

## REPORT ON RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

**Reporting period:** - September 2024 - February 2025

**Title of Project:** In balancing personal and professional lives, are female biochemists with young children striving, thriving or struggling?

**Investigators:**

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This report aims to explain the progress made on the awarded £450 Biochemical Society's Diversity in Science Grant project titled: *In balancing personal and professional lives, are female biochemists with young children striving, thriving or struggling?*

The project started in September 2024 with the first 2 meetings between the 2 investigators, addressing the research focus and project plan. A research assistant was engaged and literature review commenced same month. Thereafter, application for ethical approval was submitted to University of Lagos Research Ethics Committee in October, 2024 and the approval (UNILAGREC/24/11/001) was given in December, 2024, after a thorough peer review process, clarification and satisfactory responses to reviewer's comments (receipt of payment is attached). Participants were female biochemists who had at least a child. In January 2025, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide was developed and shared with participants via google form using various platforms including the Nigerian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Department of Biochemistry platforms in Universities in Nigeria. This was to achieve a wider outreach to participants as well as ensure they get an understanding of the aim of the study, give consent, get acquainted with the questions, pick their preferred date and time among 3 suggested slots. The form contained comprehensible questions addressing demographics and the research objectives to be answered by participants. The FGDs were conducted via zoom on Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> February (12 noon- 2pm) and Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February (12noon-2 pm and 3pm- 5pm)- (Evidences are attached to this mail). The zoom FGDs were recorded after explaining to participants the reason for the recording and obtaining their consent. The questions in the google form included: number of children and their ages, their experiences as female biochemists with children in balancing work and family responsibilities. There were also questions on how they address these challenges they face, the strategies they employ in navigating between work and family spheres. There were also questions around challenges unique to female biochemists, coping strategies and recommendations. Recorded transcripts were retrieved via zoom and proofread.

In total 29 participants were involved in the study, 13, 10, 3, 2, and 1 of the participants had 3, 2, 4, 1 and 1 children respectively. The ages of the children ranged from 3 - 26 years. Qualitative data analysis is currently ongoing. Preliminary findings suggest that all female biochemists struggled with childcare and household responsibilities whether they received any support with childcare and domestic responsibilities or not. According to their account, they struggled to cope with their official responsibilities of administrative, teaching and research while also striving to maintain a balance in their marital responsibilities. In

addition, participants experienced various levels of stress when they started having children due to the need to provide qualitative childcare and care for home front which precluded them from opportunities to attend academic conferences, workshops and other beneficial trainings. On a long term, they experienced a slow-down in their career progression and suggested better implementation of some form of policies that could ease the stress currently experienced by female Biochemists who had at least a child. After data analysis, it is expected that an article will be published in a reputable academic journal. The findings from the study based on data analysis will determine the focus of further research on this topic.



Mariam Gbajumo-Sheriff 28/02/2025  
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