Luzon, all participants (3/3) reported maximizing time for hands-on parenting. This was also evident in all cases in Visayas (3/3) and in three of four participants in Mindanao (3/4). Overall, the majority emphasized making the most of time with their young children.

Sharing Parenting Responsibilities. This means that teacher-parents get help from family members or a nanny in taking care of their children. The participants stated.

"My mom only takes care of the child in the afternoon, for about 1 or 2 hours, then my nieces take over at night when they get home." -LT01.

"I honestly wouldn't be able to do it without the help of my nanny. During the weekdays, the kids are mostly with the nanny." -VT04.

"My parents help me. From the very beginning, they have really taken care of my children."
-MT08.

The spouse affirmed that due to the participants' continuous work and limited rest, the participants rely heavily on their parents and the nanny for childcare. This shared responsibility helps teacher-parents manage their parenting duties more effectively alongside their work commitments. They expressed gratitude and appreciation for the help they have been receiving.





In Luzon, two of three participants (2/3) reported sharing parenting responsibilities with family and household helpers. This was noted by all in Visayas (3/3) and Mindanao (4/4). Overall, reliance on support helped Filipino online ESL teachers balance their roles, highlighting the collaborative nature of their parenting.

Carrying Out Different Parenting Styles. These encompass how parents nurture and raise their children in different approaches and ways. The participants expressed.

"I'm the type of mom who would always want to give anything that I never had when I was a child. I'd like to be very affectionate to my children."-LT03.

"I'm a little strict. I've already figured out my child's behavior, so even now, I'm looking for ways to handle it. But I'm also very sweet to my baby." -VT06.

"For me, it's just about providing money to buy what they need, like milk and food." -MT08.

The researcher observed that these teacher-parents were very intentional in how they raise their children. They strive to balance care and discipline. A few prioritize financial support, ensuring basic needs like food and milk are met. Their parenting styles reflect a mix of emotional, disciplinary, and practical strategies shaped by their personal experiences and hopes for their children.

In Luzon, all participants (3/3) used varied parenting styles. In Visayas, two did, one didn't. In Mindanao, only one did. Overall, diverse parenting was more common in Luzon and Visayas than in Mindanao.

Navigation of Work-Life Balance by Filipino Online ESL Teachers as Teachers and Parents

This focuses on how Filipino online ESL teachers manage both their teaching duties and parenting responsibilities.

Maintaining a Consistent Teaching Schedule. It pertains to how the participants create steady teaching schedules that allow them to dedicate quality time to loved ones. The participants stated.

"I plan my schedule. On weekdays, from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m., but sometimes it extends to 3 a.m. But on weekends, it's fixed from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. to have time for my family." -LT02.

"Saturday and Sunday are for family. I have 18 slots, 9 hours a day, Monday to Friday." -VT04.

"The busiest time for me here at home with the family is every morning, so from morning to afternoon, I really have no work. I have set it so that I don't have classes during that time." -MT08.

As confirmed by the spouse, the main participant has returned to a regular weekday schedule, which has given the participant more time to spend with the family. Participants stressed the importance of a consistent, well-planned work schedule to ensure quality time with their families, especially their children.

Maintaining a consistent teaching schedule was a key strategy among all participants across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Teachers emphasized predictable routines to balance work and family duties.

Utilizing a Flexible Work Schedule. This means that teachers take advantage of the freedom to choose when to work. The participants shared.

"When I feel burned out, I always inform my boss and my admin, saying, 'Boss, I need to breathe.' I step out, take a break, and cancel my class." -LT02

"Whenever I don't have a student yet or the student is late, I really make time to check my kids out."-VT04.

"If I have a vacant time and there are also special occasions, I automatically have my slots closed." -MT07.

The spouse noted that the participant manages everything well and still spends time with the children during short breaks between classes. The participants expressed that flexible scheduling empowers them to remain productive while balancing work and family priorities.

Two of three participants in Luzon (2/3) and in Visayas (2/3), along with three of four in Mindanao (3/4), made use of the advantages of a flexible work schedule. The remaining participants in each region did not mention this practice.

Setting Boundaries Between Work and Family. This refers to the ways teacher-parents establish clear distinctions between their dual roles. The participants stated.





"With the help of my mom, since my mom is here, she really takes care of the kids, and mostly she's the one doing things now because I said, 'Mom, I can't do it because I need to work.'" -LT02

"On weekdays, I try to make my child understand, even though he's not yet 2 years old, that when I'm in front of my laptop, I can't hold him or play with him." -VT05.

"Even if I'm working, I'm not really disturbed because someone is taking care of him, as long as there is milk." -MT09.

The researcher observed that many teachers taught in quiet rooms, free from interruptions. This reflected their effort to separate work from family time, with children cared for elsewhere. ESL teacher-parents emphasized the importance of maintaining such boundaries to stay focused.

Setting boundaries between work and family was noted by two of three participants in both Luzon (2/3) and Visayas (2/3), and by two of four in Mindanao (2/4). Overall, boundary-setting was key to maintaining balance.

Challenges Filipino Online ESL Teachers Experience in Managing Work-Life Balance

This category is about the difficulties Filipino online ESL teachers encounter in balancing their dual responsibilities.

Child-Related Emergencies and Interruptions. This refers to sudden situations involving a child's health or behavior that disrupt work commitments. The participants stated.

"It's only when they get sick that my mind gets confused about what to choose. When the kids are sick or feeling something, my mom can't handle it alone; sometimes I also need to be there." -LT02

"My child had an ear infection and really wouldn't stop crying, and my mom also wasn't feeling well, so I had to cancel class. And when you're at home, your child is always there and most of the time wants to cling to you." -VT05.

"It's really exhausting because you have to carry the baby since she doesn't want to be held by her dad. You carry her while teaching, rocking her with your foot just to keep her quiet during class." -MT08.

When the participants' children are ill, they become overwhelmed, causing them to prioritize their children over work. The participants' statements indicate that Filipino ESL teacher-parents struggle when their children have emergencies or simply need their mother's attention during teaching hours.

Child-related emergencies and interruptions affected two of three participants in Luzon (2/3), two in Visayas (2/3), and three in Mindanao (3/4), making it a common challenge across regions. These unexpected disruptions during class affected their focus and professionalism.

Reduced Personal Time and Freedom. This means having very limited free time because of dual roles. The participants noted.

"When it comes to traveling, I can't just go if, for example, a friend suddenly invites me. Not anymore. They went to Vietnam recently, but I couldn't come because I have to consider my baby." -LT01.

"I used to work out, but now that I'm a mom, not anymore." -VT06

"Traveling this time would be very difficult for me. I work more compared to enjoying other things now." -MT09

As affirmed by a co-worker, the participants can no longer travel freely due to the very limited time. The participants' statements revealed that ESL teacher-parents experience a major reduction in personal time and freedom after becoming parents. This shift highlights the difficulty faced by the participants.

Reduced personal time and freedom due to work and family demands was noted by two of three participants in Luzon (2/3), one in Visayas (1/3), and two in Mindanao (2/4). Constantly shifting roles left little room for rest or self-care, especially in Luzon and Mindanao.

Emotional Strain from Dual Responsibilities. This describes the stress and emotional difficulty of trying to focus on two important tasks at once. The participants shared.

"I feel guilty as a mom because I don't have much time for my baby since I'm working, as if I'm not properly taking care of my child." -LT01.





"When it comes to work, when I'm at work, I'm really useless. I can't really help. I also feel bad for my students; I'm always there. I know my students so well; I help them a lot. That's one of the biggest struggles for me is not being there for my own kids." -VT04.

"I think about my child, then my student only has that available time, so I get confused and also feel sorry for the student." -MT08.

The spouses confirmed that the participants feel regretful about not being able to attend to their children due to work demands. The researcher observed the teachers' feelings of guilt over balancing time between children and students. The participants emphasized that they worry about neglecting both their children and their students.

Emotional strain from divided attention between dual responsibilities was noted by two of three participants in Luzon (2/3), one in Visayas (1/3), and two in Mindanao (2/4).

Extended Working Hours for Financial Needs. This means working extra time to earn enough money, often causing less time for rest or family. The participants reported.

"We have a house being built, so I really work more because I need to finish it." -LT01.

"I would need to choose to work more because I need money for my family." -MT09.

The researcher found that participants spent long hours in classes throughout the day to meet financial responsibilities. The participants expressed that they work extended hours mainly because of financial needs, and days off and personal time are mostly compromised.

Extended working hours driven by financial needs were noted by two of three participants in Luzon (2/3) and one in Mindanao (1/4), while no participants in Visayas mentioned this challenge.

Internet and Power Disruptions. This refers to losing internet or power during work, which interrupts productivity, causes stress, and may lead to penalties. The participants expressed.

"Power interruptions are really a problem for me." -LT02

"There's always an emergency with electricity and internet, and there's a big deduction when I tag myself absent." -MT10

The co-worker confirmed that when there is no electricity or the internet goes out, the teachers struggle to continue teaching. The participants described how frequent internet and power outages disrupt their work, making it hard to conduct classes.

Internet and power disruptions were raised in Luzon (1/3) and Mindanao (2/4). While not as prominently mentioned in the Visayas, this challenge remains a serious barrier to reliable teaching performance in other areas.

Sleep Deprivation. This is about not getting enough sleep, often because of work schedules or family duties, leading to tiredness.

"Speaking of struggles, working the graveyard shift, sometimes the kids have programs at school. So, when there are programs, you have to wake up early. I don't want to just send the nanny; I want to be there to support. So, I only get about 3 hours of sleep." -VT04.

As confirmed by the spouse, the participant sacrifices sleep to manage conflicts between work and family commitments. The participant shared how working the night shift makes it hard to get enough sleep, especially when needing to wake up early for their children's school events.

Sleep deprivation was reported as a significant issue, though notably discussed only by a teacher in the Visayas. The mention of sleep deprivation, even if limited, signals a potential area of concern.

Filipino Online ESL Teachers' Ways of Addressing Challenges in Managing Work-Life Balance

It describes how Filipino online ESL teachers manage difficulties in keeping their job and personal time balanced.

Seeking Emotional Support. This refers to sharing your feelings with your partner and those close to you to get comfort and encouragement. The participants stated.

"For me, it helped that my husband always tells me you're a good mom. Don't think that just because you work, you don't take care of your children." -LT02

"I also have two sisters who help, which lightens the feeling and stress, and the baby's dad is involved too, but only every weekend." -VT06.





"I am very thankful that my partner is very supportive. Even when I have problems or feel stressed, I don't always need to say it out loud because he naturally takes action on his part. One of my main ways of coping when stressed is to talk to my husband." -MT09.

The researcher observed how loved and supported the participants were by their husbands and family members. According to the spouse, he brings the participant snacks, coffee, or words of encouragement on difficult workdays. His statement confirmed the crucial role of emotional support in helping the participant manage work-related stress.

Seeking emotional support was a prevalent coping strategy, identified by all participants in Luzon (3/3), the majority in Visayas (2/3), and most in Mindanao (3/4), for a total of 8 out of 10 participants.

Planning Personal, Family, and Social Time. This refers to organizing your time well so you can enjoy important moments not only with your family and close friends but also with yourself. The participants shared.

"I have a lot of friends actually, so whenever I ask them to go out, I just ask their availability so we can match, then we usually meet every month or twice a month." -LT01.

"This year, it's fixed, Saturday and Sunday are for family. It really feels different. I feel more motivated, more recharged, and the burnout is much less. It made me happier and gave me more time with my family." -VT04.

"I've set that I don't like to work during these hours because it's family time. I can take advantage of it since the time is flexible." -MT08.

As affirmed by the spouse and co-worker, the participants carefully plan their personal, family, and social time to balance work and family demands. The participants shared that organizing their time well helps them spend good moments with family and friends, even if they are busy.

Teachers in Luzon (2/3), Visayas (3/3), and Mindanao (2/4) highlighted careful planning of personal, family, and social time as a key strategy for maintaining balance.

Handling Child-Related Emergencies and Interruptions. This refers to promptly communicating with management or directly with private ESL clients to explain the need for class cancellations or to politely inform them if your child's presence may cause interruptions during the lesson. The participants stated.

"If I cancel classes, I make sure to explain it to the management." -LT03

"Sometimes, my baby can really be heard, so I really apologize and say, 'I'm sorry because my baby is here.'" -VT06

"In unexpected events like emergencies or situations involving the child while we have booked classes, I tell them, and so far, I've been quite lucky because most of the parents of the students I'm handling now are very understanding." -MT07

From the teachers' statements, it is evident that they prioritize clear and timely communication with management or clients when child-related emergencies occur, which highlights the importance of honest communication and mutual respect in managing child-related challenges during work

This approach was noted in Luzon (2/3), Visayas (2/3), and Mindanao (2/4), reflecting a consistent strategy among teachers across all three island groups.

Using Backups and Adjusting Work Schedules. This means teachers use backups and reschedule classes whenever there are power and internet outages. The participants stated.

"I really try to find a way, for example, if there's a power interruption or an emergency, I make sure to talk to them, like, 'Miss, can we reschedule this?' but I don't cancel it right away." -LT02.

"My backups are already complete. So having backups, I don't really cancel that much anymore." -VT04.

"I can just reschedule; you just have to talk to your students. They're also okay with it. When they're the ones who aren't available at that time, they're the ones who inform me." -MT08.

The participants reported using backups and rescheduling classes during power or internet interruptions. One spouse confirmed that the participant had completed all necessary backups, resulting in fewer problems. These statements show how teachers manage interruptions effectively.





Using backups and adjusting work schedules was practiced by one of three participants in Luzon (1/3), two of three in Visayas (2/3), and one of four in Mindanao (1/4), totaling 4 of 10 participants.

Budgeting Finances. It refers to setting a plan on how to use one's income to cover needs, save for goals, and manage daily expenses. One participant shared.

"I don't conduct classes that much. I set a budget for the month. I save part of my salary for that, then we set a budget. I prioritize our needs, especially food and the kids' needs. So, if there's any extra, that's when we take it for our wants." -MT10.

The researcher observed how carefully one participant talked about budgeting earnings. The participant made sure to prioritize important needs and handled finances with great responsibility.

Budgeting finances was mentioned only in Mindanao (2/4). Though not a dominant sub-category in all major islands, this reveals an important underlying factor as a means to achieve a healthier work-life balance.

Optimizing Available Rest Time. This pertains to making the best use of any free moments to rest or sleep. One participant shared.

"If I didn't sleep well because I accompanied my child to school, I just came home since I still have time to sleep again to make up for it." -LT04.

The spouse confirmed that the participant uses short periods to take naps and recover from sleep deprivation. The participant demonstrated the practice of using available time efficiently to rest and regain energy.

Optimizing available rest time was uniquely mentioned in the Visayas (1/3).

Motivations of Filipino Online ESL Teacher-Parents to Continue Teaching

It refers to the reasons, drives, or personal factors that encourage Filipino online ESL teachers-parents to continue teaching.

Family. It signifies the motivation to commit to work driven by the need to support loved ones and create a better and brighter future for them. The participants stated.

"Of course, my family" -LT03

"My son, he's my number one motivation." -VT05

"It's my children and also my mom and dad who motivate me." -MT10

The researcher observed that the participants smiled as they showed their kids' photos and spoke with joy, clearly showing how their families inspire them to keep teaching. They are fueled to keep going because they have their own families who inspire them each day. Their families encourage them to continue working online.

Family consistently emerged as a motivator, noted by all participants in Luzon (3/3), Visayas (3/3), and Mindanao (4/4), making it the strongest and most universal factor across all major islands.

Earning Opportunities. Online ESL teachers are usually paid per class; some companies also give bonuses and incentives based on specific qualifications. The participants shared.

"I won't lie, of course, it's always the money." - LT01

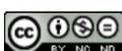
"The pay, of course, is the most important thing. We really prefer jobs that pay more." - VT05

"What's the purpose of why you're working? To earn money. We've got different ways on how to use it." -MT09

A co-worker confirmed that the participants are highly motivated to continue working due to satisfactory earnings. The participants view their work as an important source of income that helps meet their financial needs.

Across Luzon (3/3), Visayas (3/3), and Mindanao (4/4), earning opportunities were viewed not only as financial gain but also as a necessity to meet daily needs and long-term goals.

Flexible Teaching Hours. This means that teachers can choose or adjust their work times to fit their personal and family needs. The participants shared.





"It's convenient because it's at home, especially since I'm a lazy person. I hate waking up early, traveling, and preparing to get to work. It's just about being comfy and choosing the easier way. No more traffic, and you can manage your schedule." -VT04.

"With the schedule, in ESL, where if you choose mornings, it's always mornings; if you choose nights, it's always nights. Plus, you can choose your day off." -MT07

The researcher observed that participants found flexible teaching hours convenient for balancing work and family needs. Both a co-worker and the spouse confirmed that this flexibility provides more free time and positively motivates them.

Flexible teaching hours were valued by two of three participants in the Visayas (2/3) and three of four in Mindanao (3/4). Although not mentioned in Luzon cases, its presence in other major islands suggests its growing significance in work-life decisions.

Personal and Professional Fulfillment. This refers to the satisfaction participants feel as both parents and teachers. The participants shared.

"This gives me a sense of purpose. It helps me heal while I continue my ESL journey and career; I heal while teaching, I notice that. Talking, teaching, expressing myself, that's what really motivates me every day. I shift my attention to more fruitful things, not to just wallowing." -LT02.

"It's very fulfilling when you see your students improving. I had a student before whose English was really zero, but now he can converse with me well. The fulfillment I feel when I teach well, when I see them happy and learning, when you see their progress, and of course, when their parents say thank you and tell you that you're a very good teacher." -VT05

The participants felt deep satisfaction in achieving personal goals, overcoming challenges, and seeing their students grow while building meaningful connections. Receiving praise and appreciation made their hard work and efforts feel worthwhile.

Personal and professional fulfillment was highlighted by two of three participants in Luzon (2/3), two of three in Visayas (2/3), and one of four in Mindanao (1/4). Teaching provided them not only income but also a sense of identity, purpose, and pride.

Discussion

Filipino online ESL teachers demonstrate dedication and passion for teaching, apply varied teaching strategies to foster student engagement, and manage diverse student behavior as key ways of fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Teachers are therefore described as individuals with grit and passion who tirelessly fulfill their responsibilities (Baraquia, 2020). Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory helps explain how maintaining balance between work and personal life enables teachers to sustain motivation, adapt strategies to meet learners' needs, and address diverse student behaviors effectively. Teachers who achieve this balance can focus on creating a supportive and engaging learning environment, which promotes both student success and their own professional satisfaction. Even though these teachers often work independently, educational leaders can support the profession by promoting continuous professional development focused on these strengths. Doing so helps sustain high teaching performance and ensures quality instruction in remote or hybrid learning settings.

Maximizing quality time with children, sharing caregiving responsibilities, and carrying out different parenting styles are the main ways Filipino online ESL teachers fulfill their parental roles. Parenting, broadly defined, encompasses all actions that support a child's development, from meeting basic needs to guiding emotional and cognitive growth (Doepke et al., 2019). Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory offers valuable insight into how individuals juggle the competing demands of work and family life, helping to explain how these teachers thoughtfully balance their roles. Parenting, in this context, goes beyond simply being physically present; it requires dedicating meaningful moments to their children, coordinating caregiving with family members or helpers, and adapting approaches to meet unique needs.





These practices reflect the dynamic and intentional effort required to nurture a supportive home environment while managing professional responsibilities. Recognizing this dual commitment highlights the importance of supportive organizational policies and community structures that acknowledge teachers' caregiving roles, promote flexibility, and reduce work-life conflict, ultimately strengthening both family well-being and teaching performance.

Filipino online ESL teachers manage the demands of teaching and parenting by keeping consistent schedules, making use of flexible work hours, and setting boundaries between home and work. These practices reflect deliberate efforts to organize time and energy so that family responsibilities are not overshadowed by professional duties. These approaches demonstrate a combination of effective time management and boundary-setting, with time management involving planning, organizing, regulating, and monitoring productivity to maintain harmony between professional and personal responsibilities (Ghafar, 2023). Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory helps explain this approach, emphasizing that balance is not only about dividing hours but about aligning both roles with personal values and goals. By planning steady routines, adjusting workloads when needed, and separating workspaces and family spaces, teacher-parents minimize role conflict and preserve harmony across domains. For educational management, these experiences show the importance of creating supportive systems for remote or hybrid teaching. Simple steps such as allowing flexible schedules, offering wellness support, and guiding teachers on how to manage time and boundaries can help them succeed in both family and work roles, strengthening well-being at home and performance in the classroom.

Managing work-family balance presents several challenges, including child-related emergencies, reduced personal time and freedom, emotional strain from divided attention, extended working hours for financial needs, internet and power disruptions, and sleep deprivation from late schedules and family duties. These difficulties make it harder for teachers to focus, rest, and sustain both roles, often leading to stress and feelings of guilt. The pressure of divided attention also causes emotional strain, leaving teachers feeling overwhelmed and inadequate in both roles (Eason et al., 2021). Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory explains these struggles as time-based conflict when caregiving interrupts teaching, strain-based conflict when stress reduces energy at home, and behavior-based conflict when divided attention reduces effectiveness. In educational management, understanding these challenges highlights the need for systems that support teacher wellness. Online ESL companies and schools offering hybrid or remote teaching can provide backup support during emergencies, access to mental health services, and fair workload expectations. Encouraging peer support and open communication among teachers can create a healthier and more understanding work environment, helping them manage both family and professional responsibilities.

Teachers manage the challenges of balancing work and family through strategies such as seeking emotional support from partners and family, carefully planning personal, family, and social time, handling child-related emergencies responsibly, adjusting work schedules and using backups, budgeting finances, and optimizing available rest. These approaches highlight that overall well-being is essential for sustaining both personal and professional responsibilities (Tual & Omandam, 2023). In line with Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory, this demonstrates that teachers actively engage in role management to reduce work-family conflict and seek enrichment, implementing personal and environmental adjustments to maintain performance across domains. By planning their time, seeking support, and using coping mechanisms like backup routines and shared caregiving, they are not simply reacting to challenges but intentionally managing the link between their work and family responsibilities. For educational management, these practices highlight the importance of helping teachers build resilience and problem-solving skills. Leaders can support teacher-parents by encouraging the sharing of practical strategies, providing mentoring, and connecting educators through online communities to foster emotional support, reduce burnout, and make remote teaching more sustainable.

Family priorities, earning opportunities, flexible teaching hours, and personal and professional fulfillment are key motivations for Filipino online ESL teachers to continue teaching. Finding purpose in work has also been shown to lead to greater satisfaction (Weston et al., 2021), which aligns with teachers' experiences of fulfillment in their profession. In line with Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance Theory, these motivations illustrate how work-family enrichment enhances both teaching and parenting roles. Teachers derive emotional, financial, and professional satisfaction from their dual roles,



with flexible teaching schedules supporting parenting duties, while experiences as parents strengthen patience, empathy, and communication that improve teaching. This mutual reinforcement shows how positive experiences in one domain can enhance performance and satisfaction in the other, fostering higher engagement and motivation. Educational leaders may consider how flexible scheduling, fair compensation, and opportunities for personal and professional growth can be adapted into remote or hybrid teaching models. In the teaching profession, recognizing how fulfillment, family time, and purpose impact motivation should inspire schools to develop more approaches to sustain teacher engagement and long-term commitment.

This study has several limitations that may affect the transferability of its findings. The participants consisted of ten female Filipino online ESL teachers, which may not reflect the experiences of male teachers or those in other teaching contexts. Although participants were selected from the three major island groups, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, the small number of participants per region may not capture the full diversity of cultural, socioeconomic, or geographic contexts within each area. Data were primarily collected through interviews with the participants, supplemented by insights from spouses and co-workers, but reliance on self-reports may still introduce subjectivity. Despite these limitations, the findings offer meaningful insights into the experiences of ESL teacher-parents and their strategies for navigating work and family responsibilities, while acknowledging that the results may not be directly generalizable to other populations or settings.

Knowledge Contribution

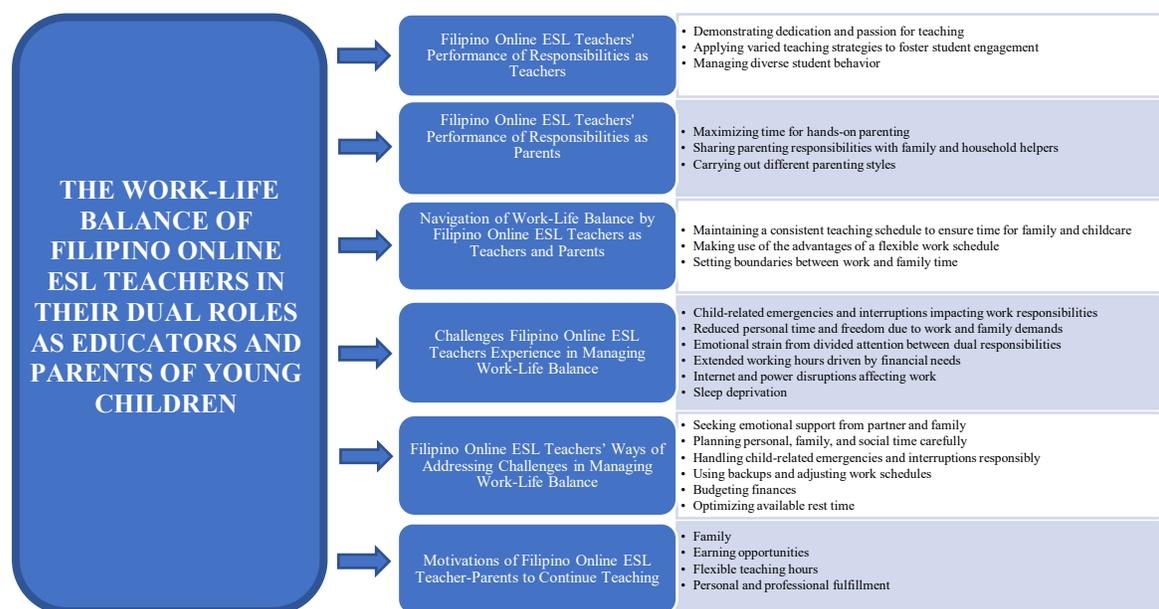


Figure 2: *Work-Life Balance of Filipino Online ESL Teacher-Parents*

Figure 2 presents the main findings on Filipino online ESL teacher-parents' experiences in balancing teaching and parenting roles. Teachers demonstrated dedication and passion, applied varied strategies to engage learners, and managed diverse student behaviors, while also maximizing hands-on parenting, sharing responsibilities at home, and employing different parenting styles. Navigating work-life balance involved maintaining consistent schedules, utilizing flexible work hours, and setting boundaries between work and family time. Teachers faced challenges such as child-related interruptions, reduced personal time, emotional strain, extended working hours, internet and power disruptions, and sleep



deprivation, which they addressed through emotional support, careful planning, adjusted schedules, financial management, and optimized rest. Motivations to continue teaching were driven by family, earning opportunities, flexible teaching hours, and personal and professional fulfillment, which collectively reinforced their engagement and performance in both professional and parenting roles.

Conclusion

From the findings, it was concluded that Filipino online ESL teacher-parents managed their dual roles through dedication to teaching, the use of varied teaching strategies to engage learners, and the ability to handle diverse student behavior. As parents, they maximized time for childcare, shared responsibilities with family or helpers, and practiced different parenting styles. Work–life balance was maintained by following consistent schedules, using flexible hours, and setting clear boundaries between work and family. However, they faced child-related emergencies, reduced personal time, emotional strain, long work hours, internet and power disruptions, and sleep deprivation. To address these, they sought emotional support, planned their time carefully, handled emergencies responsibly, used backup plans, budgeted finances, and optimized rest. Their motivation was drawn from family, income opportunities, flexible schedules, and personal as well as professional fulfillment. These findings were consistent with Greenhaus and Allen’s (2011) Work–Family Balance Theory, which highlighted that balance is achieved when individuals meet the demands of both work and family roles, showing that teacher-parents actively pursued strategies to sustain equilibrium despite challenges.

Recommendations

ESL companies are encouraged to provide competitive compensation and incentives for all hours worked, including peak and non-standard schedules, to help teacher-parents manage demanding workloads. In addition, ESL companies could develop community platforms and work-life balance training to support teachers in balancing professional and family responsibilities and preventing burnout. Furthermore, teacher-parents could consider setting clear “off-limits” hours and engaging in personal and social activities to maintain well-being, while seeking employment with ESL platforms that offer fairness, flexibility, and supportive systems. To address broader systemic challenges, ESL platforms could establish clear and considerate guidelines for managing class disruptions, such as power outages or internet interruptions, ensuring that any consequences for missed classes are applied fairly and with understanding of teachers’ circumstances. Finally, future researchers may examine comparative studies between ESL teachers who are parents and ESL teachers without parenting responsibilities to better understand the impact of parenting on work-life balance.

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