



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Complex Challenges of Balancing Caregiving and Career Aspirations among Women in Public Sector Universities in Pakistan

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This qualitative study explores the intricate challenges that women in public sector universities in Pakistan face while balancing caregiving responsibilities for family members with their career aspirations. Interviews with 48 women in various roles, and thematic analysis revealed significant findings. The study uncovers challenges such as the struggle to harmonize family duties with career ambitions, conflicts regarding time management and work-life balance, and the emotional toll of managing caregiving and career advancement. Additionally, the study identifies coping strategies these women employ, highlighting their resilience and adaptability. These strategies involve the importance of organizational support in achieving work-life balance, the influence of religious commitment in finding fulfillment in caregiving roles, and the crucial assistance provided by family members, particularly supportive in-laws and mothers. Overall, this study underscores the significance of addressing the unique challenges faced by women caregivers, not only for gender equity but also to promote diversity, inclusivity, and gender equality in the workplace.

Introduction

The shifting landscape of the role of women in contemporary society is characterized by significant transformations over the years. Increasingly, women are actively engaged in pursuing careers while simultaneously assuming caregiving responsibilities within their families. This complex and intricate dynamic, often referred to as a delicate balancing act, where women navigate the domains of family caregiving and career (Brown & Williams, 2018). This has emerged as a focal point of scholarly investigation within the field of gender studies and work-life balance (Thompson & Walker, 2019). This study aims to comprehensively explore the multifaceted challenges encountered by women in their efforts to harmonize these dual roles and, correspondingly, to assess the profound ramifications of such a balancing act on women's well-being and career paths.

The evolution of the role of women has been a gradual process, influenced by shifting societal norms and policy changes. Historically, women were predominantly confined to the domestic sphere, primarily responsible for caregiving duties (Gerson, 2010). Consequently, their opportunities for career advancement were often constrained by these familial obligations. The changing social paradigms have since paved the way for a broader participation of women in professional careers while still shouldering caregiving responsibilities.

This study looked into the complex dimensions of this balancing act and provided a comprehensive analysis of the associated challenges. It is crucial to understand the complexities that women encounter as they navigate between these two essential domains. Moreover, this study endeavors to shed light on the repercussions of these challenges which extend beyond the individual level to affect societal dynamics and gender equality in the broader context of the workforce.

Literature Review

Gender roles and societal expectations have historically confined women to caregiving roles which frequently intersect with their career aspirations. In Pakistan, a nation entrenched in a deeply patriarchal culture, women confront distinctive challenges in reconciling caregiving responsibilities with career advancement. This literature review explores the intricate interplay between caregiving and women's career development, illuminating the barriers and opportunities encountered by women in their pursuit of professional success while simultaneously fulfilling caregiving roles (Anderson, 2017).

Gender Role Expectations and Caregiving Responsibilities in Pakistan

In Pakistan, deep-rooted traditional gender roles assign women the primary role of caregivers within the family structure. Women are tasked with managing household duties, caring for children and elderly family members, and often supporting extended family networks. These caregiving responsibilities can serve as substantial obstacles to women's career advancement, thereby limiting their full participation in the workforce (Afzal, 2018; Khan, 2019).

Academic Achievement and Professional Ambitions

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by caregiving roles, Pakistani women have made significant strides in educational attainment. Increasing number of women are pursuing higher education and entering into the professional workforce. Nevertheless, they frequently encounter resistance stemming from societal norms and familial expectations, potentially undermining their career aspirations (Rashid & Chaudhry, 2017; Sultana & Arsalan, 2020). Thus, the workforce participation of women in Pakistan remains comparatively low influenced by factors such as limited access to job opportunities and pervasive gender discrimination. Caregiving responsibilities

further curtail their ability to engage in full-time employment, resulting in fewer prospects for career advancement (Saleem & Loughnan, 2019).

Systems of Support and Associated Difficulties

The limited availability of support systems, such as affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements, in Pakistan places a significant burden on women who are trying to balance their caregiving responsibilities with their careers. The societal stigmatization of women who prioritize their careers can exacerbate these challenges, leading to internal conflicts and potentially hindering women's career advancement and economic independence. (Ali & Ahmad, 2016; Mustafa & Khan, 2018). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including policy changes, workplace reforms, and a shift in societal attitudes towards gender roles and work-life balance.

Role of Policy and Advocacy

Government policies and advocacy initiatives have aimed to rectify gender disparities within Pakistan's workforce. Programs promoting women's empowerment and gender equality have been launched, however, substantial challenges persist. Comprehensive policies that specifically address the unique needs of working women including those related to caregiving, are indispensable for meaningful progress (Niaz, 2018).

Cultural and Societal Transformations

Societal norms and cultural attitudes concerning women's roles in Pakistan are gradually evolving. An augmented awareness of the significance of women's career advancement and the economic benefits of women in the workforce is gradually challenging traditional gender norms (Malik & Alvi, 2020; Nadeem & Malik, 2019).

The balancing act between caregiving and women's career advancement in Pakistan is a multifaceted issue. Gender roles, educational attainment, workforce participation, support systems, policy initiatives, and cultural changes all exert a pivotal influence on the opportunities and challenges women face in their careers. Resolving these issues and promoting gender equality in the workplace necessitates a multifaceted approach, encompassing shifts in societal attitudes, the implementation of supportive policies, and sustained advocacy for women's rights and opportunities. Only through such comprehensive endeavors can Pakistani women fully realize their potential and contribute substantially to the country's economic and social development.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this qualitative study is rooted in two primary theoretical perspectives that contribute to a better comprehension of the intricate dynamics encompassing women's management of caregiving responsibilities and their pursuit of career advancement within the context of public sector women's universities in Pakistan.

Role theory proposes that individuals assume multiple roles in society, each associated with distinct expectations, norms, and obligations (Biddle, 1979). In this investigation, women are presumed to concurrently occupy roles as caregivers and professionals. This theoretical framework aids in comprehending the challenges that arise when individuals juggle numerous roles and the strategies they employ to fulfill these roles.

Coping theory, as elucidated by Folkman and Lazarus (1984), facilitates the interpretation of the diverse coping mechanisms utilized by women as they strive to strike a balance between caregiving responsibilities and the pursuit of a career. This theory provides insight into how women effectively manage stress, emotional pressures, and the demands associated with their dual roles.

These two theoretical perspectives jointly inform the research questions, data collection methods, and analytical approaches employed in this study. They contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles women encounter and the strategies they employ in reconciling the demands of caregiving and career advancement. Additionally, these theoretical frameworks guide the study's implications emphasizing on the significance of fostering inclusive work environments, developing supportive policies, and raising awareness to promote gender equality and empower women in both their personal and professional spheres.

Material and Methods

The research employed a qualitative research approach to collect and analyze data. Qualitative research is a methodological approach that aims to dig deeply into understanding the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of individuals in a particular context. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research seeks to explore the richness and nuances of human experiences and the social phenomena under investigation.

In this specific study, the qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate due to the nature of the research questions and the complex, multifaceted nature of the topic. The study sought to gain profound insights into how women in public sector universities in Pakistan navigate the intricate environment of caregiving responsibilities and career advancement. These topics involve personal experiences, emotions, social dynamics, and individual strategies, which are best explored through qualitative methods.

Population and Sample Selection

The sample was derived from eight public sector universities. The rationale behind selecting these specific institutions lay in their consistent administrative structures, encompassing promotion protocols, selection procedures, seniority hierarchies, salary frameworks, and basic pay scales (BPS). These attributes, particularly when compared to their counterparts in the private sector, made them a suitable focus for this study. These universities were strategically distributed across four cities:

Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, and Lahore. This selection was made for its logistical convenience in accessing both participants and organizational settings.

Study Participants

The study encompassed a total of 48 female participants. Out of this group, 30 held senior positions in university management, including roles such as Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, Registrars, Treasurers, and other representatives within the management structure, all falling within cadre/basic pay scale (BPS) 18 or higher. The remaining 18 participants occupied junior positions corresponding to cadre/BPS 17, including titles like Assistant Controllers, Assistant Registrars, Assistant Treasurers, and Assistant Directors. These participants shared demographic characteristics that were similar to those of the senior women.

Data Collection Method

To gather data that could provide a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena, the researchers opted for semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between flexibility and structure. They allow participants to express themselves in their own words, share their unique experiences, and provide detailed narratives. At the same time, these interviews are guided by a set of predetermined questions, ensuring that key aspects related to caregiving and career advancement are covered systematically.

Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate because they provide a framework for discussion while also allowing participants the freedom to elaborate on topics that are most relevant to them. This approach is particularly valuable when exploring sensitive and personal subjects, such as the challenges and strategies women employ in managing dual responsibilities

Data Collection Procedure

The interviews were conducted through a combination of face-to-face and virtual interactions, depending on the preferences and accessibility of the participants. Each interview initiated with open-ended questions that centered on the participants' experiences, challenges, and strategies concerning caregiving responsibilities and career advancement. Additionally, probing questions were employed to get deeper insight into themes that emerged from the study's theoretical framework.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analytical approach involves the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and categories within the data. The analysis process was aligned with the research questions and theoretical perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the participants' narratives and experiences.

Results and Discussion

Based on the collected data, and after conducting thematic analysis the following main themes emerged. The findings shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by women as they manage the dual responsibilities of caregiving and career development. Women also employ various coping strategies to strike a balance between caregiving and professional aspirations:

Challenges

Difficulties in Balancing Family Commitments and Career Advancement

A significant portion of the participants (45.8%) expressed a strong desire to emphasize how their family commitments sometimes clashed with their pursuit of professional development. This was particularly evident when training opportunities required them to be far away from their place of residence. While they genuinely cherished their roles within their families, they perceived these commitments as a hindrance to their career advancement. Consequently, they were less inclined to seize training opportunities that could have potentially boosted their career prospects at the expense of their family responsibilities. For instance, a senior participant articulated:

"I find myself working longer hours than a man, often up to 14 hours a day. What if I were presented with the chance to pursue further higher education abroad? I cannot immediately embrace such an opportunity due to my caregiving responsibilities within the family. In contrast, a man can pursue such opportunities without the same considerations, as they don't bear the same familial responsibilities as women do [...]. If I were a man, undoubtedly, my career would have progressed more rapidly and successfully than it has as a woman." (Senior Interviewee 14)

Another senior participant, though harboring aspirations of attaining the highest echelons of university management, commented on how her family commitments affected her career advancement:

"I aspire to ascend to the most senior positions in university management. At present, I have received a prestigious job offer for a high-ranking senior position in another city's university. It is an enticing offer, but the deadline for acceptance is not yet expired. The primary challenge lies in the fact that this university is located in a different city. Due to my son's educational pursuits, I am not inclined to accept it immediately, despite the fact that my son is grown up and pursuing his studies at a university. I must wait until he completes his degree." (Senior Interviewee 19)

Time Management and Work-Life conflict

Balancing the roles of caregiver and pursuing a career necessitates effective time management and strategies for maintaining work-life balance (Smith, 2020). Women often find themselves in a challenging position, striving to meet the demands of both caregiving responsibilities and their professional aspirations without compromising their performance or well-being (Johnson, 2019).

A prominent and consistent theme that emerged from the data was the difficult challenge of time management. Women participating in the study consistently conveyed their struggles in allocating sufficient time and energy to fulfill both their caregiving duties and their professional pursuits. Juggling these dual roles frequently created a time crunch, prompting the need for meticulous planning and organizational skills to attain a sense of stability (Ahemad et al., 2013).

In the context of caregiving for elderly family members, previous research has indicated that the hours dedicated to tending to dependents and managing household responsibilities can represent time away from work. This diversion of time from professional responsibilities can have adverse implications for career advancement as it may hinder one's ability to dedicate the necessary time and effort to excel in their professional endeavors (Bielby & William, 1988). This is especially pertinent in situations where providing proper care for elderly family members demands a substantial investment of time and attention (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

As articulated by one of the study participants:

"I find myself running a household in parallel with my job responsibilities. I am responsible for the well-being of my mother, who has various health issues. I attend to every aspect of her life while simultaneously managing two departments at the university where I work. My days start early and end late, often with me returning home late in the evening. Unfortunately, this routine doesn't contribute to my mother's happiness." (Senior Interviewee, 16)

This participant's narrative vividly illustrates the intricate and demanding nature of balancing caregiving and professional commitments and underscores the challenges faced by women in similar situations who strive to excel both in their roles as caregivers and in their careers.

The Emotional Strain of Balancing Caregiving and Career Advancement

Another prominent theme that emerged from the study revolves around the significant emotional strain experienced by these women. Balancing the roles of caregiver and career advancement, while fulfilling familial obligations, can demand a profound emotional toll giving rise to heightened levels of stress, anxiety and even feelings of guilt. The emotional burden associated with managing these multifaceted responsibilities emerged as a recurring and central concern among the participants in our research.

The emotional distress often arises from the difficult interaction of caregiving responsibilities and professional commitments. Participants grappled with a deep sense of responsibility and a genuine desire to provide care and support to their elderly parents. For many, this responsibility was not merely a personal choice but also a deeply ingrained religious duty. The geographical separation between their parents' home and their own residence, coupled with the location of their workplace, created logistical challenges. As a result, participants found themselves navigating a demanding daily

routine that included visiting their parents after their office hours to cater to their various needs.

However, the emotional strain became most pronounced during those instances when work-related demands compelled them to work late at the office, rendering it challenging (Allen et al., 2013), if not impossible, to visit their parents as regularly as they wished. In these situations, a profound sense of guilt and emotional distress would weigh heavily on them. This inner conflict, rooted in their dedication to both their families and careers, illuminated the deep emotional complexity of their experiences.

One participant captured this emotional struggle expressively:

"It's not that I am unwilling to assist my elderly parents; in fact, I willingly and happily provide them with all the care and support they need. It's not just a personal choice; it's also a religious duty. My parents' home is situated a few miles away from my own house, and my workplace, the university, is located in the opposite direction. I make it a daily routine to visit my parents after my office hours to attend to all their requirements. However, there are times when I have to work late at the office, making it difficult for me to visit them. These situations weigh heavily on me, causing feelings of guilt and emotional distress."

This participant's account underscores the emotional turmoil experienced by women striving to balance caregiving and career responsibilities, shedding light on the complex emotions that accompany their dedication to both familial and professional roles.

Societal Expectations and Gender Roles

In the study the concept of societal expectations emerged as a prominent and noteworthy theme. It became evident that women participating in the study were acutely aware of the pressure exerted on them to conform to established social norms and traditional gender roles. These societal expectations often presented a direct challenge to their personal aspirations for career advancement. The resulting conflict between these expectations and their individual career ambitions introduced a profound layer of complexity to their life experiences.

One particularly salient aspect of these societal expectations was the role of daughters-in-law in caregiving within the family structure. In many instances, society imposed an unwritten obligation on daughters-in-law to be readily available to fulfill caregiving demands especially when it came to the care of elderly parents particularly, mothers-in-law requiring personal and comprehensive assistance.

For instance, a participant shared her perspective on this matter shedding light on the cultural context:

"In Pakistani culture, there exists a well-established tradition where the responsibility of caring for elderly parents, particularly mothers in need of close and intimate care, is customarily assigned to daughters or daughters-in-law. This cultural norm places a significant obligation on

these female family members to provide physical and emotional support to their aging parents, reflecting the deeply ingrained values and expectations within the society.

This statement exemplifies how deeply ingrained these societal expectations are, highlighting the cultural context where such roles and responsibilities are not just accepted but actively enforced. The tension between these expectations and the desire for personal career growth underscores the multifaceted challenges that women in this study faced as they navigated their roles within both their families and their professional pursuits.

Work-Life Conflict: The Crucial Role of Organizational Support for Women Caregivers

The imperative need for organizational support emerged as a prominent and recurring theme within our study. The experiences of women in balancing caregiving responsibilities with their professional careers underscored the critical role that organizations play in facilitating this delicate equilibrium. Creating inclusive work environments that offer flexible scheduling, remote work options, and caregiving resources can substantially alleviate the challenges faced by women caregivers.

The women participants in the study emphasized the profound significance of having a workplace that not only recognizes but also accommodates their caregiving duties. Flexible work arrangements along with understanding leadership were identified as pivotal elements that enable them to effectively strike a harmonious balance between caregiving and their professional development.

One common frustration expressed by several participants related to their university employers who often assigned tasks and responsibilities that were perceived as excessive and unnecessary. Furthermore, unscheduled meetings were frequently cited as disruptive elements that disrupt carefully planned schedules. These unexpected demands on their time could pose significant challenges, especially when it came to fulfilling their commitments to the care of elderly family members.

In the words of one participant:

"I often find myself frustrated with my university because it frequently assigns tasks and responsibilities that seem excessive and unnecessary. Unscheduled meetings also frequently disrupt my carefully planned schedule. These unexpected demands on my time can make it challenging for me to fulfill my commitments, especially when it comes to taking care of my elderly parents. In my opinion, the university administration should consider implementing flexible working hours and streamlining the work timetable. Such adjustments would greatly benefit individuals like me who have caregiving responsibilities for elderly family members. With a more flexible approach from the organization, it would become much easier for us to manage our caregiving obligations alongside our work responsibilities."

By implementing flexible work environment the university or any organization can create an environment that not only accommodates the diverse needs of its employees but also fosters a more supportive and inclusive workplace. The flexible

support structure would extend beyond individuals like the participant, positively impacting anyone who faces similar challenges in balancing their personal and professional commitments within the organization. Ultimately, such initiatives can lead to a more harmonious and productive work environment for all.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies play a pivotal role in helping women effectively manage the complex demands of juggling caregiving responsibilities and advancing in their careers (Adisa et al., 2016). The following strategies emerged from the study as valuable approaches that women employ to strike a balance between these dual roles:

Religious Commitment and the Fulfillment of Caregiving Duties

The participants in the study deeply valued their religious commitment and this played a pivotal role in shaping their sense of responsibility towards caring for their elderly parents. Rooted in the teachings of the Holy Quran (Quran Surat Al-'Isrā' 17; 23), which emphasize the importance of honoring and caring for parents. They carried a profound sense of duty towards the well-being of their aging parents. This sense of responsibility was particularly pronounced when it came to providing intimate care to elderly mothers, a duty they believed should not be solely relegated to male family members.

Among the participants, unmarried daughters and those residing in close proximity to their parents' homes often expressed a strong desire to offer exceptional care to their mothers. They approached this responsibility with a deep sense of devotion and commitment, driven by their religious beliefs and cultural values.

One participant articulated her personal experience, highlighting the immense joy and privilege she derived from caring for her mother. She embraced a dual role, simultaneously managing her caregiving duties and her professional responsibilities, without ever compromising on the quality of care provided to her parents. For her, caregiving was not a burden but a source of profound happiness and contentment. Despite the challenges, this deep sense of fulfillment left her neither fatigued nor disheartened.

In the words of the participant (Senior Interviewee, 16):

"I take immense pleasure and feel a profound sense of privilege in being able to care for my mother. I have seamlessly integrated this dual role into my life, and I have never compromised on the quality of care I provide to my parents. For me, taking care of them is not a hint of burden; rather, it is a source of immense joy and contentment. This deep sense of fulfillment has never left me feeling fatigued or disheartened."

This participant's account beautifully illustrates how religious commitment can profoundly influence one's sense of duty and fulfillment in caring for elderly parents. It highlights the inherent joy and contentment that can accompany caregiving when driven by deeply held religious and cultural values.

Assistance from Family Members

Seeking assistance from family members alleviates some of the caregiving burden, allowing women to focus on their careers. Women often rely on their immediate and extended family members for assistance in caregiving responsibilities. This includes delegating tasks related to caregiving, such as taking care of elderly family members, managing household chores, or providing emotional support. Family members can become essential supporters in sharing the caregiving burden, allowing women to focus on their professional aspirations.

Supportive In-Laws: Balancing Work and Home

In addition to receiving essential support from their immediate family members such as parents, siblings, husbands, and sisters, the study revealed that participants also experienced significant support from their in-laws, who played a crucial role in helping them manage the dual demands of their careers and family responsibilities. This assistance was particularly notable when it came to childcare, as many grandmothers stepped in to care for young children while the participants were at work. The involvement of their mothers-in-law not only facilitated their careers but also positively impacted their overall work-life balance.

One participant expressed her deep appreciation for the support provided by her in-laws, especially when her children were very young. She recounted how her mother-in-law affectionately referred to as "Dadu" took on the responsibility of caring for her children during her work hours. She described how her mother-in-law happily looked after the children, ensuring their well-being, feeding them, bathing them, and attending to their every need. Without this support, handling the demanding responsibilities of her job and the long hours it entailed would have been nearly impossible.

In her words (Senior Interviewee, 24):

"I must appreciate the kind of support provided by my in-laws, particularly when my children were very young. I always left them with their Dadu. She happily took care of them. Carefully fed them, washed them and took care of every need [...]. The management work and related long hour assignments would have been impossible to handle if she had not been behind me."

The data further revealed that participants, especially those in the early stages of their management careers, received support from their in-laws not only in terms of childcare but also in managing other family responsibilities. This support system made it feasible for them to pursue their careers without compromising their familial obligations.

Another participant highlighted the considerate nature of her mother-in-law and how it significantly eased her daily life. She described how upon returning home from work, she sometimes helped her mother-in-law prepare food but when tired, her

mother-in-law would insist that she rest and not worry about household chores. This gesture meant a great deal to her and contributed to her overall well-being, acknowledging that not every mother-in-law possesses such a considerate nature. For women, who were both mothers and working professionals and living independently, managing without this kind of support was indeed more challenging.

The research shed light on the invaluable role played by supportive in-laws in the lives of women in junior management positions. Their assistance, particularly in childcare and household responsibilities, played a crucial part in enabling these women to pursue their careers while fulfilling their family roles, ultimately contributing to their work-life balance and overall career advancement opportunities.

The Role of Supportive Mother

Our data revealed a noteworthy pattern among participants, indicating that their careers had not been adversely affected by interruptions stemming from the responsibilities of childbearing and child rearing. This finding was exemplified succinctly through the experience of a typical participant:

“My mother was very supportive. On the birth of our (only) baby, she did not allow me to take on home responsibilities. She lived with us for two years and took on almost all childcare duties. If she had not been willing to come to us, I would have had to take a long leave from my job because both my husband and I were very sensitive about the matter of childcare in our son’s early years.” (Senior Interviewee, 10)

This participant's experience exemplifies a common narrative within the study, where participants benefited significantly from the support of their mothers, particularly during the crucial period of early parenthood. In this case, the participant's mother played a pivotal role by stepping in to assume the majority of childcare responsibilities, allowing the participant to continue her professional career without needing an extended leave of absence.

The presence of such a supportive family structure, where mothers were actively involved in childcare, was instrumental in ensuring that these women could sustain their careers without significant disruptions. This arrangement not only underscored the importance of familial support networks but also highlighted the significance of accommodating the dual roles of working mothers in their pursuit of both family and career aspirations.

Conclusion

This qualitative study examined deeply the multifaceted challenges faced by women in public sector women universities in Pakistan as they navigate the delicate balance between caregiving for elderly family members and pursuing career advancement. Interviews with 48 women from diverse positions within these institutions provided valuable insights into their experiences.

The challenges identified in this study revolved around the difficulties of harmonizing family commitments with career aspirations, the time management conflicts arising from these dual roles, and the emotional strain experienced when juggling caregiving and career responsibilities. These challenges underscore the complexity of the issues faced by women in the pursuit of their personal and professional goals.

However, the study also illuminated several coping strategies that women employ to effectively manage these challenges. The role of organizational support, including flexible work arrangements and understanding leadership, emerged as a pivotal factor in facilitating work-life balance for women caregivers. Additionally, religious commitment and the sense of fulfillment derived from caregiving duties played a significant role in motivating and sustaining women in their caregiving roles. Furthermore, the study highlighted the crucial assistance provided by various family members' particularly supportive in-laws and mothers who greatly contributed to the participants' ability to successfully balance their work and family responsibilities.

Recommendations

Addressing the challenges faced by women caregivers in the workplace is not only a matter of equity but also essential for promoting diversity, inclusion, and gender equality in the workforce. By implementing supportive measures and recognizing the resilience and dedication of women in balancing their caregiving roles with their careers, organizations can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious work environment for all employees such as:

- Public sector universities and similar institutions should consider implementing and strengthening support mechanisms for women caregivers. This includes flexible work schedules, remote work options, and providing caregiving resources to help alleviate the challenges faced by these women.
- Organizations can take steps to raise awareness among all employees about the importance of supporting colleagues with caregiving responsibilities. Sensitizing the workforce to the challenges faced by women caregivers can foster a more inclusive and empathetic work environment.
- Institutions should consider flexibility in career advancement timelines for women who may need to temporarily adjust their career lines due to caregiving commitments. This flexibility can enable women to return to career advancement opportunities when their caregiving responsibilities evolve.
- Further research into the challenges and coping strategies of women caregivers can inform policy advocacy efforts. These findings can be used to advocate for policies at the institutional and governmental levels that better support women in balancing caregiving and career advancement.

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