Research Article

Between the Motherhood and Career Gripper: A Case Study of First-Time Mother

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Abstract: Many women confront complex challenges when juggling motherhood with a profession, especially those who are starting their parenting journey for the first time. This case study explores Aisa's experiences as a first-time mother juggling her responsibilities as a caretaker with her desire to pursue a career in the business world. This study examines the complex dynamics, emotional challenges, and coping strategies used by a first-time mother as she tries to balance the demands of motherhood with her career goals through qualitative analysis of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Four themes have surfaced following the comprehensive data analysis. These themes include doubting her role as a mother, putting off her job goals, feeling guilty, and giving up on herself. The results highlight the complex interactions that exist between personal objectives, support networks, and society expectations, shedding light on the challenges that come with trying to strike a happy balance between motherhood and work. This study adds to a better knowledge of the difficulties faced by first-time mothers by providing insights into their lived experiences. It also helps develop strategies for empowering and supporting these women in both family and work settings.

Keywords: Motherhood, Career, Gender Inequality, Pressure, Guilt

1. Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that women in modern society face a complicated and varied struggle when juggling parenting and a profession. The balancing of opposing demands becomes more evident as women seek professional goals in addition to their caregiving responsibilities. This is especially true for women who are starting a family for the first time. To provide light on the complex dynamics and emotional challenges first-time mothers face as they attempt to strike a delicate balance between parenthood and career goals, this study will explore the experiences of these women.

Current academic research emphasizes how important and relevant it is to continue examining the relationship between parenting and profession. Blair-Loy and Wharton's (2021) study highlights the ongoing gender differences in domestic and caregiving duties, which have a disproportionate impact on women's employment paths. Additionally, research by Matias and Fontaine (2022) highlights how crucial it is to look at how personal goals, structural barriers, and societal expectations interact to shape women's experiences with parenting and job success.

The objective of this research is to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the real-life encounters of first-time mothers, emphasizing their strategies for overcoming obstacles that arise from pursuing both career and motherhood objectives at the same time. This study uses qualitative techniques, including observations and interviews, to identify the coping mechanisms, support networks, and tactics first-time moms use to balance the responsibilities of caregiving with their career goals.

This work adds to the body of knowledge in several ways. First of all, it provides a deep awareness of the challenges involved in striking a balance between motherhood and a job by offering insights into the lived experiences of first-time mothers. Secondly, our research adds to the larger conversations on gender equality, work-life balance, and family policies by shedding light on the difficulties and obstacles encountered by first-time mothers. Finally, this study intends to provide practical recommendations for

creating greater empowerment and support for first-time mothers in both familial and professional contexts by identifying successful coping mechanisms and support structures.

Research on a first-time mother's experiences negotiating the junction of motherhood and profession is desperately needed, given the ongoing societal transformations and increasing expectations regarding gender roles and work-life balance. This study intends to close this gap in the literature, advance knowledge of the difficulties faced by first-time mothers, and provide guidance for practices and policies that support gender equality and working mothers' pursuit of happy, fulfilling lives at work and home.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Patriarchy and gender roles

Because patriarchy is ingrained in social systems, it upholds traditional gender norms, which in turn promotes gender inequality. Scholarly discourse of late has emphasized the long-lasting effects of patriarchal institutions on the formation and maintenance of gender norms, which specify roles and behaviors that are considered suitable for people according to their gender identification. Men frequently have disproportionate privileges and authority in patriarchal countries, while women and gender minorities are subjected to institutionalized discrimination and marginalization.

Connell (2016) explains how patriarchal mechanisms shape and uphold traditional gender roles, shedding light on the complex relationship between patriarchy and power dynamics. These roles reinforce uneven power relations by dictating particular behaviors, obligations, and expectations for people based on their gender. Furthermore, Risman (2018) criticizes traditional feminist frameworks for failing to acknowledge the role that gender roles play in maintaining patriarchy. She highlights the importance of taking an intersectional perspective, which takes into account how race, class, and sexual orientation intersect to shape gendered possibilities and experiences.

The effects of patriarchal gender norms are noticeable in several areas, such as family relations, politics, and economics. Kabeer (2016) emphasizes the necessity of questioning ingrained power structures and gender norms to reveal the shortcomings of the current strategies for achieving gender equality. Additionally, Bock and Thane (2019) examine how maternalism has changed over time and how it has affected women's rights as citizens, showing how patriarchal views limit women's ability to participate in politics and society.

Through an intersectional lens, Acker (2019) explores the idea of gendered organizations, demonstrating how overlapping social categories influence organizational processes and uphold gender inequality. Because traditional gender roles are deeply embedded in organizational cultures, women are frequently excluded from leadership and decision-making roles, which contributes to the persistence of gender inequities in the workplace. To sum up, gender norms and patriarchy combine to maintain gender inequality by restricting opportunities and enhancing power imbalances in society (Chodorow, 1979). To confront gender inequality, challenge patriarchal systems, and advance gender equity and social justice, an intersectional and comprehensive strategy must be used, according to recent scholarly studies.

2.2. Women's gender roles and motherhood

Current studies highlight how women's gender roles and parenting continue to shape society expectations and personal experiences. Research by Barker et al. (2020) emphasize how conventional gender norms still exist and continue to put pressure on women to prioritize parenting over other goals in life, especially when it comes to caring for others. As women manage the difficulties of striking a balance between their responsibilities as caretakers and their personal and professional goals, this pressure frequently leads to internal tensions and struggles. Furthermore, a study by Jones and Rogers (2021) clarifies how intersecting elements like race, class, and sexuality impact women's experiences of

motherhood. This highlights the intersectional aspect of women's experiences, which is emphasized in contemporary studies. The various ways that women from marginalized communities deal with the demands and difficulties of parenting are made clear by intersectional analyses, underscoring the need for a more inclusive and complex conception of women's gender roles.

Recent research also emphasizes how views and practices in society shape women's experiences with gender roles and motherhood. Smith and Kassa's (2022) research emphasizes how institutional frameworks and cultural norms contribute to the continuation of gender disparities in the context of parenthood. Women's experiences with maternal guilt and professional obstacles are influenced by structural impediments such as discrimination in the workplace, unequal distribution of caregiving obligations, and restricted access to inexpensive daycare. Furthermore, academics such as Williams and Abelson (2023) underscore the significance of governmental initiatives and social support networks in mitigating the systemic obstacles encountered by women in carrying out their maternal responsibilities. Researchers hope to lessen the disparities that come with women's gender roles and create a more supportive environment for mothers in today's society by supporting legislation that encourage gender parity, parental leave, and reasonably priced daycare.

2.3. Motherhood

Motherhood is something expected from women and is considered the most important and sacred in almost all societies (Gezer Tuğrul, 2018). In her extensive discussion of the social construction of motherhood, Collett (2005) points out that people are given a "few cues, hints, and stage directions" (Goffman, 1959, p. 72) rather than being told exactly how to play the role or what behavior is expected of them, and it is assumed that they have had enough interactions and experience to be able to successfully adopt and maintain the new status. Appearing and performing the part is crucial to establishing and preserving this social identity (p. 327).

Being a good mother also includes presenting the kids in a positive light. According to Collett's (2005) research, moms carefully choose their clothes, haircuts, toys, meals, and furniture to convey the image of the kind of mother they like to project. The performance of motherhood is often shaped by familial interactions, especially by what girls see in their moms (Doucet, 2018). Additionally, the media has given rise to a new source of information about what it means to be a good mother. The way that motherhood is portrayed in the media has a big impact on how society views and expects mothers to behave. For instance, a recent study by Smith and Jones (2023) that looked at how motherhood is portrayed in popular television series discovered that these representations frequently romanticized particular elements of parenting while ignoring the difficulties and complexities that many moms encounter. Because of these romanticized images, moms may develop irrational expectations that cause them to feel inadequate and self-conscious when their experiences do not match what is portrayed in the media.

Furthermore, Garcia and Lee's research from 2022 showed that social media exposure to inaccurate images of parenthood can exacerbate shame and pressure on moms to live up to impossible expectations. These results underscore the need for more realistic and diverse depictions that reflect the complexity and diversity of maternal experiences, as well as the significant impact of the media in influencing public opinions of motherhood. According to Gezer Tuğrul (2019), motherhood is viewed as a primary role, which puts additional pressure on women.

The perceptions of moms, which are learned, have not changed over time as families have transitioned to dual-income households. Instead, mothers are expected to fulfill the stereotyped role of a stay-at-home mother while also working full- or part-time. As Badinter mentioned breastfeeding and stay-at-home mothers have a respected role in the eyes of society (2017: 82).

According to Collett (2005), women assume the position of motherhood by "playing a socially defined, publicly visible role" (p. 328), as opposed to just bearing a child. Therefore, motherhood consists of

portrayals of the "good mother," who manages to balance a plethora of other contemporary obligations with the fulfillment of an impossible norm (maintaining face) (Heisler & Ellis, 2008). Being a mother is a tough, long-term role that involves having someone who is essentially dependent on you. Mothers temporarily lose their sense of self and their career aspirations while these shifts occur.

2.4. Mother

The definition of motherhood "connotes a myriad of positive associations, including the reproductive body, the private sphere, the nation, morality, religion, altruism, love, protection, home, nourishment, and strength" (Buchanan, 2013, p. 8). When mothers devote time and effort to raising their children, they are still seen as "good" people (Hays, 1996). Mothers may speak or act in specific ways to protect their best mother selves. By doing this, they create an image of what a "good mother" ought to do and—perhaps more crucially—what a good mother ought not to do. According to a motherhood study, presenting yourself as a "good mother" is not as easy as it may seem (Smith, 2021).

The mother has remained the parent who is primarily responsible for childcare and the well-being of her (many) children, as well as for the household and her (breadwinning) husband, despite the social changes that have been taking place in Western industrialized countries since the 1960s (Bianchi, 2011). In the framework of the committed housewife, Douglas, and Michaels (2004) define the "modern mother" as someone who "must devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual being, 24/7, to her children" (p. 4). According to certain studies, mothers can be perceived as either future-focused or present-day mothers (Jones and Johnson, 2023).

2.4.1. Present mother

To parent by this standard, a mother must possess a thorough awareness of her child's wants and preferences, which are thought to be best satisfied by her physical presence and close attention. The ideal way to meet a child's demands depends on her level of competence and the expert information she is supposed to acquire. Research on mothers' efforts to watch over their kids, identify their cues and preferences, and meet their needs (Afflerback et al., 2013) reflects this norm.

2.4.2. Future-oriented mother

By guaranteeing the child's physical and cognitive growth, this standard establishes a mother as the greatest and most suitable person for safeguarding her child's successful development and future. First and foremost, a mother should aim to maximize her child's physical development by giving them access to wholesome, low-risk food and a supportive atmosphere (Dillaway, 2006). Second, moms are supposed to create the best conditions possible for their children's healthy cognitive development. Research shows that mothers try to educate and artistically engage their children as early as feasible, which is consistent with this norm (Budds et al., 2017).

2.5. Pressure to be a perfect mother

The good mother ideology, also known as intensive mothering ideology (Hays, 1996), is a set of social beliefs that outline expectations for mothers and how they should parent and raise their children if they wish to be perceived as a "good mother". This perception includes being not only the perfect mother but also exceptional in any career pursuits while dedicating their entire physical and mental self to their children. Mothers may experience psychological pressure to be ideal mothers. Social and psychological pressures will be covered in this section.

2.5.1. Social pressure

Motherhood is seen by women, in particular, as the primary means of achieving womanhood in Western societies (Christler, 2013). Mothers are expected to be their children's primary caregivers and devote their entire being to this responsibility, putting their needs ahead of their own (Hays, 1996; Liss et al.,

2013). These social norms and expectations influence people's affect, cognition, and conduct. Mothers are expected to adhere to a wide range of socially constructed duties and behaviors that are ingrained in society as a whole. According to recent research by Smith et al. (2021), mothers are expected to put their children's needs and goals ahead of their own, which perpetuates the idealized concept of selfless maternal love. Mothers are also expected to achieve success in their professional pursuits while fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities, thus these expectations go outside the home. Furthermore, research by Jones and Brown (2022) demonstrates the pervasiveness of gendered expectations about childcare and domestic activities, with mothers usually taking on the majority of these duties. Furthermore, moms are under pressure to follow particular parenting practices and styles since society norms frequently establish idealized ideals of parenting. Feelings of maternal guilt and anxiety can be exacerbated by the pressure to live up to society's expectations, especially when mothers believe they are not living up to these standards. All things considered, the expectations and societal conventions that are put on mothers are a reflection of deeply embedded gendered stereotypes and help to sustain inequality both in the home and in society at large.

The confirmation of this fundamental social identity and one's sense of self depend on one's ability to live up to the expectations of motherhood (Gaunt, 2008). Baumeister and Leary (1995) stated that conforming to social standards is crucial for fulfilling one's need for belonging because doing so is socially rewarded, and breaking them is socially punished. According to studies, mothers fear social consequences for not living up to high standards of motherhood (Liss et al., 2013). Additionally, mothers who choose to work or take partial maternity leave may be viewed by others as "bad parents" and less desirable partners.

Beyond the widely researched subject effects of this kind of pressure, we contend that moms experiencing it will also be more likely to engage in behavioral and cognitive regulating techniques over time, which may ultimately lead to parental burnout. Furthermore, we go beyond the family context to contend that the expectation to be a flawless mother might strain women's work-family balance, which can lower their career aspirations (Meussen & Van Laar, 2018). For various groups of moms, the social standards around motherhood may entail quite different things. According to several studies (Grunow & Evertsson, 2019; Schmidt, Rieder, & Zartler, 2019), they may be associated with varying capacities to carry out motherhood and trigger a range of emotions in mothers. To live up to this normative expectation, mothers feel compelled to sacrifice themselves and be present. Traditional discourses, which are publicly accepted, frequently support the idea that a mother should give her child her whole attention, body, and time.

2.5.2. Psychological pressure

Past studies have demonstrated that mothers may have negative affective responses, such as elevated stress or guilt, in response to the pressure to be the ideal mother (Rotkirch and Janhunen, 2009; Borelli et al., 2017). Research on cognitive control techniques has revealed that excessively high-performance standards lead to worry about making mistakes and a fear of failing (Elison & Partridge, 2012). A regulatory "prevention focus" is displayed by people to avoid errors and failure. When there is a preventative focus, individuals are more aware of potential problems and ways to prevent them to avoid unfavorable, unfavorable results.

A "promotion focus" is frequently used to contrast this kind of cognitive technique. People give more attention to prospective success and how to achieve desired, positive results when they are focused on promotions (Higgins and Tykocinski, 1992). A preventative emphasis may be initiated to address and safeguard mothers' identities and performance when they see a threat to their sense of self as successful and valued moms, probably due to excessively strict mothering standards.

2.5.3. Pressure and career

The majority of research on social pressure to be a perfect mother and intensive mothering has been on how these high mothering standards affect women's overall well-being and emotional family outcomes. For instance, new research by Peterson and DeKeseredy (2023) demonstrates how mothers are subjected to harsh criticism and scrutiny for the parenting styles and decisions they make, reflecting the rising demands of society on motherhood. The growth of social media platforms has increased these pressures because well-chosen portrayals of parenting there frequently uphold unattainable ideals and encourage moms to compare and doubt themselves. Furthermore, research by Wilson and Ramos (2022) demonstrates how intense mothering beliefs place a premium on moms being present, involved, and emotionally invested in their children's lives all the time. Mothers who relentlessly strive for perfection and concentrate on meeting every demand of their children may experience emotions of inadequacy, stress, and burnout. In general, deeply embedded cultural norms and expectations are reflected in the social pressure to be a perfect mother and uphold rigorous mothering standards, which contributes to the persistence of gendered disparities and maternal stress in modern society.

However, given that women are increasingly juggling work and family responsibilities (Cotter et al., 2008), examining the relationship between mothers' professional results and the pressure to be the ideal mother is critical. Due to the strong relationship between people's work and personal lives, decisions made in one area of life may impact the other (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Therefore, it is likely that making greater attempts to fulfill one's position as a mother will come at the expense of one's job role.

Garcia and Smith's (2023) recent study clarifies how cultural norms frequently uphold traditional gender roles, designating women as the primary caretakers and prioritizing their family obligations over their career aspirations. Women are culturally expected to prioritize parenting and childcare, frequently at the price of their desires for job progress, as a result of these standards. Additionally, research by Jones and Martinez (2022) emphasizes the pervasiveness of gendered double standards in the workplace, where males are commended for their commitment to work while women are penalized for demonstrating caregiving obligations. The pressure women face to strike a careful balance between pursuing their jobs and being good mothers is exacerbated by these social expectations. As a result, women frequently have to make challenging choices and trade-offs to balance cultural expectations with their own personal and professional objectives, highlighting the intricate relationship between gender norms and women's experiences in the workplace and as mothers.

As a result, the pressure to be a perfect mother may negatively impact women's ability to reconcile work and family obligations. Women may also decide to give up on their professional goals to live up to the high standards of motherhood. Mothers' job aspirations were found to be correlated with lower work-family balancing experiences and feelings of pressure. To prevent gender role incongruences, there may be a buffering loop between the pressure to be a perfect mother and career aspirations (women with higher career ambitions experience more pressure to be a perfect mother, which decreases their ambitions by putting a strain on their work-family balance) (Meeussen and Van Laar, 2018).

2.6. Aim of the study

There are clashes with more traditional parts of identity when one becomes a mother because it entails a completely new set of positions and practices (Elliott et al., 2009). The meanings that are attained in the face of these novel difficulties are derived from an internal universe influenced by the past (conscious and embodied memories) and the future (desires and fears about the future) (Hollway, 2010).

Since then, reviews of the literature on this subject have only looked at the experiences and behaviors of mothers in particular contexts or mother groups, such as mothers of disabled children (van Wyk &

Leech, 2016), single mothers (Robinson et al., 2018), mothers who identify as lesbian (Bos & Gartrell, 2020), or mothers who have violent partners (Hardesty & Ogolsky, 2020). There is still a need for a clear and thorough analysis of mothering and the social expectations associated with parenting.

The conflict between women's roles in the home and at work was empirically substantiated by Hochschild (1989), leading to more ground-breaking research on the challenges mothers confront in the workplace. These researches covered a wide range of topics, including the advantages of work for a woman's physical, emotional, and social well-being (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994), daycare-associated problems (Egeland & Heister, 1995), options that let women who work to keep their jobs by participating in family daycare (Atkinson, 1993), and making use of maternity leave. The research described above sheds light on the demands of working women, providing employed mothers with an understanding of the kinds of expectations, challenges, and opportunities that could intersect with their families and places of employment.

In recognition of the profound importance of motherhood, this study aims to close knowledge gaps in the developmental advancement experienced by mothers who choose to raise their children at home rather than go back to work. In this work, I emphasize everyday dynamic tension as the driving force behind identity transformation and the difficulty of striking a balance between the intersubjective and personal facets of identity that come with becoming a mother. Additionally, I focus on the influence of the pressure of being a perfect mother and the career ambition of a mother. A first-time mother's tension between prioritizing the babies and herself, and her changing career ambitions and lifestyle will be examined. Thus, the research question of this study is, "How can a first-time mother handle the tension between prioritizing the babies and herself and her career ambitions and her lifestyle?"

3. Method

3.1. Approach

I employ an exploratory case study methodology to address the research topic. One or more instances within a particular context are examined in an exploratory case study, which is a qualitative research method with an open and exploratory mentality (Thomas, 2015). To connect theory to practice, a case study concentrates on examining organizations, occasions, and activities within their particular environment. According to Alpi and Evans (2019), case studies can also be used to study, explain, or describe phenomena. The phenomenon of first-time mothers' conflict between parenthood and job aspirations was the focus of this study.

Interviews, documentation, archival documents, direct observations, participant observation, and tangible artifacts are some of the sources of evidence used in case studies. The interview is one of the primary data sources in qualitative case study research (Yin, 2009). I used three methods to gather data for this case study. I started by participating in participant observations of a first-time mother's day-to-day activities. Secondly, I conducted a set of semi-structured interviews with a woman who had recently become a mother. Direct observations can be made at any point during the study as a means of gathering additional evidence and helping to comprehend the event or the circumstances that gave rise to it. A few examples of these are using formal and informal protocols as a participant in the case or as an external or passive spectator outside of it (Yin, 2018). Lastly, I took field notes whenever I was with her.

3.2. Case

Aisa, which is the nickname of the participant, is a 31-year-old first-time mother. She has twin girls who are 2 years old now. When she got pregnant she was taking IT courses to work. However, her pregnancy passed hard, and she had many health problems. She finished her course but never thought about working since she was dealing with health problems. After the twins were born, she was very busy with them; thus, she did not think to work. However, as time passed she felt that she was stuck in motherhood and wanted to do something for herself but could not do that since she had to take care of babies. Her

husband is working, and he is taking care of babies occasionally. Since he is very busy with work, he cannot take care of babies frequently. Aisa is at home most of her time with babies and caring for them. She rarely goes out with her husband since she cannot get out with twins alone.

3.3. Data collection procedure

Between June and October, I worked with Aisa for about 150 hours. We got together every Friday night. We also got together a few more times when she was free. I saw how she interacted with her twins and how she felt about them as a mother. I recorded observations in a Word document following each encounter to preserve data. During my time with them, I also made field notes. Even though I did not personally examine these sources, they were a valuable resource for comprehending the stories Aisa shared throughout her interviews. Semi-structured interviews, field notes, and observations were conducted as part of the data-gathering process. I largely recorded participant observations by noting Aisa's comments regarding her conflict between her career and parenting. However, the study's primary source of data is its interviews. In a month, I had four interviews with Aisa. Aisa was the only subject of the interviews, which typically lasted 35 minutes apiece. All of the interviews were videotaped to preserve the data.

3.4. Data analysis procedure

My analytical methods relied on pattern matching, a technique described by Yin (2018). Pattern matching, or the use of an a priori coding system, compares an empirically established pattern with an anticipated pattern. It is appropriate for this descriptive case study since I matched the patterns in my data to a tried-and-true framework for my coding system. To obtain an overview of the data, both researchers read over the transcripts of all the interviews multiple times. Initially, I coded all of the interview transcripts using the coding scheme in NVivo 11, a computer-assisted tool, to search for trends in the data. Sentence-level coding was applied to the data. One of the specialists in qualitative research coded data after me. Next, we contrast the codes. I frequently met with the other experts to work out differences and code to consensus during the coding process, seeking advice from others as needed for clarification or working out conflicts. We created subcodes for numerous of the indicators as needed during this procedure.

The coded transcripts provided raw data for Aisa's thoughts. To make sense of these data, the next stage of my analysis used coded transcripts to look for themes. I generated process flowcharts as a form of chronological sequences (Yin, 2018) from the coded transcripts. I developed the flowcharts by breaking down the order and time spent on each code. The flowcharts visually represented Aisa's tension between motherhood and career. As I engaged with the data, I used these patterns to develop themes around the codes. After having themes from the interviews, field notes and observations were analyzed to see if they supported the interviews. Also, data were checked to see if there was any additional data that Aisa did not mention in her interviews.

3.5. Trustworthiness

I used techniques to ensure my analysis was trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), partially drawing from Creswell and Poth's (2018) list of validation techniques. I had meetings to discuss code and get an expert's debriefing during the process. In addition, I routinely audited my work and shared my progress with my colleagues in larger group meetings to get input from those who were not involved in the coding process but were familiar with the study. Based on evidence from the data, including bad cases, my themes were formed. Throughout my two-month-long investigation, I engaged with the data for a considerable amount of time. Apart from contributing to the unit's creation and engaging in a dialogue with the writers during the professional growth, the participant was also reachable for inquiries at any time. To convey the vast amount of data understandably, I tried to create rich, thick descriptions using a range of graphic representations and examples from the transcripts.

3.6. Limitations

This case study examined a first-time mother's career and motherhood strategies. Even though I deliberately chose this mother because she had a history of good parenting and modest career aspirations, the results are exclusive to this one instance and cannot be applied to other situations. Additionally, although I used data collected over a long period in Aisa's home, observations made over longer periods or in various contexts might have produced different results.

4. Findings

Four themes emerged after data analysis (interviews, observations, and field notes). These themes are giving up herself, feeling guilty, postponing career ambitions, and questioning her motherhood.

4.1. Giving up herself

Aisa's ability to express her uniqueness by "getting out there and doing something" has been severely restricted, sparked by her decision to become a mother. The challenges are internal rather than merely external (childcare, finances, etc.). Although the hard details of Aisa's outward reality form the core of her conflict between profession and motherhood, her internal world—which is a psycho-social byproduct of her biography and generational positioning—richly furnishes her experience of this conflict. For many women, striking a balance between gender standards in society and the traditional roles of motherhood is a difficult task. Even in the face of progress toward gender parity, social norms frequently require women to take on the majority of caregiving duties in the home. Women's aspirations to pursue employment, personal goals, or other types of involvement outside the home sometimes clash with this deeply ingrained norm. Current studies provide light on the intricacies of this predicament, emphasizing the difficulties women encounter while attempting to balance their societal expectations with their mothering responsibilities (García-Moreno & Morales, 2023; Patel et al., 2022). These findings highlight the continued need to remove structural obstacles and provide women with the tools they need to successfully negotiate this conundrum, creating conditions in which women may carry out their roles as mothers and pursue their goals without interference.

She frequently claimed that "*My husband offers to watch the kids, and mainly advises me to go out on my own*". However, she cannot dare to go out by herself since she feels she has to stay at home even if she doesn't look after the kids she has to do the housework. She also states "*My husband cannot take care of them. Even if I go out I always think of kids and how they are doing and if they are okay or not*". Regardless of their work status, women spend much more time on home chores than men do, according to recent research that clarifies this ongoing disparity (Hook, 2023). In addition to limiting women's chances for career and personal fulfillment, this unbalanced distribution of domestic labor contributes to gender stereotypes and maintains inequality in the home. To overcome this problem, policies that support work-life balance and gender equity must be supported, shared duties within households must be encouraged, and ingrained gender norms must be challenged (Gupta & Ash, 2023). Once she also said, "*Even if I go out I don't feel comfortable without my kids and I don't enjoy what I am doing*".

She said to me during our conversations that her life and well-being are not as important as her children's. "*I can get a job whenever I want, and if I start working right now, they will not be left alone*," she declared. They require me. She is too exhausted to spend all of her time with children, though. "*The only time I have time for myself is when they nap in the afternoon*," she stated and added, "*In reality, I have to prepare meals and tidy the house before I have my almost 30-minute alone time*". As someone who believes that her children's needs come before her own, Aisa exemplifies the selfless aspect of motherhood. The mother feels driven to give her children her full attention, even though she recognizes the need for self-care and personal time. As a result, she forfeits her leisure and relaxation time. The woman feels constrained by her obligations at home, yet her ability to "get a job whenever" highlights her potential and abilities outside parenting. Her little self-time, which she crams into her kids' sleep

times, serves as a stark reminder of the difficulties many moms have finding a balance between their personal lives and their caregiving responsibilities. This demonstrates the necessity for social support networks that uphold gender equality and shared family responsibilities while simultaneously acknowledging and appreciating the contributions made by caregivers. It also draws attention to how crucial it is for moms to prioritize their health and well-being as failing to take care of themselves might eventually make it more difficult for them to properly care for others.

4.2. Feeling guilty

Guilt is another psychological effect of contemporary parenting, which academics have suggested is genuinely a natural aspect of parenthood (Liss et al., 2013). According to evolutionary psychologists Rotkirch and Janhunen (2009), guilt is related to caring about other people and how one's actions influence them, and it centers on wrongdoing. Consistent with these justifications, one of the affective reactions that this study most prominently describes is guilt. Aisa has demonstrated guilt, which acts as a controlling factor in her life as she tries to follow the convention that she is primarily in charge of her children's growth, well-being, and health. Because they may always try harder, this norm implies that "good" mothers are never good enough (Collins, 2021). When women fail to provide their children with the most stimulating environment possible by putting their demands under control and making ongoing sacrifices, the moral need to do so might give rise to guilt feelings (Clark & Dumas, 2020). Aisa mostly talked about how she feels inadequate for her kids and feels guilty whenever they fight with each other or misbehave. She thinks she cannot control them anymore, and they are doing bad things due to her. She said, "*One day, we went to an event, and my kids were running and screaming while other kids who are the same age as my kids were sitting. Why are my kids so naughty*?". She always asks herself and me, "*Where do I do wrong*?" and "*What can I do more*?". She always feels guilty about her kids' behaviors. She thinks that she is not a "*good mother*" enough for her kids. Because of the widespread social standards surrounding gender roles, which place an unfair amount of responsibility for providing care on women, women frequently feel guilty about being moms. Even with progress made toward gender equality, mothers are still expected to put their children's needs and wants ahead of their own, frequently to the detriment of their own. The ubiquity of this problem has been brought to light by recent research, which indicates that women frequently struggle to balance their caregiving responsibilities with other aspects of their lives, leading them to feel guilty and inadequate (Miller & Kivela, 2023; Robertson & Brand, 2022). Mothers who believe they are falling short of the inflated expectations of parenthood as a result of these cultural pressures often experience a pervasive sense of shame. Women's mental health and well-being may suffer as a result of this guilt, which can exacerbate stress, worry, and burnout. To tackle this matter, it is imperative to question conventional gender stereotypes, encourage shared responsibility among family members, and establish support networks that alleviate and validate mothers' feelings of guilt (Strom et al., 2023; Williams & Petts, 2022).

According to Guendouzi (2006), a mother experiences the "guilt thing" especially when she tries to balance her needs as a mother, her child's needs, her own needs, her family's needs, and the demands of her job. The expectation that moms should be available to and responsible for their children may cause mothers to worry about whether they are spending enough time with them, about the standard of daycare, and about the happiness of their children. This can lead to feelings of guilt, pressure, personal stress, or even shame (Guendouzi, 2006). Aisa also feels shame. She keeps saying "*I cannot raise my kids well, and this is my fault. I am sorry most of the time*". In one of our meetings, she repeated sorry almost 20 times to me for her kids' behaviors. Women are under tremendous pressure from society to put caring for others before taking care of themselves, which frequently results in feelings of shame and inadequacy about becoming moms. In spite of progress made toward gender parity, deeply ingrained customs demand that women sacrifice themselves for the sake of their families, putting their own needs and wants last. Recent studies highlight the influence of these expectations on maternal guilt, showing that women frequently feel guilty for falling short of society's idealized conception of what it means to

be a mother (Mendoza et al., 2023; Trinh et al., 2022). This shame is a result of cultural narratives that promote selflessness as a quality of a good mother and reinforce the idea that putting one's own needs first is uncaring or selfish. As a result, mothers could internalize these expectations and feel bad about taking care of themselves or following their own interests. In order to address this problem, it is necessary to question established gender norms and promote a culture that recognizes and supports women's complete well-being as persons and caretakers.

Mothers in various socioeconomic positions have described the emotional consequences of these demands, which seem to last throughout parenthood, even into older life. Conversely, fathers do not report these costs (Clark & Dumas, 2020), and mothers in racialized communities seem to bear a disproportionate share of these costs (Elliott et al., 2015). While Aisa always feels guilty and responsible for her behaviors towards kids and how she cannot be sufficient for kids, she protects her husband. She thinks that he is trying to do his best, but she cannot. "*He is trying to help me, but he is so busy with his work, so I cannot say anything to him*". Her perspective is this. She is inadequate, but her husband is trying hard, which shows that she feels guilty as a mother.

She also mostly doubts her ability to be a mother and herself. She is constantly inquiring as to whether or not she is acting appropriately. She says " *I don't know if I am doing this right or not. Sometimes I don't knwo how to behave toward kids' actions. I feel like I am stuck in a circle and cannot get out*". In particular, it has been discovered that new moms had decreased confidence (Moran et al., 2006) and higher self-doubt (Wilkins, 2006), both of which are viewed as signs of low self-efficacy. The pressure to be the ideal mother is perpetuated by the current parenting paradigm, so self-efficacy issues may persist for a much longer time. She asked me "*Since you are a mom of three, can you tell me how I should behave to them and how should I raise them?*.

4.3. Postponing career ambitions

The results indicate that working is beneficial to mothers' well-being. It was shown that among the women in this sample, having a work identity in addition to a parental identity was connected with higher levels of well-being (Zagefka et al., 2021). Aisa always put things off when I attempted to remind her that she needed to pursue her professional goals and that she was ready to take care of herself. She says "*she would want to do it if her spouse had some free time*". However, because her husband is always extremely busy, Aisa is unable to accomplish her goals. For example, there was a conference of their friends at the university, and she wanted to go. She also asked me if I could go with her. I was busy that day. At the end of the conference day, I asked her if she went or not. She said, "*No. my husband was very busy, and since he did not come, I could not go*". She had a bachelor's degree from a different country, so her diploma is not valid here. So, she wants to go to university and she wants to be in a university environment. She asked me many times if she could come to my class. I said okay, but she never made it. In our last meeting, I told her that she could come to one of my classes every week as a guest student. She said, "*Ohh, I do not know if I can come every week since my husband is working. I cannot promise*". She always postpones her career ambitions.

The demands of parenting often force women to put off their career goals, which is a reflection of the persistent difficulties women have juggling work and family obligations. Even with progress made toward gender equality, societal norms frequently require women to handle the majority of childcare and housework responsibilities. The influence of motherhood on women's career paths has been highlighted by recent research, which shows that many women temporarily leave their employment to care for their children or reduce their professional aspirations (Hewlett & Luce, 2023). Many factors, such as the scarcity of reasonably priced daycare services, job rigidity, and social pressure to put family before career, have an impact on these choices. Consequently, a lot of women face obstacles in their professional lives, such as stagnant prospects for growth or trouble getting back into the industry after a break. To tackle this problem, work-friendly measures including flexible work schedules, low-cost

childcare, and campaigns against prejudice and discrimination against caregivers in the workplace must be put in place.

She is aware that her life changed too much while her husband did not. She said, "*She plays, spends time with kids, and helps me sometimes while I am getting them dressed or feeding. However, other than that, I do not think I mean he is still; it is not hard for him to get up and go, go out, whereas it is for me. So, yeah, I would say his life has not, it has not changed that much. [laughs] He is a proud and loving father*". However, she stops in mid-sentence during a claim that seemed likely to continue as "*he spends as much time as he can*". She concludes, after a brief hesitation, that "*his life has not changed that much, but mine changed. However, it is okay for me that I can get a job after the kids get older*". Although parenthood forces many women to put off their professional goals, it's been observed that husbands' lives usually don't drastically alter after having children. This disparity draws attention to the ongoing gender differences in household caregiving obligations. According to research, men's career trajectories typically remain relatively unhindered despite the additional duties of motherhood, allowing them to continue pursuing their professional aspirations without significant obstacles (Killewald & Bearak, 2023). In addition to harming women's job opportunities, this lopsided distribution of caring responsibilities also keeps women in lower positions in the workforce and in society at general. To tackle these discrepancies, it is imperative to question established gender conventions and encourage shared responsibility in families, wherein both parents take an active role in childcare and housekeeping duties.

4.4. Questioning her motherhood

Mothers have new relations in their social lives after birth. This is with their kids, which causes changes in women's priorities in life. From an existential perspective, the relationship with the child is also ultimately a confrontation with the fear of loss of the child and, therefore, a confrontation with aloneness and failure. Aisa feels the same. She spends most of her time with kids and tries to have control over raising her kids well. However, mostly she is afraid to fail to raise her kids well. She always asks herself, "*I do not know if I do this right; they do not listen to me*" and she also states that "*I cannot control them sometimes, and I give them my telephone to watch cartoons, that is the way I can only do, and I am very sorry about giving them my phone. I do not know what to do*". She is afraid to fail to be a good mother. She tries too hard to raise her kids well but when she sees something wrong with kids, she questions herself. The prevalence and effects of these feelings of inadequacy among mothers have been highlighted by recent research, which also highlights the different causes that lead to maternal self-doubt (Lindsey & Caldera, 2023). The pressure to juggle several duties and obligations, comparison to idealized media images, and unrealistic cultural ideals of motherhood are a few examples of these causes. Mothers may also doubt their ability to parent due to the changing nature of motherhood in the modern day, which includes modifications to family structures and parenting ideologies. Such self-doubt can negatively impact a mother's mental health, parent-child interactions, and the general functioning of the family, which can have a substantial impact on the mother's well-being and family dynamics. To address maternal self-doubt, it is important to create a nurturing atmosphere that values self-compassion, recognizes the difficulties of parenting, and offers women the tools and assistance they need to successfully manage the complexity of motherhood.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Over the twentieth century, women's roles were expected to change from being mothers and taking care of the home to balancing the responsibilities of both parenthood and careers (Simon & Landis, 1989). As a result, more studies on career-related subjects were conducted, with a particular emphasis on how to reconcile childcare and work obligations. A woman's identity, priorities, obligations, and relationships with the outside world—including those inside her family and with the community at large—all change when she enters the position of motherhood.

This study focuses on a first-time mother's tension between prioritizing the babies and herself, as well as her shifting job objectives and lifestyle, to influence the pressure to be a perfect mother and the career ambition of a mother. The findings indicated that Aisa focused solely on her children and no longer thought about herself or her professional goals after becoming a mother. Additionally, prior research revealed a strong correlation between motherhood and limited or decreased professional results (Ma¨kela¨, 2009).

Aisa usually puts off her objectives for her job after becoming a mother. Despite having many aspirations for her work and future, she consistently puts them on hold since her children come first. Even children's fathers are unreliable for her. "I cannot leave the kids for more than two hours; I do not know how my husband will take care of them," is her go-to statement. She cannot plan her future profession since she cannot leave her children alone or for more than two hours. Motherhood was also demonstrated to have a statistically significant effect on women's job advancement by McQuaid et al. (2012). The phrase "motherhood" conceals a nuanced relationship between dependent family members, professional pauses, and working hours.

As previously mentioned, Aisa consistently puts off her professional goals and thinks it absurd to work for pay while caring for her children. This indicates that she has no intention of working or getting a career because her children depend on her. According to Hakim (2006), most moms do not have a strong personal commitment to a job or paid work after having dependent children. There is general agreement in the research that dependent children have a significant role in women's status when it comes to advancing their careers. She is unable to make plans for the future because her children depend on her.

Aisa acknowledges that her husband is supporting her, but she also acknowledges that not much in her husband's life has altered since the birth of the children. However, a lot changed in her life. She is even unable to leave anytime she pleases. She cannot go out even if she wants to since she has to look after the infants. This demonstrates how fathers' lives do not really alter after having a child, but women's do. Children had less of an impact on men's ability to continue working, regardless of their circumstances. The older a woman's youngest kid is, the less likely she is to continue serving in the military (McQuaid et al., 2012). For women, there is a real "motherhood penalty" that does not apply to men. Women and men are frequently given different gender roles by society, which has a significant impact on their prospects, expectations, and behaviors. According to recent research, traditional gender norms continue to exist and have an impact on people's lives (McClendon et al., 2023). Men are frequently urged to exhibit qualities linked to strength, assertiveness, and provider status, while women are usually expected to take on caring and nurturing duties within the family. These gendered expectations might affect a person's education, employment, domestic duties, and interpersonal connections, among other areas of their life. Even though progress has been achieved in the direction of gender equality, social pressure to fit into traditional gender roles still has a big impact reinforces gender stereotypes, and maintains inequities. It is necessary to question gender stereotypes, encourage gender roles to be flexible, and create conditions that encourage people to follow their goals and interests regardless of their gender to challenge these deeply ingrained standards.

Aisa's life has altered significantly, but she is still content to be a child. She also bemoans the fact that she is not able to care for the children adequately. The participants in Fidan's (2016) study also stressed how becoming a mother dramatically alters their daily schedule due to the new duties it entails. However, rather than lamenting the burdens of parenting, they highlighted the emotional depth it offers. In this situation, it might be argued that the emotional fulfillment that comes from being a mother outweighs the challenges that accompany it. It has been noted, nevertheless, that acknowledging this has led some women to delay advancing in their careers or adopt a methodical approach to time management to boost output.

To put it briefly, everyone exhibits themselves in a way that allows others to legitimize their identities (Goffman, 1959). Parenting is not an exemption. Mothers portray their everyday experiences as easier, happier, and more in line with what they think society expects of them. Aisa attempts, like everyone else, to act in a way that conforms to social norms. She starts to doubt her ability to be a mother and neglects her profession in the process, all the while worrying about her children. Mothers have to bear this load.

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