ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Exploring the intersection of motherhood and work for women working in the NGO sector in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract   Gender equality, built on the principle of equal opportunities, maintains that women and men's equality is based on the availability of equal access to resources, funding and opportunities. Through this principle women have gained access to public life and form a good proportion of the world's working population. However, other social arrangements such as motherhood and associated care remain largely unchanged and may disrupt delivery of equality of outcomes between men and women participating in public life.

This paper details research that investigated how women working in the Zimbabwean NGO sector reconcile motherhood and work. The research illuminates the disadvantages that women in the stated category face at the intersection of motherhood and work. The research reveals there is a divergence between work and mothering demands, leaving women overstretched in both directions. Maids serve as a key support mechanism for working women, which the research reveals as problematic to achieving gender equality and the ideals of equity and justice.

Keywords
Work, motherhood, equity, care work

Introduction

Women's rights have come a long way since the United Nations Decade for Women, seeing a distinct increase in the number of women participating in public life (World Bank, 2018). However, contentions raised from the Decade, such as social arrangements that hinder equality of outcomes, remain relevant. While equality of opportunities is important, socio-economic arrangements are equally important as these determine the ability for women to access the available opportunities (Ghodsee, 2010).

Motherhood remains a large social institution, through which women are co-opted into associated care work. Previous research shows that motherhood is largely a social construct that is enmeshed in womanhood, to the extent that the full measure of womanhood is fulfilled in motherhood (Stearney, 1994; Rich, 1995; Walker, 1995; Akujobi 2011). In this way, motherhood is seen as an extension of femaleness, not viewed as 'work', and seen through the perspective of emotional bonds.

Although there is an awareness and articulation of the possibilities of discrimination against women due to the functions of motherhood (BPA, 1995; CEDAW, 1981), the balance of public and private life, in the face of motherhood, remains a significant challenge for the project of gender equality (Connell, 2005); women still retain the larger burden of unpaid care work (UN Women, 2016).

This paper is drawn from a thesis on the exploration of the intersection of work and motherhood for women working within the NGO sector in Harare, Zimbabwe (Mutariswa, 2019). The paper focuses on the challenges women encounter at the intersection of work and motherhood. Zimbabwe will first be explored as a site of study, with regard to work and gender equality. Then, literature on motherhood and work will be explored to set up the findings and discussion that will follow. A synopsis of the research procedure will be presented, followed by main findings presented and discussed in detail. The paper will close with recommended areas of further study.

Context
Zimbabwe is a country in Southern Africa. According to the country's Census report (2012), women compose 47% of the formally employed population, a significant proportion that amounts to almost half the category. Similarly, the Labour Force Survey (2011), recorded that women comprise 53% of those in informal employment, once again a significant proportion, hence the need to question the existence of policies and practices that help women to balance motherhood and work. Problematically, the Census report (2012) included a category on the economically inactive population; within that category, 'homemakers' were included (Census, 2012). Homemakers were defined as persons who '…engaged in household chores in their own household i.e. cooking and fetching water' (Census, 2012: 84) and 89% of this category were women. Such a classification does not assign economic value to domestic labour and so perpetuates the view that domestic labour is not only invisible, but undervalued.

In 2013, the Zimbabwean government adopted a new constitution which includes a Bill of Rights. Within the Bill of Rights, the Zimbabwean government offers a progressive definition of discrimination, describing when either a person is '…subjected directly or indirectly to a condition, restriction or disability to which other people are not subjected', or '…are accorded directly or indirectly a privilege or advantage which other people are not accorded' (Constitution, 2013: 33). These definitions of discrimination reflect a lack of tolerance for conditions that minimise room for participation and encourage fair treatment and access. The definitions present a perfect backdrop for the investigation into how motherhood and work are structured practically, to ensure that women do not indirectly face conditions that hinder them in the workplace and give men an unfair advantage.

Zimbabwe is state party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and signatory to International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Additionally, Zimbabwean women actively participated in the Beijing Platform for Action which has led to some changes in policy and practice within the country.

Article 7 of the ICESCR articulates the rights to work and unpacks the responsibilities of governments to ensure work environments that promote wellbeing. Of particular importance are the sections under this

article that refer to decent living for workers and their families, as well as access to rest, leisure, and reasonable working hours (ICESCR,1976).

CEDAW articulates the responsibilities of state parties to take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women including those that may form barriers to the enjoyment of public life. The convention is alive to the role that women play in supporting family life and how this can be employed as a tool of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1981). In the preamble, the convention articulates that the biological roles of women as mothers should not be deployed as a tool of discrimination. Zimbabwe as a state party to CEDAW, with no reservations, has obligations to translate the convention into local legislature and policy.

In the 2010 state party report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the government of Zimbabwe reported efforts to reduce discrimination against women in relation to pregnancy through the Public Service Regulations Statutory Instrument 2000. The instrument sets forth that maternity leave will not be viewed as a break in a woman's work service and that women are not passed up for promotion when on maternity leave of up to 98 days. Additionally, new mothers are granted one hour off work for the first six months after maternity leave to allow for breastfeeding. This progression safeguards women from being negatively affected by becoming pregnant and ensures full benefits during maternity leave. However, these measures secure women's critical availability in the early days of their new-born children's lives and is tied directly to mothers as biological carriers and carers of babies. It does not go beyond these roles tied to biology to those tied to social constructions of, and the ancillary work that accompanies motherhood.

In this way, there is a gap in policy and in practice around how work is structured to allow a balance between motherhood and work. This blind spot effectively makes mothering a private role that is somehow divorced from the public worker. The problem with this arrangement is that the public worker and private mother are the same individual who is likely to become overextended to the disadvantage of either work, mothering, or themselves. As discussed by Zilanawala (2016), women tend to be faced with a challenge of time poverty that affects their ability to form strong social relationships, thereby affecting their quality of life.

Motherhood and work: the literature
Douglas and Michaels (2006), provide insight into contemporary motherhood that is encased in the pressure of 'successful mothering' as portrayed in the media. They report that women find mothering more difficult in this age of constant media alerts and messaging that insinuate mothering is the most important thing a woman gets to do in her life. Douglas and Michaels (2006) seem to echo the sentiments of Rich (1995) that at some point there was a counter revolution that reinstated motherhood to eminence. This is to say women are now more able to step into public lives, but the pressure to be the 'best mum' has remained unchanged.

In the age of the working mother and mass media, there is increased availability of standards that women ought to live up to as mothers. And while women can work, motherhood is and should be their chief priority (Douglas and Michaels, 2006). This places pressure on women to juggle motherhood and work and to be essentially perfect at both. As a result, women find themselves pulled in two directions with the pressure to, 'be more doting and self-sacrificing at home than Bambi's mother, yet more achievement oriented at work than Madeleine Albright.' (Douglas and Michaels, 2006: 11)

The social role of motherhood and associated care-giving is still largely viewed as an extension of the biology of childbirth. In this way, it remains viewed as a natural role for women and not as work. Rich (1995: 4) summarizes this occurrence by saying of the 20th century woman, 'She had not found herself

entering an evolving new society, a society in transformation. She had only been integrated into the same structures that had made the liberation movements necessary.'

As such, contemporary mothers find themselves able to work and participate in activities that reinforce their autonomy but are still tied heavily to the role of motherhood and associated caregiving. In this way they are pulled into two directions that are not necessarily easy to reconcile in terms of time and emotional labour demands. Over the past two decades, the pressures women face to juggle work while maintaining perfect motherhood has given rise to the work-life balance debates. Although proposed as gender neutral, work-life balance has been founded on what Eikhof, Warhurst, and Haunschild call: '…questionable assumptions and perceptions…that "life" can be equated with caring responsibilities, most particularly childcare, with the result that women are primary targets for work-life balance provisions.' (2007: 326)

Eikhof, Warhurst, and Haunschild (2007), further discuss how work-life balance has been implemented to guarantee that women continue to reproduce, fulfilling the obligations towards replenishment of human capital. At the same time, this implementation has been one that does not radically disrupt employment, ensuring profit security for the employer. This leaves women perfectly boxed into motherhood and care-giving that is fictitiously supported and separated from their working lives.

Leon (2009) discusses the European Employment Strategy, leaning towards the provision of childcare as a work-life balance measure. This is seen as a way of enabling young mothers to stay in paid work as a matter of necessity due to a sizeable aging population. In this research, Leon (2009) refers to fertility being low in countries that do not provide measures for women to balance work and family life. As such, efforts to reconcile work and family enable replenishment of the human population without upsetting market principles of profit-making or unsettling the social arrangements of motherhood and care. Hereby thrusting women into the world of work and providing commodified childcare, without investigating the burden of care still retained by women (Leon, 2009). While there are attempts at provisions of childcare and there is 'help' from fathers, women still retain a larger portion of domestic work in the forms of cooking, cleaning, and assisting children with homework (Connell, 2005).

The work-life balance debate, therefore, has reinforced the public/private divide which Connell (2005) describes as spheres of profit-making and gift relations respectively. This implies that the work of women in the public is what is counted as work by the profit-making nature of it, while unpaid care is seen as a gift, or the reasonable service of women as mothers (Pateman, 2005). Since women are left holding the short end of the stick, it becomes necessary to ask questions around equality of outcomes, fairness, and true equality.

Research on work-life balance in South Africa reveals an even sorrier state where there is no real policy initiative aimed at reconciling paid work and unpaid care work. Kotze and Whitehead (2003), record that women felt there was no real commitment from employers to support the fulfilment of the dual roles of motherhood and work. Moreover, they reported work cultures that normalised working late, and attending after-hours meetings, which made it even more difficult for women to reconcile their dual roles. Presence of a 'male base of performance' meant that women's performance was measured against that of their male counterparts and there was pressure to work harder and longer hours to measure up.

Due to lack of a systematic approach to work-life balance, women are left to their own devices in arranging child and family care. This support can take the form of part-time or full-time household help, private childcare, or in some cases, grand-parents and other family members (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003). Kotze and Whitehead (2003) report that women still felt over-extended and although they had ambitions to do other things outside of work, they became confined to doing their jobs and spending time with their children.

According to Serrano (2012), there is a distinctive lack of social protection services in Africa to support care activities such as childcare. As a result, women tend to step in to provide this care and at times must give up achievement of personal objectives. As shown by Kiaye and Singh (2013), employers' lack of support to dual roles of women result in women being unable to progress with their careers and take up promotions, especially those requiring relocation.

Here, lack of support for the dual roles of women results in implicit discrimination where there is a price to pay for choosing to become a mother, either in the way of sacrificing one's career or lack of time for the mothering role (Gallup & ILO, 2017). At the time of carrying out this research, there was no study on the reconciliation of motherhood and work in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

Research Procedure
As reflected by the literature review, perspectives already exist on the interactions of motherhood and work. There is a distinct lack of research on motherhood and work in Zimbabwe. An attempt was made through this research to create a representation of motherhood for women working in the NGO sector within Zimbabwe.

Therefore, a qualitative approach was chosen to conduct the research in order to draw objective conclusions from subjective realities (Johnston, 2010). The feminist epistemology approach was used in conducting the research, this entails valuing the lived experiences of women and treating them as valuable sources of information on their lived realities (Anderson, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were used in conducting the research. As indicated by Reinharz, (1991), semi-structured interviews allow the research to access people's experiences in their own words.

Participants
A combination of convenience and snow-ball sampling techniques were utilised in selecting research participants. Research participants had to be located within Harare for accessibility, because the research was conducted in a short timeframe. Ten women were interviewed, seven of whom were known by the researcher through work networks, and three were referred by the identified participants.

Participants were between the ages of 27 and 49 with between one and four children. All participants were in heterosexual relationships, nine being married and one in partnership with her child's father. Seven of the participants were in middle level jobs, while three were in senior management and directorate level jobs.

Research participants were afforded an opportunity to choose names under which their contributions to this research would be recorded. As such, the direct quotes herein included are referred to according to the participants' own chosen names.

Data Analysis
In order to reduce the possibility of the data becoming too rich and to remain meaningful, the researcher identified a pathway of analysis (Bryman, 2016). The pathway of analysis selected was thematic analysis, with themes selected to show the relationship between motherhood and work in the view of the question of gender equality. As suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003, cited by Bryman, 2016) analysis was conducted

by repeatedly listening back to the interviews, thereby establishing repetitions, similarities, and differences in the words of the interviewees. These patterns were then used to flesh out the identified themes.

This research cannot be used to make generalisations of the experiences of women working in the Zimbabwean NGO sector. This is because of the small research sample and the limited timeline in which the research was completed. However, findings here can be used as indications of the phenomenon under study.

Results

The main findings from the research indicated that the sampled women working in the NGO sector in Harare, Zimbabwe face challenges balancing work and motherhood. Four out of the ten women went on to suggest that in balancing work and motherhood either work, mothering, or the mother as an individual had to suffer. This confirmed exploration in literature that show that women still retain the burden of unpaid care work (UN Women, 2016).

Balancing work and motherhood

Results indicated that work in the NGO sector is particularly challenging for the study informants due to associated travel. Travel in the context of NGO work is travel to communities, conferences and meetings, and such travel can last between two days and seven days. Six of the ten informants brought up the issue of travel as a challenge, stating that they were unable to bring along their children past the age of one year. Of interest here, is the disconnect between the age of supported travel and recommended length of breastfeeding. While NGOs only support travel of children up to one year of age, World Health Organisation recommends children breastfeed up to two years or beyond (WHO, 2018).

Three of the informants went further to interrogate how the issue of unsupported travel curtailed their ability to engage competitively in their work; as informant Yeukai describes:

> One of the things I really, really hate right now is when there is travel and I can't travel with my kids, I have to leave my kids behind. So, I always find myself, sometimes having to worm my way out of certain tasks and roles because I don't want to travel. …But then when you now look at it, you want to strike a balance where you are the most senior person within the department and so certain roles naturally fall on your desk but then you can't participate in them and you can't voice that. Because then it becomes more like you are um, it's almost like insubordination like you don't want to do your work. Yeah so, I think those are some of the struggles. (Yeukai)

Nine of the ten informants indicated there is no real balance between work and mothering, rather, it is a matter of choice. That is, women must make a choice about what is important to them, at which stage, and how to prioritise. One informant shed light on a particular challenge; the mid to late twenties is the time women want to have children, and it is also the time to make the most of career opportunities. Therefore, women were left with choices that were non-choices in that in choosing to have children in their twenties there was an unacknowledged risk of sacrificing their career or sacrificing their children in favour of their career growth.

Skills in scheduling duties and balancing time for work and home life surfaced as a key mechanism of balancing work and motherhood. These are skills dependent on individual abilities of time management and compartmentalisation of work and motherhood. Workplace policies and practices provide no support to safeguard women against being viewed as "slackers" when they require time to be with their children.

One informant Precious who is in a management role explains it is difficult for the workplace to maintain their view of a woman as a hard worker once she becomes a mother and starts to split her energy between work and being a mother.

> That's what makes it difficult for women to navigate, because, and at some point, when that happens (when one has a child), priorities shift hey. And the organisation or the workplace is not sort of also trying to sort of think through what is on your plate vis a vis these additional roles. So at the end of the day, you were a high performer or high achiever or whatever and you used to work extra until midnight or whatever, then now you are not operating at optimum performance because you have had to navigate some other roles. We are not sitting there; we are just sitting there thinking your performance has come down. But has it really, or it's just that you have less time available for you to do what you used to do when you were single, before you were a mother. Because obviously that why the guys stay, the X's they work, they could do Y until tomorrow morning. But do you think I can do Y until tomorrow? Think of all the guys will put hours and hours and hours, but you will be thinking it's not ok for me to not see my children before they go to bed. (Precious)

Thus, while one can schedule, there is the challenge of measuring standards for work, whereby men and women without children can dedicate more time to work than a woman who is a mother. This automatically gives men an unfair advantage due to their perceived ability to give more time to work duties. One informant Dominica explains:

> The workplace is a very competitive place, and mothers face a lot of challenges. And um, we might not be as competitive as the guys, men have enough time outside the family to pursue education, to um improve their education. But for a mother sometimes, you are held back and therefore at the workplace it becomes very difficult to compete, you are juggling too many activities. And it becomes very, very difficult for you to be that star worker, that star mum at the same time. (Dominica)

Support systems

Nine out of ten informants stated live-in help, in the form of maids, are a major support mechanism for women to balance work and mothering. Yeukai describes, 'I think my godsend is actually the nanny who is watching the kids. Um but you know that doesn't come without its own fair of challenges' (Yeukai).

Help comes in the form of less privileged women, some of whom are not educated but have children of their own to care for. This presents a challenge of care, because while these women provide care for the educated, modern women working in NGOs, their own children are left without care. Hence, raising the question of work and motherhood reconciliation for household workers. However, the role of live-in paid help cannot be understated, as described by Precious.

> I think it's a very key support system though. Like, I think a good maid makes everything, like work you know. Because then, you know like I was saying, like there are a lot of things, that are not necessarily like emotional support for your kids but are practical and take a lot of time. (Precious)

Participants revealed other support mechanisms aside from their live-in maids, such as sisters, mothers, aunts, and mothers-in-law. This is problematic as it relegates even secondary childcare to women, and

therefore replicates patriarchal tendencies that make childbearing and rearing, and the associated unpaid work, mainly female business.

The role of fathers

When it comes to care and domestic work, the role of fathers tends to be confined to 'helping' (Connell, 205; Lupton, 2001). This leaves men able to pursue their own lives without the pressures of the family curbing their pursuit of either career or personal pleasure goals.

Two out of the ten research informants considered themselves 'lucky' to have supportive partners who, in a way, have taken over childcare to allow their female counterparts to pursue their careers without worrying about childcare. The remaining eight informants reported that their partners were supportive and 'helped', although the desire to help did not come naturally, but instead, had to be continually negotiated.

Informant Yeukai described that as her children are growing older, there is a tendency in her partner to 'slacken'. Another informant,[1] S.M the Development Worker, reported that she must continually teach her husband about the importance of helping with childcare:

> I feel we need I don't know. My husband steps in, actually not fully, yes yes yes. Many of times its forcefully. Only when I am away you get to hear the good stories, "oh we have gone on a date", "he did not go out", "he has stayed with X". I am always impressed. But if I am there, I need to come to work, and need him to stay at home with our child and not necessarily have the maid there, it always becomes an issue. I feel like men don't necessarily jump onto the parenting wagon. (S.M the Development Worker)

While partners were reported to be willing to help, there were certain tasks that men were unwilling to do. Most of these tasks centred around what could be viewed as 'traditional female roles', such as toilet training and bathroom breaks for toddlers, which one informant Sally reported that her partner will not do. The seemingly small tasks are routine and there is a constant need for them to be done, so there is a sense of pressure and obligation to fulfil.

Women's ability to pursue social lives outside of motherhood is challenged by the need for constant care of children. This is more prominent for women with smaller children. While men as fathers can easily detangle themselves from care roles to do other things women find it more difficult. One informant Sydney explains:

> I would probably have to, to put in a lot more like, to compose my case, right; like I am a lawyer, and just be like you know, there is a. Because to someone it will be like ah, but then like why would you? But then the same person can easily say "you know what, Saturday I am not here, I'm going for golf." And it's not a permission thing, it's not a… they are just going. But I don't have the same luxury of saying "you know what I am going", I don't know, even to just sit in the grass somewhere and just stare at the sun and think about myself. Because then the other person is thinking "so what's going to happen with the baby?" (Sydney)

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[1] 'S.M the Development Worker' was a pseudonym one of the research participants chose to have their contributions recorded under.

While fatherhood affords men a measure of freedom to engage at their own pace and they sometimes need to be cajoled into doing things, women in this study are a consistent supply of emotional and physical labour in the role of parenting.

Three of the research participants referred to men's ability to negotiate their parental roles. One participant Debra referred to this as outsourcing fatherhood roles, this includes hiring a driver for school runs and hiring an after-school tutor to support homework. Precious went further to describe the socialisation of her husband as a man who views his role as that of material provision, while care could be provided by the woman as a mother.

Discussion

Douglas and Michaels (2006) aptly describe the pressure contemporary working mothers face, to always be emotionally available in the home and achievement-driven in the workplace. Research informants confirmed that they feel pulled in different directions, leaving women short-changed. It left women feeling like they either had to sacrifice their motherhood for their career, their career for their motherhood, or themselves to have both. Consequently, motherhood was viewed as conflicting with work.

Lack of work policies that speak to the reconciliation of motherhood and work further exacerbated the situation for women who had to come up with their own mechanisms to handle work and motherhood. Scheduling and time management was proffered as the tool deployed in managing motherhood and work. Questions arise however of the efficacy of this methodology, how practical is it for one to separate their lives (i.e. motherhood and work) by time, and physical presence or absence at the office? In the absence of policy approaches to the reconciliation of motherhood and work, women are left with a myriad of methods that award them a semblance of control for which they are solely responsible.

Kotze and Whitehead (2003) discuss the arrangements women have in place to help manage the demands of motherhood and work, one of these arrangements is household help. This was reaffirmed in this research where women referred to good household help as key to achieving the balance of work and motherhood. A good maid was cited as pivotal for woman's achievement of balance; one informant referred to her maids as 'household assistants'.

Household help as a solution to work-life balance is problematic when viewed from a gender equality perspective. This is due to the exploitation of poorer women for the benefit of more educated privileged women in that conditions of work are likely to include long hours, low pay, and limited time with one's own family. Household help as a solution to the reconciliation of motherhood and work creates an equality mirage that allows the latter group of more privileged women to access "equal opportunities" in the mainstream, and the former group access to "employment". According to Esplen (2009) home-based work (in this case household help) is largely unregulated, often low paid, and there is no access to sick or maternity leave. In this view while poor women can access "work" the conditions of work are questionable when placed alongside the ideals of equity and equality.

For the gender equality outcomes to be meaningful, private arrangements of care, such as household help, need to be interrogated and linked to public life. It is critical to show how the private arrangements of care in the household affect the paid caregivers as well as the women paying for this labour. In this way, it becomes clear what inequalities are perpetuated by these arrangements. Esplen (2009) discusses the invisibility of domestic work and the abuses that can exist within this invisibility. Research on global care chains explores displacement and missed familial care opportunities for women that are paid to provide care (Orozco, 2009). All this research provides a backdrop to the key issue of gender equality and the

exercise of equity, which also begs the question around the reinforcement of inequality within mechanisms for equality as care is relegated to poor women with limited access to education and 'prestigious career' paths.

Additionally, private arrangements of care as a mechanism for the reconciliation of motherhood and work, are problematic as they reinforce the public/private divide. This is because issues of care remained enmeshed in womanhood, and the private sphere of care arrangements are treated as gift relationships (Connell, 2005) that remain unacknowledged in the public. Private arrangements of care also make it possible for governments to escape the responsibility to create mechanisms that can support real equality, such as affordable care services (Esplen, 2009).

While maids are pivotal, husbands were revealed by research to be inconsistent sources of support for women in the reconciliation of motherhood and work. Connell (2005) discusses 'the really good husband', this can be described as the rare husband who "helps" with household and domestic tasks. Kabeer (2007) confirms that men, even in communities that believe in equality, only "help" with household work, meaning women retain longer working hours when paid and unpaid work is combined. In most of these communities, the business of care and associated ancillary roles such as cooking and cleaning is firmly carried out by women. The findings of this research confirm the arguments above, showing that in the research sample, men maintained a minimal share of the burden of care work. There is need for the research participants to remind, teach, and continually negotiate male participation in household work.

Furthermore, the research revealed a traditional mode of maleness whereby men viewed their contributions to be more linked with material provision for the family rather than emotional investment in care. As such men were willing to outsource their caring roles by paying for services that enabled them to retain their autonomy and minimize the demands on their time. This leaves the woman with the burden of providing emotional labour, limiting her pursuit of social pleasures. Thereby confirming the assertion that 'many of the fathers were continuing with their recreational pursuits…while the women found they had barely enough time to deal with childcare and housework' (Lupton, 2000: 59).

These arrangements are driven by social norms that defer provision to the men, care to the women, and place high demands of physical and emotional labour on women. Necessitating interventions that look at social norms that can challenge underlying social arrangements. Such arrangements create false equality where women have access to work opportunities but retain a larger burden of care and limited access to social life and recreation.

The preamble of CEDAW states that '… the role of women in procreation should not be a basis of discrimination…' (CEDAW, 1981: 2) This statement demonstrates that there is an awareness of challenges women face with the intersection of her biological role and the pursuit of own her life goals. The definition of discrimination provided in the Constitution of Zimbabwe was applied in this research and explored in the context above. This definition is progressive due to its enunciation of discrimination as conditions that subject one to restrictions that other people are exempt from, or where one is not afforded advantages others have (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). The lack of provisions to support motherhood and work leave women potentially competing for jobs with men who do not have the burden of care associated with motherhood. Furthermore, women can be left with little to no room for forming social relationships and access to leisure where their male partners can easily navigate the same needs.

Working long hours and travelling are incongruent with motherhood, so men excel in these areas and affirm commitment to their jobs. This is due to the work environment being structured around what Kiaye and

Singh (2013) refer to as the male base of performance in which excellent workers are those who work longer hours and are readily available for all assigned tasks. The performance model is completely ignorant of the social roles that women are burdened with. Similarly, assertions by Leon (2009) state that the '…equal opportunities at work approach…' is not enough to bring about a solution to the complex issue of gender equality; this suggests that gender blindness or gender neutrality will continue to leave in place solutions that create false equivalences (Connell 2005).

This research further confirms arguments made by Connell (2005) that the distinct challenge for gender equality remains to find an appropriate response for the reconciliation of motherhood and women's participation in public life. The research revealed that provisions to support the reconciliation of motherhood and work in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe mainly centre on maternity leave, breastfeeding and travel with infants in the first year of life. Such provisions only look at the unescapable biological functions associated with childbirth. There is no further insight into care arrangements such as school runs, cooking, cleaning and intangible emotional labour associated with motherhood.

Conclusion

While the results discussed here cannot be utilised to make generalised statements on discrimination against women, they point to the possibility of innate discrimination that results from a lack of deliberate efforts in awarding women opportunities and infrastructure to balance motherhood and work. Furthermore, these results reveal that the presence of women in the workplace is supported by the hiring of less privileged women to support care work. These are private arrangements women tend to make in order to manage the demands of work and home life; however, the question remains, where is the discussion of these private arrangements and negotiations within the gender equality discourse?

The research showed that women informants face substantive challenges at the intersections of motherhood and work. Lack of deliberate actions and provisions to help women balance motherhood and work becomes problematic when viewed in the context of gender equality. Women, as confirmed by this research, retain a large burden of unpaid care work, leaving them with little time to pursue leisure and rest, and leading many to forfeit opportunities in the workplace.

This research shows that while the project of equality has allowed some women to access opportunities in the public domain, arrangements made in the private domain have remained largely unchallenged. Thereby, women must contend with occupying both spaces as though these spaces are physically separate rather than fluid, feeding into and affecting each other.

Recommendations

This research revealed that women are largely dependent on private arrangements to support the reconciliation of motherhood and work in Zimbabwe. Household help was reported as a key support system for working women. This suggests that further research is critical, to investigate the connections between women working as maids and formally employed women, in order to clarify whether these arrangements result in equality for all women and whether "equality" is or should be the same thing for all women regardless of education levels and/or class.

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Runyararo is passionate about equity and social justice, and takes her involvement with communities as an opportunity to influence shifts in gender dynamics. Being a mother to a one daughter, Runyararo takes every opportunity to discuss and push back against patriarchal tendencies and toxic masculinities. In her spare time, she writes poetry mostly on gender issues, particularly violence against women.

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