The Implications of Balancing an Academic Career and Motherhood for Women in Higher Education

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Abstract:
In the twenty-first century, increasing numbers of girls and women are moving into intellectual and occupational spheres traditionally seen to be masculine (Francis 2000). These changes involve the performance of new forms of femininity, a distancing from variants traditionally perceived as normative and the adoption of qualities previously viewed as masculine. Yet this new reinvented femininity is just as regulated as previous forms of femininity. Girls and women are clearly paying a price for their success, as women develop illnesses of stress previously only seen in men. The downside of female 'success' is apparent in the double and sometimes triple shift of many female academicians juggling work, child care and further study. This paper remains a humble attempt at exploring the myth of higher education being conducive to female professionals and the reason behind a colossal loss of valuable national intellectual resources in the higher education sector and suggest new perspectives with the prevalent social system in mind.

Key Words: motherhood, family, career, higher education, women, role conflict
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Introduction:
In the twenty-first century, an increasing number of girls and women are moving into intellectual and occupational spheres traditionally seen to be masculine (Francis 2000). These changes involve the performance of new forms of femininity, a distancing from variants traditionally perceived as normative and the adoption of qualities previously viewed as masculine. Yet this new reinvented femininity is just as regulated as previous forms of femininity. Girls and women are clearly paying a price for their success, as women develop illnesses of stress previously only seen in men. The downside of female 'success' is apparent in the double and sometimes triple shift of many female academicians juggling work, child

care and further study. Researches have uncovered several benefits of assuming the multiple roles of career and motherhood, but despite many positive outcomes, additional studies have demonstrated potential for negative outcomes. Mediators and moderators of employed mothers' experiences include work- family fit, womanhood ideologies, role quality, and spouse's support.

Review of Related Studies and Documents:

Contemporary literature highlights the opportunity for individuals to reap benefits from assuming multiple roles. Thoits (1983) found that greater the number of identities an individual possesses, especially those stemming from multiple roles, the less psychological distress is reported. In another expansive literature review, Crosby (I991) concluded that women who juggle multiple roles are generally better-adjusted and less prone to depression than other women. Such research outcomes were promising as many women take on the challenge of balancing multiple roles, including motherhood and career. In 2006, 70.9% of women in the United States with children under the age of 18 were employed (United States Department of Labor, 2007). Workforce participation rates of married mothers and mothers with children under the age of six were also high, at 68.6% and 63.5%, respectively. In addition, 75.6% of employed mothers were employed full-time. However, the All India Survey of Higher Education (Government of India, 2013) provided gender disaggregated analysis for 2010-2011 that reveals poor presence of women academics in higher education.

PERCENTAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE ACADEMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

■ MALE ■ FEMALE
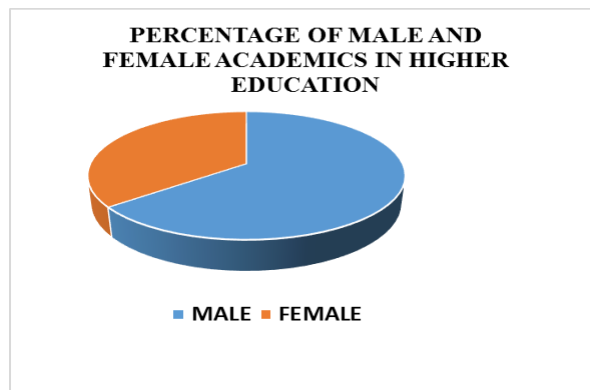
Female: 35.7% (237881) Male: 64.3% (429090)
Source: Elaborated from Government of India (2013)

The Government of India (2013) Report revealed that while in all categories of academic positions women are under-represented, this increases for higher positions. Thus only 25.5% of Professors, 31.1% of Readers and Associate Professors, and 38.5% of Lecturers or Assistant Professors are women. The report exposed that within academics with disabilities, female academics with disabilities represent only 1.9% of the overall total number of academics in India, and that Muslim women are also under-represented in Indian higher education, both in relation to male academics and overall. Of those academics in India who are Muslim, only 33.5% are female. Furthermore, Muslim women academics comprise only 14.9% of the total number of academic staff in India. The Indian Government's Planning Commission 12th five year Plan 2012-17 Volumes 1 and 3 identify gender inequality as a key

issue and show a concern for inclusion of all 'backward' groups and also women in general. Chanana (2013) cites 1986 policy declarations on education and gender equality when discussing interventions in progress following Verma et al. (2013). The recommendations briefly address women's promotion in higher education: "'Glass ceilings' and fears over promotion must receive more attention, as the feedback received by the Task Force would indicate widespread practices of discrimination and harassment among women working in Higher Education Institutions" (UGC India, 2013). Despite these strong recommendations, overall, there is a lack of attention to gender in many high level statements on Higher Education, even when addressing a 'faculty crunch' in Higher Education (Academics India 2014). India is ranked 114 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014). Two small-scale studies were conducted by Chanana (2003) that illuminated women had more frequent job changes; 26% of women and no men started in lower grade positions such as teachers, assistant teachers, demonstrators, and guest lecturers. 26% of women also reported career interruptions, mostly due to marriage and the demands of their husbands' career and family. This raises questions regarding stressed predicament of female academics, especially mothers, in higher education.

Discussion:

While there are many potential benefits to taking on the multiple roles of career and motherhood, researchers have also demonstrated that individuals assuming multiple roles frequently experience tremendous stress due to inter-role conflict. Inter-role conflict has been defined by Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) as a specific type of conflict that arises when responsibilities from different domains of one's life produce sets of pressures that are in some sense incompatible. Again, generally based on ideologies for each role, inter-role conflict can also be understood as conflict that arises when one's internally perceived demands or standards for a role are not met due to striving to meet the perceived demands for another role (Polasky & Holahan, 1998). Inter-role conflict, as shown by various scholars, is significantly higher for women than for men, as women who enter the workforce often continue to assume primary responsibility for their other socio-culturally defined gender roles like parenting and homemaking (Reddin, 1997) that implies the roles of a caregiver and nurturer. This is greater in countries like India where a great premium is set upon the woman as the primary caregiver and nurturer of family comprising not only of children but in-laws, husband and relatives. Women are brought up with this ideological perception and social expectation in mind and many employed and professionally oriented women are found to internally suffer from excruciating sense of guilt and agony under the psychological pressure of a socio-culturally predetermined sense of their role that has been instilled since their childhood. Contemporary media too tends to propagate and glorify certain popular cultural roles for women and the intellectual or ambitious woman is branded "careerist" with a profoundly negative implication. This sometimes create an indirect socio-cultural pressure on the successful career women in the Indo-Asian societal superstructure. Greenberger& O'Neil (I993) studied

role conflict in employed mothers and fathers of preschool children who were married to an employed spouse. They noted that the mothers had stronger commitments to parenting and, correspondingly, experienced greater role strain, anxiety, and depression. In another study of work-parent conflict, Simon (1995) found that, of their 40 married participants, more women (75%) than men (40%) described experiencing inter-role conflict between the employment and parenting realms. Additional factors, such as single parenthood and blended family circumstances, may increase even further the potential for inter-role conflict, although these factors have not been explicitly addressed through research. There is extensive research demonstrating that working mothers often report feelings of inner conflict between their career and parenting roles (Polasky & Holahan, 1998). This conflict is experienced as internal tension deriving from the seemingly conflicting goals of career and mothering. Both internal and external sources of this conflict have been described by employed mothers (Polasky & Holahan, 1998), illuminating the fact that the inter-role conflict experienced by working mothers is not solely due to tangible role requirements, but also to internally perceived demands. The internal tension often described by employed mothers has been shown in numerous studies (Coverman, 1989; Greenglass, 1985; Krause & Geyer-Pestello, 1985; Laster, 2002) to have negative effects on their subjective well-being, leading to depression and anxiety, anger, stress, guilt, and other negative self-assessments. Consideration of factors which play a determining role in women academics' position is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the adjustment process which employed mothers are engaged in.

Voydanoff (2004) performed a quantitative analysis of employment data from 1,938 adults, that revealed that it was one's individual assessment of the balance between work and family roles that influenced the perceived subjective well-being of the academics. Time demand and strain at workplace and time demands with related stress at family collectively contribute to the major decisions of the female academics. In the modern academic scenario, one needs to engage in continuous upgradation and generation of knowledge, as well as dedicate hours of service to the students. An academic's work does not end within the campus but is carried home with multiple role demands like supervising duties, mentoring responsibilities in tandem with evaluation and research related activities. Such time demands and demand for uninterrupted intellectual engagement is at loggerheads with time demands of the family and its expectations for the role of nurturer, caregiver and emotional and physical source of sustenance for the children and aged. According to 2016 Times Higher Education University Workplace Survey, more than two-third academicians agree that they "spend too much time working" and only less than a third believed that their "work responsibilities allow for a healthy work-life balance" – "Despite satisfaction levels of more than three-quarters for both teaching and research, it is clear that many academics are in peril of drowning in the sea of things that they are expected (and often want) to do". Higher Education teacher appraisal too demands a college or university teacher to be a multi tasker and take an active part in the administrative and corporate life of the institution in tandem with contributing to quality research output, evaluative responsibilities and quality teaching in class which calls for

considerable time for intensive study and time for deep thinking. The present appraisal as well as time table and working hours criteria hardly cope with this challenge and the teacher in higher education is increasingly facing the threat of becoming a mechanical mediocre puppet buckling under myriad pressures with least time for quality research and study needed for taking a standard class in higher education. Times Higher Education quotes Jennifer Rohn, Principal Research Associate [with teaching duties] at University College London **:** "Deadlines began to gather over my head, sucking away my oxygen. My diary slowly turned black, each square containing a dense list of tasks in increasingly small fonts. The weekend squares, once relatively free, began to take up the overspill, elbowing out the fulfilling, personal tasks I used to do much more of: writing, public engagement and political activism. When my husband and I moved out of London and put our toddler into a local nursery, my commute imposed uncompromising hours and involved pushing a pram for several miles a day. […] weekends felt like a convalescence. Despite my desperate need for more sleep, I found myself lying awake at night, clenched into endless cycles of anxiety about the things I had yet to do."

It has been suggested by several sociological researchers that a paradoxical, ideological bind has been created for the modern working mother (e.g., Friedan, 1981; Hays, 1996). This contradiction is described as occurring between the traditional and contemporary perspectives of motherhood. Traditional outlooks are often tied to historical assumptions about the "private/public dichotomy" (Van Leeuwen, 1993, p. 390); namely, the concept that "women are somehow 'naturally' fitted for the private sphere... of marriage, family, and friendship" (p. 390). Contemporary perspectives are influenced by current societal womanhood ideals of both intensive child-rearing and successful participation in the workforce. In 2004, Phanco compiled several qualitative themes from her research participants' mothering and professional ideologies, largely corresponding to traditional societal ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), the qualities valued in the modern, male-constructed workplace (Friedan, 1981), and the relational component proposed as a part of a more contemporary motherhood ideology (Ex & Janssens, 2000). Research also suggests that a woman's faith community can impact her motherhood ideology (Phanco, 2004) and contribute to the internal tension and guilt experienced by many employed mothers, due to the ideological promotion of mothering and homemaking as the most important and most spiritual roles for women.

Lauren Giugno (2015) in her theses titled "An Exploration of Female University Professors' Experiences of Negotiating between Personal and Professional Roles, Stress and Mental Health" brought to the forefront many case studies. For instance, she found that "all participants with children expressed that at one point they believed being a full-time mother and academic was a realistic expectation [but] Participants reported shifting this expectation […] one woman concluded that being a full-time caregiver and full-time academic was an unmanageable task. One woman was unable to complete her Ph.D. after having twins and left

the university to care for her children for six years before returning. She expressed the challenging identity shift from being an academic to a stay-at-home mom: It was really interesting because something I remember a lot from when my kids were little was we lived in student housing because I did my PhD here. (It) was…full of students and student partners and there was one woman who her kids and my kids were playing together and she was saying "Oh well, my husband is doing his PhD in this discipline", which was my discipline, and I had never heard of him! And that was sort of a defining moment because before that moment I was a PhD student on leave and I was planning to go back and then to sort of realize there are all these things happening on campus that I am not aware of. I am actually a stay-a-home mom now and that was…sort of an identity shifting kind of moment." (pp.47-48) . A comprehensive review of the large experimental literature that supports the ubiquitous nature of gender-based discrimination in the academy conclude that there are stereotypic characteristics and behaviours associated with gender and women are not associated with 'leader,' 'scientist,' or other descriptors and their related behaviour that are relevant for advancement in the academy. These stereotypes exist in entrenched implicit forms (Nosek, et al. 2002), and include both descriptive (i.e., what women are like) and prescriptive (i.e., what women should do) characteristics (Heilman, 2001). Descriptive gender stereotypes include less expectation for success, competence, leadership, and these in turn slow or halt advancement for women. Wenneras & Wold (1997) provides the instance of female postdoctoral applicants to Sweden's Medical Research Council (MRC) had to accrue an impact score (an objective measure based on the addition of all of each applicant's publication's impact factors) 3-5 times higher than male postdoctoral applicants to achieve equivalent subjective competency ratings by the MRC reviewers. Competent and other leader-like behaviours by women violate prescriptive stereotypes and result in personal derogation and dislike, as leadership positions include social interactions and socializing, a perceived inability to interact in socially appropriate ways inhibits advancement (Heilman 2001).

Conclusion:

The diminishing proportion of women who advance from undergraduate to doctoral education, earn doctorates; enter the academy, advance in the academy and lead the academy has been referred to the 'leaky pipeline' (Mason&Goulden 2002), 'off-ramps' (Hewlett, 2007), and other structural metaphors; that is, women are represented in decreasing proportions as one ascends up the academic hierarchy. The proportion of women who are qualified to hold leadership positions is much larger than the proportion of women who hold leadership positions (Committee on the Guide to Recruiting and Advancing Women Scientists and Engineers in Academia and Committee on Women in Science and Engineering 2006). The nature of modern gender discrimination and other forms of contemporary discrimination and prejudice (Dovidio 2001) has been described as covert, subtle, automatic, unintentional, unconscious, and pervasive (Heilman, 2001; Sue, et al. 2007). A number of other terms have

been used to describe subtle gender discriminatory events or their collective effect, like chilly climate (Hall&Sandler 1982), micro-aggressions (Solorzano, et al. 2000; Sue, et al. 2007); micro-inequities (Benokraitis 1998) and selective incivility. Therefore it may be concluded that ideologies of motherhood and womanhood (e.g., Friedan, 1981; Hays, 1996; Phanco, 2004), perceived role quality (e.g., Barnett, 2004, 2005; Reid & Hardy, 1999), and identity development (Thoits, 1983) have significant impact on the relationship between multiple roles and inter-role conflict. Research indicates that additional contributors to this complex and dynamic relationship include the strategies employed to cope with inter-role conflict (Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Current, 2001) and the presence of social and/or spousal support (Greenberger & O'Neil, 1993; Ozer, 1995; Thorstad et al., 2006). In the words of Butler (1993)-

> Being a man' and 'being a woman' are internally unstable affairs. They
> are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in
> every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the
> forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that
> chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that
> the norm fails to determine us completely.
> (pp.126–127)

The downside of female 'success' is apparent in the double and sometimes triple shift of many female academicians juggling work, child care and further study, and are often marginalized and excluded. It is high time that policy perspectives, appraisal criteria, infrastructural facilities, organizational set up and co-operation norms are rendered more inclined towards the burning problem in the higher education sector, where many bright academicians with great potential are dropping out due to gender expectations and roles assigned by the social, cultural and family constructs.

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