

( استكشاف تحديات ودوافع الطالبات الجامعيات المتزوجات بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية مسلاته )

Exploring Challenges and Motivations of Female Married Undergraduate Students English

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الملخص :

يسعى هذا البحث "استكشاف تحديات ودوافع الطالبات الجامعيات المتزوجات بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية مسلاته لتحليل المشكلات التي تواجه الطالبات المتزوجات في سعيهن للحصول على شهادة جامعية وهذه التحديات مرتبطة بالدراسة الجامعية وبالمجتمع والثقافة الليبية علاوة على ذلك يسرد أسباب ودوافع هؤلاء الطالبات في رغبتهن في تحصيل التعليم حيث يتم استخدام النسب المئوية لتفسير وتحليل نتائج الاستبيان التي جمعها من هؤلاء الطالبات. أثبتت النتائج أن التحدي الأكبر ينبع من ازدواجية أو تعدد الأدوار التي يؤديها هؤلاء الطالبات وعلى الرغم من هذه العقبات فإن رغبتهن الشديدة في الحصول على درجة العلمية الهتمهم على المتابعة وفي النهاية فإن جودة التصميم والإصرار في مواجهة هذه العقبات هي التي حددت هؤلاء المشاركات على انهن زوجات وامهات وطالبات مسؤولات".

الكلمات المفتاحية: استكشاف، تحديات، ودوافع، الطالبات الجامعيات، المتزوجات،

**Abstract:**

This research on "Exploring the Challenges and Motivations of Female Married Undergraduate Students English Department, Msllata" analyses the problems encountered by the respondents (married students) in their pursuit of a college degree. Such challenges are relative to the family the college and to the Libyan society and culture. Furthermore, it recounts the reasons /motivations of these students in wanting to achieve an education. Frequency counts, percentage and ranks are used to interpret and analyze the results of the survey collected from these respondents. Findings proves that the paramount challenge emanated from the duality or multiplicity of roles that these respondents performed. Nonetheless, despite these obstacles, their desire to obtain a degree has inspired them to persevere. In the end, the quality of determination and persistence in the face of such obstacles has defined these respondents as responsible wives and mothers and students.

**Key words** Challenges, Motivation, Nontraditional student, Undergraduate.

## Introduction

The common notion of the undergraduate years is thought of as a time of self-discovery, exploration and independence but what happens to those values when the college students are married especially female undergraduate students. Marriage is not perceived on individual terms but rather is considered as a partnership in which each member sacrifices some of his or her autonomy (McQuillan, 2005). Adebayo (2006) observed that female married students generally are faced with a number of stressors. These include continuous evaluation, pressure to earn good grades, time pressures, unclear assignments, heavy workload, uncomfortable classrooms, and relationship with family and friends.

Having to study poses challenges for women due to their family responsibilities and several challenges arise when these individuals tend to negotiate the role of university students with their role inside of marriage and the family. These students are usually considered nontraditional students. Nontraditional student is defined as any female student who does not fit the typical schema of a university student. In other words, she is a member of the working -class, has obligations outside of her school work, she has many roles such as mother, wife, caretaker, employee, and finally student; thus to this category belongs the respondents of this research.

According to the National Centre for Education Statistics of the United States America (USA) (Choy, 2002; Horn, 1996), non-traditional students have one or more of the following characteristics; delayed enrolment in college, part time attendance, full-time employment, may have or not have spouses, children and other dependents. Adjusting to an academic setting can be difficult for all students, no matter what stage of life they are in. The rigorous demand of the university -level courses coupled with the patriarchal values of the institution can be overwhelming for even the most studious students. Instructors expect more with less guidance and may seem unapproachable to new students who have questions. Unlike a typical college student who moves from one dependent realm to another, however, non-traditional female students experience dramatic life transitions when entering the higher institution. They often struggle with this transition because they feel insecure in their new role and anxious about the perceived loss of structure in their lives (Haynes -Burton, 2008). Along with possible personal feelings of inadequacy, non-traditional women may feel overwhelmed by their numerous responsibilities which often take precedence over school work. Nonetheless, not all non-traditional women feel uncomfortable entering university. Because of their life experiences, some women feel adequately prepared for university and find themselves contributing more frequently in classroom discussions than their classmates. While traditional students often go to college because their parents expect them to, non-traditional women choose to go to school to improve themselves or their quality of life, and they may exhibit an eagerness to learn that other students do not display. In fact, some women find it empowering to seek higher education while working and sustaining a family, no matter how difficult it may be. Inasmuch as the researchers have members who belong to the nontraditional group, this gave them the impetus to tackle an investigation on the obstacles and reasons why these researchers are still in pursuit of a college degree despite the rigors and difficulties of being a wife - mother - student. From this research, they would attempt to find out the situations of all the nontraditional students particularly the female married students in the English Department of the College of Arts and Sciences.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research focuses on "Exploring the Challenges and Motivations of Female Married Undergraduate Students in the English Department of Messalata". Specifically, this research provides answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges or difficulties that these students encounter while studying?
2. What are the motivations of these married students in their desire to continue their studies and finish a degree?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Married women from time immemorial have been saddled with many family responsibilities and are traditionally assigned many roles including custody of children, maintenance of the home, feeding and preservation of the family health. Thus, married undergraduate students are also expected to perform duties as wife and mother, in addition to fulfilling their academic responsibilities. Within marriages, the strain faced can include, but are not limited to quarrels between spouses, feelings of exhaustion and resentment over inequitable divisions of household labour (McRoy & Fisher, 1982; Pittman, Kerpelmen & Solheim, 2001). Despite stress from academic pursuit, these married students persevere to attain their goal, knowing that in the end, the family as well as they themselves will derive advantages like self fulfillment and recognition within their community.

Hence, this study is anchored on the Exchange Theory. Exchange theory is based on the notion that people are motivated to engage in behavior based on a desire to maximize rewards.

In the context of this research, the female undergraduate married students take on the multiple roles of wife, mother and student with the aim of being rewarded with their goals of self-fulfillment or better acceptance and prestige into the culture they were born into.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will provide invaluable assistance to the following: For the female students in the English Department, this research dealing with marriage and undergraduate studies while

pursuing a career in a male dominated society, will hopefully encourage other female students to enter certain professions suited to their supposed, gender assigned caretaking qualities and to pursue professions where they will be allowed to balance family and career.

For the English Department of Messalata, because of the novelty of this topic, the researcher hope that this study would serve as a substantial source of data and be utilized as a reference for further studies in the same realm of female roles as housewives, mothers and students.

For the students who intend to be married simultaneous with their pursuit of a degree, this research hopes to convey information relative to common challenges met by nontraditional students. However, despite these obstacles, the researcher believes that these learners can be as successful as other students, if they only possess the proper motivation and firm determination to complete their goal.

For the teachers of these nontraditional students, the results of this study could also be an eye opener for them to be more tolerant and understanding of these students and probably substitute other lecture activities with home tasks that can be done in place of missed actual lectures.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Many scholarly works guided the researcher to a deeper understanding of this present study. Among this study and literature where the areas of concern on difficulties of the respondents have been investigated by various researchers. Their motivations for pursuing a degree amidst these obstacles have been investigated as well.

Researcher is studying the academic side of the conflict between school and marriage demands from students have examined how outside influences such as family and work impact academic achievement and retention rates among adult students (Benshoff, 1991; Noel, Levitz & Saluri, 1985).

A recent study by Home reported that the greatest stressors were school-family conflict, low incomes, course work, and children were all factors in role strain in female students (Home, 1992, 1997, 1998; Home & Hinds, 2000). Role strain from increased roles and their demands and from time conflicts was associated with high stress, depression, and anxiety in women students (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Darab, 2004)

A study conducted in the 1970's found that lack of networking ability pose a particular problem for married undergraduates' women students. These women were less able to engage in the after class socializing and networking that allowed their male counterpart to make the connections that would serve to further their career (Feldman, 1973).

Another constrain faced by the married undergraduate female student as revealed in a literature review by Benshoff (1993) is that women expressed guilt over their role as a student, over not being available for their children, over the quality and the expense of childcare, and over compromising their responsibility in the family as well as in the career world.

Along with possible personal feelings of inadequacy, non - traditional women may feel overwhelmed by their numerous responsibilities which often take precedence over school work. The number of hours Americans work each week has increased over the last 20 years, essentially adding an extra month of work to each year. Working mothers, many of whom are also students, work an average of 65 hours per week, including paid work for an employer and unpaid work in the home (Aronson, 1998).

Another study that examined stress in non-traditional students found that returning to school creates significant stress within the student's family and home life (Kohler Giancola, Grawitch & Borchert, 2009). Working-class women may be perceived as moving beyond the social class to which the family belongs, making them outsiders in their own home (Gardner, 1993).

Partners and children of female students may also feel neglected when time is devoted to schoolwork rather than family, causing conflict for the entire family.

In addition to the responsibility of jobs, bills, families, and community obligations, non-traditional women must learn to navigate through a patriarchal institution in which they feel invisible because of their gender, age, or circumstance (Kimmel, 2008).

Another issue for non-traditional students is that the students are parents (Benshoff, 1991). In order to

attend courses; they must first secure reliable childcare which is an additional expense. The issue of childcare is also a particular stumbling block for women trying to re-enter the realm which is why women in graduate schools are often older and less likely to be enrolled fulltime than their non-married counterpart (Van Meter & Agronow, 1982).

Benshoff (1993) cites a study which found that women guilt over the school role is higher for women who have more traditional orientation towards marriage. However another study found that a woman in a marriage based on more traditional marriage expectations will experience less strain if she and her husband are both in agreement that her family role is the primary role (Van Meter & Agronow, 1982).

Some of the challenges that mature women students face include: process of socialization and gender roles; lack of encouragement by spouse; low self-confidence, and the under valuing of the benefits of higher education.

Married students and those responsible for the care of children have family responsibilities before enrolling in higher institution and the responsibilities are not lessened after enrolment. The pressure to provide for families and concentrate on coursework overwhelms some students often laden with a disproportionate burden of household task and caregiver responsibilities when enrolled in university (Carmey-Crompton & Tan, 2002).

Managing multiple roles is a source of stress for female students and parents feel guilty about being unavailable when their children need them, with mothers of children under thirteen reporting the most conflict (Terrel, 1990). Women with older children may persist to graduation; where as those with younger children may interrupt their education to fulfill family responsibilities (Carmey-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Home, 1998). Unsuccessfully managed stress factors may result in premature withdrawal from school (Scott, Burns & Cooney, 1996). Work schedules and family responsibilities prevent most adult student from attending college full time.

Other researchers suggest that conflict management might always be a problem for married female students because the institution of marriage is inherently constraining for women. In his study, Feldman (1973) tried to control for factors that he believed could contribute to role strain such as work and children by comparing married students and their divorced counterparts. He found that although they had similar non-academic obligation divorced women were still more academically successful as graduate students. Although this study was in 1973, it is interesting because it raises the question that perhaps there might be something endemic to the institution of marriage that makes it an academic liability for these women within it. No doubt, combining work commitment, family responsibilities, and school obligations may be very complex and tasking. Ultimately, the struggling and juggling inherent in this may create tension and health - related problems for the individuals' concerned (Ross, Neibling, & Heckert, 1999). When nontraditional female students find time to do schoolwork, they often do not have a quiet, private space in which to do so. Finding adequate time to do homework without interruption was identified as a major challenge student, with family responsibilities, face (Aronson, 1998). The above readings and researches have been utilized to substantiate the sub problems of this investigation relative to the challenges and motivations of female married undergraduate students in the English Department of Messalata.

### **Design and Methodology**

The descriptive survey method was utilized in this investigation. The researcher nominates to employ this method as it is the most suitable method by which they could elicit data from the 24 respondents in the English Department.

From the survey, the researcher believes that they could accumulate substantial and primary data from which their answers to the sub problems would emanate. These opinions and choices of the respondents are paramount to proving the validity of their sub problem areas relative to the challenges and motivations of female undergraduate students in the English Department of the College of Arts and Sciences, Messalata.

### **Population of the Study**

Initially, the researcher is able to identify their prospective respondents by their attire befitting married Libyan women i.e. the traditional black outfit and veil over the face. After assessing their

civil status from their appearance, they had to interview these ladies since not all those wearing such outfits are married; others may just be engaged. After further inquiries about their civil status, the researchers finally came up with a total of 30 students with the following: First year - 3; Second year - 4; Third year - 3 and Fourth year 20: a total of 30 married students. Nonetheless, when the questionnaires are piloted after a week of identifying them, only 24 are available to answer the questionnaires for the survey so the researchers had only the 24 respondents.

### The Questionnaire.

A questionnaire which was the main instrument in this study contained questions which were derived from other studies that the researchers looked into and a few questions from them.

The above instrument is divided into two parts. The first portion contains a letter to the respondents informing them of the title of the research for which the survey is being conducted.

The second part consists of questions on the sub problems namely the challenges and the motivations.

The first sub problem on challenges had 7 questions relative to the family; 7 relative to the college and 3 relative to society.

The second sub problem enumerated 7 possible reasons for these respondents who are seeking to finish a degree.

The respondents are required to rank/rate in the order of their perception which among the given choices were the obstacles/reasons they felt were most significant to them with 1 signifying the most challenging/ primary motivation while 7 or 3 as the least difficult or last reason for the choice.

### Analysis of Findings

This section contains data from the survey conducts relative to the following sub problems:

1. What are the challenges or difficulties that these students encounter while studying?
2. What are the motivations of these married students in their desire to continue their studies and finish a degree?

Married students experience problems with role overload, time management, isolation from fellow students and faculty, and decreased marital communication, sexual gratification, and leisure time...and guilt over "abandoning" children, and conflict about societal expectations of the good spouse/mother (Gall, 1996).

In her book entitled "Juggling," Crosby (1991) describes how a working mother experiences great conflict and guilt in her attempts at being superwoman. Indeed, when both employee and wife are statuses that women are expected to achieve and value, such feelings are bound to exist. Crosby (1991) asked her respondents if they felt that being a woman affected how they balanced their careers and private lives compared to most men doing comparable work. Three-quarters of them answered yes and explained that they were always tired and felt as if they were unable to put forth enough effort to excel or even do well at anything.

### Challenges Encountered Relative to the Family

In Table 1, the 24 respondents ranked the difficulties they face as married undergraduate students. From the table, one can see that among the seven areas given for choices, the respondents revealed that "spending less time with their husbands" posed the most challenges. This was rated as the primary difficulty to / and in their studies. This was followed by "

**Table 1**  
**Challenges Encountered in the Family.**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Spending less quality time	5	20.83%	3
2. Spending less time with relatives	1	4.16%	6

3. Spending less quality time with	7	29.16%	1
4. Difficulty meeting family and	2	8.33%	5
5. My extended family members	6	25.00%	2
6. Too much chores in the household.	3	12.50%	4
7. No available family member to	0	0%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	99.98%	28

no support from their family members", spending less time with the children", "too many chores in the household", "difficulty meeting family and study commitments", "spending less time with relatives" as the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth difficulty in that order. No one indicated that "no available family to bring me to the college" was a problem.

The data in Table 1 indicates that one third of these married Libyan women recognize that their prime role as wife is of paramount concern. Spending early hours away from their homes/houses in order to attend their daily morning lectures can truly be a source of concern, given that they are Muslim women. Being fully aware of their duties the moment they have entered this state of life, students are deeply bothered by being away from their family particularly their husbands.

This is the initial anxiety these respondents noted because they have been made fully aware of their duties as wives, prior to their marriage.

*En.islamtoday.net*. enumerates the wife's duties to her husband as follows: obedience: not to leave the house unless the husband permits; to refrain from fasting voluntarily unless she has permission; not to let anyone into the house unless he permits it; to guard his property and to run the house in a reasonable fashion. Being aware of these responsibilities as a wife somehow makes majority of these respondents feel that it is the most challenging hurdle. These respondents believe that a wife needs to dutifully do all these aforementioned obligations.

Another survey conducted by Zain in 1991 did not explicitly state that the wife should devote fulltime attention and service to her husband. Nonetheless, the survey stated that in most Muslim countries, 20 out of the 23 areas revealed that half of the wives agree to obey and give priority to their husbands. This is true to the Muslim wives in South Asia and Southeast Asia. The same results were seen in the survey in the Middle East, North Africa and across Central Asia. In Europe, 9 out of 10 wives hold this view of obeying and prioritizing the husband. "My extended family members (including husband)" do not offer support" was ranked as the second factor causing difficulty to these married undergraduates and almost one fourth of the respondents claimed it to be so.

The Libyan setting depicts the family as closely knit where married children, particularly the males, construct their houses beside their parents' homes if not have an additional structure in the same building. Such being the case, these married students at times mingle with their in-laws who may not be supportive of the idea that women should leave their homes when they are married. This could interfere with the students' desires to pursue an education since altercations regarding leaving the home might ensue. Hence, these respondents are constrained from attending lectures regularly for fear that this might cause family disagreements.

According to Western Journal of Medicine (2000) the traditional Muslim family is extended, often spanning 3 or more generations. An extended structure offers many advantages, including stability, coherence, and physical and psychological support, particularly in times of need. traditional Muslim family is extended, often spanning 3 or more generations. An extended structure offers many advantages, including stability, coherence, and physical and psychological support, particularly in times of need.

In Muslim culture, akin to other traditional cultures, respect and esteem increase with age. Elderly parents are respected on account of their life experiences and their hierarchic position within the

family unit. The opportunity to attend to the needs of one's parents in their later years is viewed as a gift from Allah.

In practice, it is usual for a new bride to move into the household of her husband. The change is often considerable, and problems in the fledgling relationship between the bride and her in-laws are common. This transition is all the more difficult where these newly married women are students like the respondents in this study. "Spending less time with children" was rated as the third root cause for difficulty in completing a degree since twenty percent of the respondents believed it to be so.

Regardless of culture, a child is the bond between a husband and a wife. A child's role in the family is to love and to be loved since they complete a family. The child's needs to be raised by loving parents into an adult with a bright future is the primordial duty of parents.

The respondents are in full recognition of the above statements. They ascertain that they have a great responsibility to their children by way of their physical presence. Some of the respondents have children who are infants, others have toddlers and they expressed their ardent desire to be with them throughout the day; yet their desire to complete their studies have compelled them to seek the assistance of their mothers or mothers-in-law.

In the internet article on Roles of Parents and Children by Christine Huda Dodge, she explained that Muslim children learn early on that each person has his or her duties and responsibilities.

It is the children's responsibility to listen to and obey their parents, recognizing their experience and wisdom. On the other hand, it is expected that Muslim children treat their parents with kindness and respect their authority. Muslim parents are not loose disciplinarians, but they are advised that children should be treated according to their nature and in accordance with their level of understanding.

Muslim parents, in turn, have a responsibility to care for their children physically and emotionally. Parents provide support, guidance, and structure in a child's life. It is worth noting the origin of the word "discipline" in English. Stemming from the word "disciple," it means a follower, or a devoted learner. An equivalent word in Arabic would be *tarbiyyah*, which means "cultivation" or "growth." The goal for Muslim parents, as indeed for most parents, is to cultivate to grow into self-disciplined, independent people one day.

Being Muslim mothers then, inadequate time with the child somehow gives them a feeling of guilt. The fourth area of concern for the respondents is "too many chores in the household".

To the respondents, the family is central to their existence i.e. the husband and the children they have. Nonetheless as mentioned earlier, they have to "juggle" between the wife-mother role and in addition - the student role. Doing so amidst school as well as house chores causes them anxiety in their schooling. It is noteworthy at this point that only twelve percent (3 respondents) out of the 24 the married students stated that they are saddled with this problem. On account of this, the researchers believe that the 21 other respondents have readily accepted the fact that upon entering this married state of life, these married students are resigned to the reality that they ought to be ready to handle multiple responsibilities. Perhaps, those who did not consider this area as a barrier in/to their studies have either learned to manage their time, have no children at this point or have other means to finish the house work like perhaps a relative or another family member.

An internet website, [www.al-islam.org](http://www.al-islam.org), dealing with "Principles of Marriage and Family Ethics", corroborates the preparedness of Muslim wives to favorably conform to the roles of a wife in the family. The researchers are convinced that the following excerpts have made the area on "too many household chores" NOT as a burden to majority of the respondents.

The remaining difficulties that have been regarded as least burdensome are "difficulty meeting family and study commitments" and "spending less time with relatives and sharing the social life". Once more, summing up the two areas revealed that these difficulties are not significant as sources of concern. This is based on the belief that the family is nuclear with the father, the mother and child/children comprising it.

Although family ties in Muslim countries particularly in Libya, are extended to second and third generations (Western Journal of Medicine,2000), these difficulties hardly bothered a few respondents.

Lastly, noticeable from Table 1 is that not one among the 24 respondents rated "No available family member to bring me to the college" as a challenging area. This goes to prove the fact that Muslim families - both nuclear or extended, willingly assist their family members in any situation where their support is needed.

The researchers and even the respondents confirm that if their family members (husband, father, brother, relative) are not available, they charter a "bus" together with other students from the place. To the bus driver, they pay a certain sum of money for the duration of one month.

### Challenges Encountered Relative to the College

Table 2 presents the difficulties faced by the 24 respondents in the English Department.

Their challenges in the college are presented in the order of their difficulty from their point of view i.e. from the most challenging area/difficulty to the least area of difficulty. They are as follow: the foremost concern is the "presence of stringent college policies "followed by " the college is too overcrowded"; "lack of qualified counselors to help with student issues" as the third area to hurdle with; "too many courses and assignment";

**Table 2**  
**Challenges Encountered in the College.**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Too many courses and assignments per semester and inflexible deadlines.	3	12.5%	4
2. Lack of facilities on camps:(e.g. child care nursery, lounge, study area)	1	4.16%	6
3. College Policies: strict attendance, too many subject matter. Difficult time table, maternity leave)	7	29.16%	1
4. Lack of qualified counselors to help with student issues.	5	20.83%	2
5. Learning in a foreign language poses problems.	2	8.33%	5
6. College faculty are inconsiderate regarding family situations and conditions.	2	8.33%	5
7. The college is too overcrowded and not conducive to learning.	4	16.66%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	99.97%	26

college faculty are inconsiderate"; "Learning in a foreign language poses a facilities on campus" as the fourth, fifth and sixth and seventh challenges.

As earlier mentioned, for these married students, attending lectures in the early hours and leaving behind their responsibilities as wives and mothers poses the first problematic area to these students. On account of being married, their responsibilities to their family come as a priority at the expense of their regular attendance in lectures. As a result, they would rather stay away from regular lectures than leave their duties to their families.

In short, the same percentage of respondents bothered by neglect of performing one's responsibilities towards the husband is the same percentage worried over college policies, in particular, regular attendance at lectures. They are aware that their presence during lectures is part of their marks; nonetheless, many times, they are willing to forego of these and just go to the college when examination days are scheduled.



The married researchers themselves meet this difficulty since one of them has a three month old baby to this date. In the course of the discussion, she mentioned that living in Tripoli makes it impossible to be regular with her attendance. If she needs to come, she brings along her baby and leaves her child in her mother's house somewhere near the college. Another member is pregnant and likewise finds it difficult to be sitting for long hours (3 lectures in a day. Hence, attendance is truly a predicament to them. They believe that family, especially children, needed to come first, and their student obligations were met only after all other responsibilities were completed.

*As a mother I am trying my best. As a wife I feel guilty because I had to ignore husband most of the time, but I believe if the husband is supporting and understanding there will be no problems. I also feel guilty for my son who is in KGd and needs my support (International Journal of Education and Research Vol. 2 No. 1 January 2014).*

The above statement was quoted from one Emirati married student when she was interviewed regarding her multiple roles. This and varied sources affirm the conflicting roles these respondents meet.

Besides long hours of lectures, too many subjects and subject matter was a source of concern for the respondents. In the aforementioned statements, the respondents' priority was their families which explains their frequent absences in and from lectures.

Given that they are on maternity leave, their month long leave or more days out of the college poses another challenge with regard to lecture sheets and subject matter. Following the birth of a child, students are allowed two weeks maternity leave and this was considered too short.

Belonging to a department that has limited rooms for lectures posed a second difficulty to the respondents. Thus, "the college is too overcrowded and not conducive to learning" was regarded as the second source of difficulty"

One fourth of the respondents and so are the researcher convinced that a good classroom atmosphere and a pleasant environment contribute to better learning.

A study conducted by Parveen Khan and Mohammad Iqbal Sarhad of Pakistan (2012) revealed that effective teaching and learning was not possible in overcrowded classes and majority of the teachers were facing instructional, discipline, physical and evaluation problems. In order to solve these problems some implementable measures were made which suggested that government should make strict rules and policies regarding optimum students in classrooms and provide sufficient budget to education department for providing better facilities in schools.

Due to inevitable circumstances brought about by conditions in Libya, the College of Arts and Sciences had to relocate in a bigger campus at Shafeen starting Academic year 2014-2015. Because of delayed structural works of the buildings, the English Department was compelled to temporarily hold classes in a limited number of rooms while waiting for the completion of other rooms and buildings.

The school's physical plant has been so confined to a few rooms where lectures are conducted for the students of the English department. This "overcrowding" has affected the respondents in a way since perhaps they would prefer better facilities and services from their college.

"Lack of qualified counselors to help them" was rated fourth and twenty percent of the respondents admitted that they hope to have qualified counselors.

This is one of the Student Services that is not offered in their College. Perhaps these respondents need some advice from other individuals aside from their family, particularly in matters concerning the college or other college related obstacles. At times, they might have wanted to consult with counselors to solve their personal issues but could not find one.

In a study on "Perspectives of Emirati Married Students" 20.83% strongly agreed they needed qualified counselors to assist them solve issues of regarding marital problems and the like.

The study cited that there are the college staff who are capable of understanding the home circumstances and family obligations of the married students or offer counseling services.

Hiring competent counselors who understand the culture is essential for the provision of appropriate

counseling services to all students and specifically when dealing with issues related to married students.

Along with "too many subjects course requirements and assignments per semester and inflexible deadlines", twelve percent of the respondents rated this as the fourth challenging/difficult factor during their stay in college.

Due to their conflicting and multiple roles, they are left with no choice but to set aside school requirements and prioritize family obligations. The number of subjects they have, particularly the respondents with children, is taking too much time from their family time.

This has been confirmed by Carney-Crompton & Tan (2002). Married students and those responsible for the care of children have family responsibilities before enrolling in higher institution and the responsibilities are not lessened after enrolment. The pressure to provide for families and concentrate on coursework overwhelms some students often laden with a disproportionate burden of household task and caregiver responsibilities when enrolled in university.

Two respondents claimed that "College Faculty are inconsiderate regarding family situations" and this was ranked as the sixth difficulty.

Perhaps these respondents were hopeful that their teachers would extend to them "more consideration" than the rest of the students on account of their status and responsibilities in life.

However, the researchers believe that these respondents should have realized from the start what they were getting into i.e. having not only multiple roles but at times conflicting roles.

The respondents should know which they ought to prioritize and should not expect extra attention from the teachers.

The respondents were least bothered by lack of facilities like child care nursery, lounge, study area. This is because the respondents with children leave their children with family members.

"Learning in a foreign language poses problems" was considered by two respondents as difficult. The researchers believe that there are students in the English Department who are not as skilled or knowledgeable of the English language like most students in the Department. Perhaps these 2

respondents are but a few of those who wish to complete their certificate despite inadequate English skills.

### **Challenges Encountered Relative to Society and Culture**

Table 3 discloses the difficulties met by the female married undergraduate students in the English Department with regard to society and culture.

The Table reveals that their choice of employment in terms of location is limited to working in close proximity to one's home.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) or more than one third of these respondents believe that after having had a certificate or having earned a degree, they could seek employment not only in their community but probably some place where they could develop both professionally and socially. Nonetheless, the society and culture these respondents have grown into uphold the women's role in the home as wives and mothers more than as employed individuals. Moreover, these female married students are bound by their cultural practices and laws.

As stated in [www.al-islam.org](http://www.al-islam.org).

"Men are the maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them to excel others..." (4:34).

Therefore, men have a greater and more difficult responsibility in supporting their families. It is the man who can, through his wisdom, support his family and prepare the grounds for their happiness and it is he who can turn the house into a paradise and his wife to act as an angel.

"My employment opportunities are limited to a female only school environment" is the second area these respondents are anxious about.

The above data implies the anxiety of the respondents of ending up in a workplace only for the female. Perhaps these respondents desire to be in workplace where both genders are students.

According to data gathered from www.islamweb.net., there is an immense and growing need for Muslim women in various medical fields, in education, in helping professions such as social work, counseling, psychology, psychiatry, and childcare. With the growth of technology and communications capabilities, there are unlimited opportunities for women to do some type of work or business from home (such as secretarial and typing; writing, editing, publishing; computer work, etc.). This would be an ideal situation that would eliminate many of the concerns that may arise for working women. These respondents might be aspiring to get into other jobs beside teaching.

The third problem area relative to culture is that "the family identifies me as a married person first and student second."

The previous data in the earlier tables attest to the fact that in the Islamic culture, the woman's role is generally for the family - as a wife and mother; balance her household and maternity responsibilities with work. This is even truer in cases where they work only because they have to, or have a job / occupation that they do derive fulfillment from. (slamqa.info/en/106815)

The respondents cannot freely work even after their studies since they still have to prioritize their families.

The aforementioned data all point to a reality that the female undergraduate married students do encounter difficulties of diverse nature. In all of these, they need to juggle between the wife-mother role in addition to the student role.

**Table 3**  
**Challenges Encountered in the Society and Culture.**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. My choice of employment in terms of location is limited to working in close proximity to my home.	9	37.5%	1
2. Family identifies me as a married person first and student second.	7	29.16%	3
3. My employment opportunities are limited to a female only school environment.	8	33.33%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	99.54%	6

#### **MOTIVATIONS IN PURSUING A DEGREE**

Female married students have significantly ranked their reasons for wanting to complete higher education.

Table 4 depicts that a great number of them chose "To be an active member in society and to honor my country" as their paramount reason for this aspiration. Following to be in a workplace where both genders are students. this is "Increase my self-confidence" where one fourth of them agreed to wanting more self-esteem.

**Table 4**  
**Motivations in Pursuing a Degree.**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. To be an educated parent.	1	4.16%	5
2. Add to my knowledge and experience.	4	16.66%	2
3. To be an active member in society and honor my country.	7	29.16%	1
4. Increase my self confidence.	4	16.66%	2

5. Teaching is a desirable occupation for women in my culture.	3	12.5%	3
6. Improve my financial situation..	3	12.5%	3
7. Peer encouragement.	2	8.33%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	99.97%	20

"Add to my knowledge "ranked third while 'teaching is a desirable occupation for women in my culture" and "Improve my financial situation" were rated on equal percentages.

"To be an educated parent" and "peer encouragement" were the least motivations to finish their degree.

Assessing the given situation that these Libyan female respondents are into at this point in time of the country's political crisis, the researchers surmise that finishing a degree will add to the prestige of their country. After finishing their degree, these respondents are aware that this will add to the statistics on the state of literacy in their country.

In fact, in the 2010 Statistics from *www. Wikipedia*, Libya had a literacy rate of 94. 2% with the Male at 98.6 % while the Females at 90.7%. This figures speak very well of the country's educational thrust which this respondents perhaps desire to be a part of.

Being degree holders will make them become a/the pride not only of their family as well as their country particularly during these times. In addition to this, perhaps these respondents would like to change the notion of other people about Libyan women which is their being only for the home/house.

Lastly, completing their studies and landing a job as educators will give them a chance to teach the younger generation to become good citizens and bring Libya to a better place in the world.

"To increase my self confidence" was rated as second. It is a fact that these respondents are individuals who know their worth. They recognize the truth that even if they are married, they need to complete a degree which perhaps they can be proud of. they can set themselves as a role model to their children in regard to the benefits of earning a degree. The researchers believe that these respondents are open minded when it comes to being educated. These respondents are but a part of the growing number of women who are starting to open their doors to change and one of this is being educated to increase one's self confidence.

In a study conducted by UPCEA (*www. Setonhill*) they established that those earning a credential feel significantly more secure in their career and future when compared to individuals in the benchmark group. They likewise feel more secure in their current jobs, although to a lesser extent than benchmark respondents. All participants reported being effective in their current jobs. Over 80% of degree or certificate holders report increased self-confidence as well as family and friends being proud of their educational accomplishment. Although those in the benchmark category do not have bachelor's degrees, they attach a much higher importance to a degree resulting in career opportunities, financial security and self-confidence.

"Add to my knowledge and experience" was ranked third. These respondents as stated earlier are parts of the growing generation who are exposed to the changes going on in these times where men and women are afforded equal opportunities. Though they still consider themselves more importantly parts of the family than society in general, perhaps they affirm that acquiring and completing a degree will give them an edge over most others in this society.

"Teaching is a desirable occupation for women in my culture" and "Improve my financial situation" were rated on equal percentages

Teaching is one of the selected professions entered into by female graduates in this country. Female graduates could be nurses, doctors, pharmacists but among others, teaching has been the most pioneered career. On account of the cultural limitations on jobs that women are allowed to enter, these respondents perhaps are inspired to become teachers in the future.

An article in <http://muslimspice.com/women> revealed that Muslim scholars of classical times and contemporary times have explained that a woman has no need to go outside the home to earn a living. Her father, brother, grandfather, one's self confidence. husband, son are all there to provide for her. Career Muslim women will say Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid (RA) worked. In fact she hired men to work on her behalf. She was not out in the markets bartering and trading. Even speakers such as Yasir al-Qadhi have stated that women should not work except in a couple of professions such as teaching girls and gynecology. Muslim women marriage counselors have stated that a major cause of disruption in marriages is the inflexibility of the career wife. Men are advised to avoid career women who go out to corporate offices and intermingle with men in the course of their work. A woman loves home making, cooking, cleaning, and raising children not otherwise. To be an educated parent" and "peer encouragement" were the least motivations to finish their degree.

The above are best elucidated by the prevalence of cultural roles of women i.e. being for the family; to be the wife and mother of the home. This explains why self development like being educated has been relegated and considered as the last motivation in pursuing a degree.

The above data on the challenges and motivations were all elicited from the 24 respondents who are presently undergraduate students at the College of Arts and Sciences from First year to Fourth year.

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

For most women, being married is never a hindrance to obtaining a degree. This driving force to fulfill one's aspiration despite conflicting roles of wives-mothers and students served as the impetus for this research to be undertaken.

For this reason, the researchers embarked into a study on "Exploring the Challenges and Motivations of Female Married Undergraduate Students in the English Department of Messalata".

Specifically, this research provides answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges or difficulties that these students encounter while studying?
2. What are the motivations of these married students in their desire to continue their studies and finish a degree?

The descriptive survey method is utilized in this investigation. The researcher opted to employ this method as it is the most suitable method by which they could elicit data from the 24 respondents in the English Department.

From the survey, the researcher believes that they could accumulate substantial and primary data from which their answer to the sub problems would emanate. These opinions and choices of the respondents are paramount to proving the validity of their sub problem areas relative to the challenges and motivations of female undergraduate students in the English Department of the College of Arts and Sciences, Messalata.

A questionnaire which is the main instrument in this study contains questions which are derived from other studies that the researcher looks into and a few from them.

The above instrument is divided into two parts: the first portion contained a letter to the respondents informing them of the title of the research for which the survey is being conducted: the second part consists of questions on the sub problems namely the challenges met in the family, the college and in society. Another set of questions were on the motivations in pursuing a degree.

The respondents are identified from the total of 30 students with the following: First year - 3; Second year - 4; Third year - 3 and Fourth year -20. Nonetheless, only 24 of them attended lectures regularly thus they served as the study's respondents.

#### **Findings**

1. The challenges encountered by these married students categorized into three areas are as follow:

- 1.1 In the family, they regarded "spending less time with my husband"; 'my extended

family members do not offer support"; "spending less quality time with my children" as the first three areas of concern for them. "Too much chores in the household"; "difficulty meeting family and study commitments"; "spending less time with relatives" and "no available member to bring me to college" were the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh areas which posed difficulties to the respondents.

1.2 In the college, "presence of college policies like strict attendance, too many subject matter, difficult timetable, maternity leave"; "the college is too overcrowded and not conducive to learning" and "lack of qualified counselors" as the first three challenges these respondents had to contend with. "Too many courses and assignments per semester and inflexible deadline": "college faculty are inconsiderate" were the fourth and fifth difficulties. "Lack of facilities on campus i.e child care nursery, lounge, study area" together with "Learning in a foreign language pose problems" were rated as the least difficult.

1.3. In the society and culture, the respondents ranked "my choice of employment terms of location is limited in close proximity to my home" as the most challenging concern followed by "my employment opportunities are limited to a female only school environment" and the least difficult concern was "family identifies me as a married person first and student second."

2. Motivations for pursuing a degree revealed that the respondents wanted "to be an active member in society and honor my country" as the foremost reason for completing their studies. This was followed by "increase my self confidence" and "add to my knowledge" as third motivation in pursuing a degree. Following these motivations are "teaching is a desirable occupation for women in my culture" and "to improve my financial situation" as having the same rank from the respondents. The least reasons for the pursuit of a degree are "improve my financial situation" and "to be an educated parent".

### Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. Challenges are integral to any endeavor in one's desire to achieve higher education. Coupled with this motivation to achieve /pursue a degree is one's determination and perseverance during this span of time.
2. A woman's civil status, i.e. being married, is not a hindrance to her pursuit of higher education.

### Recommendations

Relative to the sub problems on challenges encountered and motivations of these female married students, the following are suggested:

1. Since married students in this country have multiple roles, teachers can assist them in affording them more consideration for written evaluations/quizzes. The teachers can give equivalent tasks which these students would have missed out during regular lecture hours.
2. The college/department can likewise device some measures whereby these students could be alleviated in their academic performance like starting on line courses for them (if possible).
3. Student Services like a Guidance and Counseling Office can perhaps be established in the college not only for married students but for other students as well who might need outside help; aside from the help and advice that their family members can offer.
4. A research can be conducted relative to the preferences in courses/jobs of female married students in other Carnouniversities nearby Messalata. This study can gauge the level of feminism this generation of married women are into.

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