

Work Life Balance (Myth or Fact) Black Female Academics

A Case of Gauteng, South Africa

Muthala Mashudu Shadrack 

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
mashudu.muthala@smu.ac.za

Roshini Pillay 

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Roshini.Pillay@wits.ac.za

Abstract

Work-Life balance is a priority at many institutions of higher learning everywhere but especially for Black female academics from South Africa. Employers acknowledge the value employees who can straddle work and non-work domains but is it balance or integration and supportive workplaces that is required. This article authored by a male social worker seeks to explore the experiences of Black female academics at a university in Gauteng, regarding their work-life balance using the intersectionality framework. This qualitative exploratory case study included ten respondents, who were purposively sampled. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the necessary data. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The study revealed the following main findings: Firstly, Black female academics are confronted by both personal and professional challenges that hinder them from achieving a work-life balance. Identified personal challenges included family responsibilities, patriarchal and cultural practices. While work overload, lack of recognition and lack of respect by male senior colleagues were identified as work-related challenges.

Key words: Interpretative approach, Black Female academics; Challenges, Work life balance, Universities.

Introduction and Background

South Africa is a society in transition and institutions of higher learning should be spaces where these transformations should reflect an ideal society. Sadly, this is not true, as transformation and work-life balance of Black female academics is a matter of concern that has an impact on the workers' productivity and promotion (John, Anthony and Bakari, 2020; Department of Higher Education and Training 2019). Diverse scholastic views have emerged over the years pertaining this subject matter. However, few studies focused on the experiences of Black female academics regarding their work-life balance in South Africa (Sav, 2016; Naz, Fazal and Khan, 2017; Kohll, 2018). South African born Black female academics are an underrepresented group in South African higher education institutions. Black female academics are derogatory viewed as beneficiaries of gender equity schemes, and hence viewed with suspicious & skepticism generally (Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019). Available knowledge on this subject was interrogated with the aim of establishing firstly, the emergence of the work-life concept, the reason for its emergence and what it was initially intended to achieve. Secondly, available international literature regarding women academics and the work-life concept was reviewed. Existing literature on women academics and work-life concept, focusing specifically on the South African context was also considered.

Many professional women continue to struggle to strike a balance between their work, unpaid labour and private lives (Mokhele, 2013). American female author, Slaughter (2012:89) notes that, "millions of working women face more difficult life circumstances. Some are single mothers; others support husbands who cannot find jobs. Many women cope with a work-life in which good day care is either unavailable or very expensive while school schedules do not match their work schedules." Black women academics are not exempted from these challenges with research findings showing that they are unrepresented, alienated and continue to face a cocktail of challenges within academia (Jansen, 2017; Pillay, 2009; Magano, 2011; Mokhele, 2013; Dominguez-Whitehead and Moosa, 2014; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Black female academics continue to be marginalised and underrepresented in academia. Available data further show that Black female academics do not have enough time for research, to publish and present papers as they struggle to balance their professional and family commitments while remaining mainly at the bottom of the organisational ladder (Pillay, 2009;

Magano, 2011). The above factors negatively affect their work-life balance. Qualitative research into the experiences of Black female academics support a better understanding, unpacking the myth of work life balance or offering suggestions to support the two aspects cohering in harmony (Potgieter and Maleko, 2004; Maodzwa-Taruvunga and Divala, 2014).

Although discussing experiences of Black female academics more than two decades into democracy might be considered a non-issue by some, “the historicity and contingency of Black women academics’ personal experiences necessitate ongoing interrogation and understanding of the effects of the nexus of power and identity on academic progression and success” (Maodzwa-Taruvunga and Divala, 2014). While a number of Black female academics have succeeded within the country’s Higher Education system documenting their experiences in trying to attain a work-life balance is essential to contribute to an Afro-centric feminist epistemology and to understand the daily struggles that Black women academics continue to face (Potgieter and Maleko 2004; Maodzwa-Taruvunga and Divala, 2014). Gaining a better understanding of the characteristics, constraints and social support systems of the University will therefore lead to the development to enhance work-life balance among Black female academics. In this regard, government has employed some empowerment schemes geared at empowering women academics such as new generation of academics programme(nGAP). This paper focused on exploring the home and work-related challenges that are faced by Black female Academics that threatens their capacity to strike a balance within the work-life balance context.

Theoretical Framework

The term, “intersectionality” is approximate as it considers the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2008:10). Intersectionality theory is a significant mechanism used by both the feminist and anti-racist scholars to theorize identity and oppression (Nash, 2008) and has attracted the interest of many authors (Nash, 2008; Cole, 2009). Cole defines the intersectionality theory as “a paradigm for theory and research offering new ways of understanding the complex causality that characterizes social phenomena” (Cole, 2009). The term ‘intersectionality’ relates to the fact that certain people exist at the intersection (or ‘intertwining’) of mechanisms of inequality, such as gender (sexism and transphobia), race and ethnicity (racism), nationality (xenophobia),

status (capitalism), disability (validity) or sexual identity (homophobia) (Bauer, 2014). Intersectionality theory is suitable as black female academics across the globe continue to be confronted by a cocktail of challenges in their workplaces such as discrimination, racism, as well as oppression from male colleagues often fueled by patriarchal tendencies (Bauer, 2014:15). The existing literature reveals that Black female academics face more challenges when compared to their White counterparts who hold more doctoral degrees and are overrepresented (Bauer, 2014:15; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019.). Consequently, intersectionality theory offers a framework to understand the complex causality that characterizes the work-life balance phenomena as experienced by Black female academics within the South African context. Intersectionality theory offers an understanding of the complex web of factors such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and other structural arrangements (Rugunanan, 2019)

Literature Review

The South African Higher Education Context

To achieve work-life balance for South African black female academics there is a need for radical accelerated transformation of the workplace. Transformation is a complex, emotional and contested process with a host of challenges such as massification, the lack of movement of white staff out of senior positions, lack of funding, lack of preparedness for research, exclusion by language, discriminatory policies and uncompetitive salaries to name a few challenges. There is a need for targeted support of Black female academics who are entering academia, working on their PhD qualification, and are middle career academics. At a broader societal level South Africa remains a patriarchal space where activities of child rearing, family care giving and domestic chores are the realm of mainly women but workplaces give little regard to these competing roles played by females. (Rugunanan 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training 2019)

Work-life balance

The work-life balance concept has been a focus for many employers across the world for the past few decades and during the emergence of the Covid

19 pandemic it was again raised (John, Anthony and Bakari 2020). Employers realised the important role that work-life balance played in ensuring that employees performed at their optimum levels. Currently increasing workloads, globalisation and scientifically improvements have contributed better understanding of how work and life feed into each other for all professionals working across all levels and all industries across the world (Yadav and Rani, 2015). The concept received much attention after a significant increase in the number of women joining the workforce across the world. This led to countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) endorsing legislations aimed at regulating the number of hours that people, particularly women, could work per week (Yadav and Rani 2015). Such legislature forced employers to explore ways of balancing women's work and non-work domains (Yadav and Rani, 2015). Furthermore, Delina and Raya (2013, 276) argued that "achieving work-life balance is a necessity for working women to have a good quality of life".

This quality of life seems to elude black women academics who continue to experience a cocktail of challenges in their workplaces (Muberekwa and Nkomo, 2016; Whaley and Krane, 2012). One challenge is a lack of support from the high echelons of many tertiary institutions (Segal 2010). The challenge of a lack of support was highlighted in a report by the Department of Education (2008) which noted that most universities failed to consider women's role in the family and had no systems in place to help them cope with specific circumstances confronting them daily. This lack of support could be as a result of a long-held and damaging perception held by mostly White academics who often label Black female academics as the 'underclass' and 'underperformers' who cannot succeed in academia, let alone become academic leaders (Monnapula-Mapesela, 2017). The consequence of this negative perception is that most of these women remain concentrated in lower-level positions with minimal opportunities for career growth (Department of Education 2008). This situation is often exacerbated by the fact that Black female academics continue to be undermined, mostly by male counterparts (Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala, 2014). The afore-mentioned are some of the intersections of factors that plague Black female academics.

Moreover, Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016:215) add that the patriarchal nature of the working climate and the conservative nature of the larger society in which they reside makes Black female academics struggle with work life balance. In addition, Whaley and Krane (2012:70) found that female

intellectuals appear to be overburdened by heavier teaching loads and extra university service work Garnett and Mohamed (2012, 85) espoused that service work which is placed on the shoulders of women is less glamorous than research.

Work-life Balance and Women Academics: A South African's Perspective

South Africa has seen an increase in the number of female academics entering the academia field as in 2012 there were about 24704 women academics working in the country's Universities (Garnett and Faza, 2012). This increase in the number of Black female academics also culminated into some women being appointed into a few senior positions previously reserved for male academics such as Dr. Maphela Ramphela and Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng as Vice-Chancellors of the University of Cape Town.

It is interesting to note that Segal (2014, 88) found that women reported that work on academia was both rewarding and that they enjoyed the flexibility the workplace afforded them. However there have been studies that found female academics have an unequally higher unpaid workload within the family and resulted in them not publishing as much as they male colleagues during the Covid 19 period (Augustus, 2021).

However, flexibility is a double-edged sword as Beninger (2010, 78) adds that academics were not confined to a 9am – 5pm job settings and technology allows them be always available and unable to create boundaries between work and non-work domains. Moreover, a lack of support, increased workload and the need to publish have been identified as the main causes of these imbalances (Beninger, 2010).

Methodology

The primary aim of this study was to explore personal experiences of Black female academics with a focus on the challenges they face. A qualitative research approach using an exploratory case study approach was adopted. The population comprised of black female academics currently working at a University in Gauteng. Purposive sampling was used to select ten participants with the following inclusion criteria. All participants were black female academics currently working at a University for a minimum of three years in

the position of a lecturer or occupying a senior position within the academic division. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the necessary data needed for analysis. All ethical considerations were upheld, and the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. The collected data was transcribed using Microsoft Word and the transcribed data was analysed using thematic framework analysis using ATLAS.ti. Pseudonyms have been used when reporting using verbatim quotes.

Results

Responsibilities

Home and family responsibilities, Financial constraints Patriarchal and Cultural practices are covered in this section.

Home and Family Responsibilities

Many South African women are expected to execute duties as dictated to them by societal and cultural expectations. Family responsibilities have been identified as the main challenge confronting Black female academics. Majority (9) of participants have indicated that one of the main challenges confronting them as Black female academics are the family duties they are expected to carry out as wives and mothers in their families placed an additional burden on them as Sibongile explains next

The academic world is a very difficult for the black female academics because after work we [respondents] are expected to perform motherly and wife duties at home such as looking after the children, cooking and doing house chores. They [Respondents] should also cook for their husbands and that is a big challenge [Sibongile, aged 45, Senior Lecturer]

Sibongile's views were shared by majority (6) of respondents who noted that having to perform their house duties over and above their work responsibilities had a negative impact on their work performance. This view was based on the fact that they had to undertake their academic work such as marking of scripts, preparing for lectures and writing articles for publications when they were not at work. In addition family responsibilities such as cooking and helping the children with their homework were still tasks they undertook which are

consistent with findings of earlier studies (Ntsele 2014). These findings are supported by Mahasha (2016, 86) who found that apart from their demanding work, Black African professional women are expected to take care of their family responsibilities such as childcare and taking care of the house. The Department of Higher Education and Training attribute these findings to a patriarchal society wherein family responsibilities such as caregiving and homemaking continue to be done mostly by women (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019).

Financial constraints

Further findings of this study suggest that financial constraints contributed to some of the challenges confronting Black female academics. Majority (7) of the participants revealed that after work, they are forced to perform household duties and to look after the extended family members. The following excerpt from an interview with Ruth put this issue into perspective:

As black academics, we do not have the luxury of being wealthy and we have to look after the extended family with the available limited income. This in turn affects our disposable income as we have more people to feed [Ruth, aged 48, Senior Lecturer].

Ruth's quote is a representative of what many Black African professional experience in different institutions of higher education. The obligation that many women have of caring for their extended families often places strain on their monthly earnings and leaves them with limited disposable income. In South Africa, there is a growing mismatch between financial income and spending in most families. The situation is worse in Black communities with extended families. Also, referred to as "Black Tax" (Mangoma and Wilson-Prangley 2019, 450) which is a form of family support where financial transfers are substantive to members of the extend family to cater for general expenditure including in education. Ordinarily, this form of burden affects both men and women. The findings of this study reveal some of the participants were expected to provide not only for their immediate family members, but also for their extended family members as well. While it is considered noble to take care of one's extended family, particularly in the African culture, such caring often places a huge financial burden on black female in general and academics as evidenced by findings of the study. Extended financial sacrifices in assistance of family members erode their disposable income as well as the

saving ability. A typical example of the pressure that Black female academics find themselves in could be seen in the following quote by Julia

My in-laws think I am very rich and as a result, everyone always wants money from me, which I do not have. What they do not know is that I always use credit cards and they do not believe that I do not have money [Julia, aged 53, Lecturer]

Patriarchal and Cultural Practices

Most of these participants noted that existing cultural practices require them to carry out certain household duties. Some of the participants indicated that they continue to perform some duties such as cooking for their husbands (Mangolothi 2019). The following quote provides a clear picture on how cultural beliefs and practices have impact on Black African academics and their quest for work life balance as Lyn says next.

In our African culture, I am still expected to perform all my wifely duties whilst I have a helper to assist me. This (the household duty) is the challenge that compromises my work as academic. For example, I am struggling to finish my PhD because of the family responsibilities [Lyn, aged 45, Lecturer].

The above quote clearly demonstrates how some cultural practices negatively affect Black African academics' work performance and completion of studies required in the academy. These practices continue to influence how women act mainly because of how Black women's socialisation and upbringing which taught them to perform these duties (Muberekwa and Nkomo 2016). In exploring the perceptions of Wits academic women about women empowerment and the changing roles of women in 21st-Century South Africa, Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016) found that Black women felt obliged to execute certain household duties mainly because of the existing belief that such roles are their social duty. However, such beliefs often result in Black female academics sacrificing their own academic development. The extent to which some women are willing to sacrifice their own professional development for the sake of their families could be seen from the following quote by Cindy,

Some of the professional development programmes are conducted in the evenings but because we [the respondents] have to cook, as we do not believe that helpers

should be cooking for our husbands, I do not attend those programmes [Cindy, aged 31, Lecturer]

The above quote clearly demonstrates how some cultural practices continue to have a negative impact on women's professional development. Cultural practices mean the Black female academics are often forced to abandon their own goals and aspirations in order to carry out their wifely and motherly duties as expected by both their culture and the society. However, such socially influenced duties often lead to a conflict between Black female academics' professional work and family roles. The extent of such conflicts could be seen in the following extract by Julia who says,

My workload means I am unable to attend some of the family gatherings. As a result, some of my in-laws think I am arrogant and I do not attend family gatherings because I am filthy rich since I am a doctor and this hurts me a lot [Julia, aged 53, Lecturer].

In the above quote, Julia laments about how her work pressures prevent her to attend family functions. The issue of conflicts within the family system is consistent with findings by Ampah (2013). Black female academics from the working class found themselves torn between meeting their cultural obligations (i.e. performing household duties) and fitting into the world of academia. Such conflicts often lead to these women forsaking some aspects of self and compromising their independent desires and choices to accommodate their cultural obligations (Hunt 2006). However, such sacrifices often are career limiting.

The findings of this study further outline the patriarchal and cultural practices that continued to influence how women are viewed within the household setup (Mudau and Obadire 2017). Most of the participants noted that their families have expectations regarding them performing certain duties as dictated by their respective cultures. In most Black cultures, women are expected to play an active role in functions such as funerals and family ceremonies. Findings of this study reveal that these activities are mostly conducted over weekends and they are unable to engage in any academic work. Majority of participants revealed that they often used the weekends to do the work they could not do during the week such as marking, assessments and writing their articles. However, this often becomes difficult to execute as

they are sometimes expected to perform their family's cultural duties. The dynamics of being Black female academic in South Africa as articulated above could be the reason why Black female academics continue to constitute a small fraction of active scientists. A recent study by Joubert and Guenther (2017, 2) reveals that Black women constituted only 17 % of the country's academics who are classified as active scientists as compared to 78% of White academics. Additional family and cultural obligations that Black female academics are expected to execute means they have limited time in which to carry out research studies necessary for them to publish articles.

Work-Related Challenges Confronting Black Female Academics.

This section presents the findings on the work-related challenges confronting Black female academics as experienced by participants. The challenges include the lack of support from supervisors; patriarchy (lack of respect from male colleagues); lack of recognition from the institution and high workload.

Lack of support from supervisors

Lack of support from supervisors has been identified as the main challenge confronting Black female academics. Seven (7) participants have identified lack of support by supervisors as one of the work-related problems they face. These participants stated that lack of support from their predominantly male supervisors made their work difficult. The picture that emerged from the findings is that male supervisors are not always willing to offer their female junior colleagues the necessary support they need to develop their career. This is how Ruth describes the situation.

At work, line managers do not offer us the necessary support we need. They do not understand that when you get home you need to attend to our family matters. They always put women under pressure to deliver without considering that the fact that we have families to take care of. The consequence of working under severe pressure is often poor results. My view is that line managers should be compassionate and be supportive to female academics, particularly Black female academics (Ruth, aged 48, Senior Lecturer)

In the above quote, Ruth shows her frustrations with the lack of support that Black female academics often experience at the hands of their supervisors. Ruth's views are consistent with those of other participants with many indicating that they were not receiving adequate support from the supervisors, particularly male supervisors. There was a consensus amongst majority of the participants that their male supervisors were not sympathetic to Black female academics in terms to work-load management. These findings seem to validate the findings of earlier studies which noted that workplaces give little regard to competing roles played by female academics (Department of Education and Training 2019). Segal (2010, 87) also found that women often lacked support from their institutions in managing their workload. This in turn made it difficult to maintain boundaries between work and non-work domains. On the other hand, the department noted that most universities failed to consider women's role in the family institution with no systems in place to help them cope with specific circumstances confronting them on a daily basis (Department of Education, 2008).

Participants in this study further noted that lack of support from their male supervisors often compromise the quality of work that they produce. This is mainly because lack of support from their institutions in managing their workload often makes it difficult for female academics to maintain boundaries between work and non-work domains. As Ruth noted, supervisors do not seem to comprehend the fact that in addition to being academics, Black female academics have families to take care off when they knock off from work. Lack of support could be as a consequence of a long-held perception held by mostly White academics who often label them as the 'underclass' and 'underperformers' who cannot succeed in academia, let alone become academic leaders (Monnapula-Mapesela 2017).

Patriarchal tendencies

Patriarchal tendencies were also identified as another problem confronting Black female academics. Five (5) participants indicated that they felt belittled and looked down upon by their male colleagues solely because of their gender. Participant's experiences show that black female academics' professionalism and ability to do work is subjected to high scrutiny and criticism in higher education unlike for men academics. The following quote from Cindy provides

an example of what Black female academics go through in the hands of their senior male colleagues:

At work its difficult working with Black males because they do not respect you. You are primarily seen as a person who should be at home taking care of the family. So, as a female you must work extra hard to be recognized. For example, a Black female who has a PhD and publishes a lot will not be promoted very fast as compared to a male who can be promoted to be a professor without enough or many publications challenge [Cindy, aged 31, Lecturer]

Through the above quote, Cindy describes the experiences that Black female academics go through in their engagements with their male accounts. It is clear through this quote that Black female academics are not accorded the same respect given to their male counterparts. There is low numbers of Black South African born female academics at a level of full professorship or at a level of associate professorship. These low numbers contribute to a lack of mentoring and the lack of progression of black female academics (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; (Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019)

Movement from junior lecturer to associate and full professor requires attention as there are different policies and gate keepers that make it difficult for Black female academics to be promoted (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019; Khunou, Phaswana, Khosa-Shangase and Canham, 2019). Furthermore, women are forced to work twice as much as their male counterparts to receive the same recognition. The fact that patriarchal practices have been identified as one of the main challenges confronting Black female academics is hardly surprising. South Africa remains largely a patriarchal society where women continue to experience inequalities. Available literature shows that patriarchal practices are not only limited to communities and that patriarchy is still much alive in the workplace as well, including those in academia (Muberekwa and Nkomo, 2016). Muberekwa and Nkomo (2016) stated that these challenges and experiences are a consequence of the patriarchal nature of the workplace environment and the slow transformation at universities. Black female academics working within the country's higher education system continue to fall victim of patriarchal institutional policies that continue to exist in many of the country's universities (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019). The challenge with many of these

policies is that they neglect to consider the broader social inequalities relating to gender identity and gender roles that still prevail in South African society (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019).

Maria's observation further confirms the position of the intersectional theory which posits that the undermining and oppression of women in a society today remains deeply race and gender based. This could be caused by the dominant widely held patriarchal societal norms in the society making their way into the workplace as observed by Dominguez-Whitehead and Moeniera (2014, 280). Traditionally, women are presumed to be fragile and incapable of performing their duties like their male counterparts or better. Despite their serious commitment to work, women remain vulnerable to both men and other women for their career growth. The challenge with patriarchal culture in higher education often marginalizes black women and other women of colour, resulting in the feeling of invisibleness (Mokhele 2013). The existence of a patriarchal culture could also explain the reason for Black female academics' lack of recognition.

Lack of recognition

The findings of this study reveal that more than half (6) of the respondents identified lack of recognition by the university as one of the challenges confronting Black female academics. During an interview with Sibongile (45) she made the following statement:

The society looks down on Black female academics. As a female academic you need to work twice as hard to get the same recognition that male academics receive (Sibongile, 45, Senior Lecturer).

The above quote provides a picture in respect of the difficulties that Black female academics face to receive recognitions due to them. Women are required to work twice as much as their colleagues to earn the same recognition. It is however important to state that the marginalization of Black women this situation is not confined to South African universities only. Available literature shows that women of colour continue to receive a raw deal even in universities based in developed countries. For instance, Maodzwa-Taruvinga, and Joseph and Joseph (2014) revealed that women of colour in academia felt they had to work harder to prove their worth, were less likely to apply for promotion, and were less likely to succeed even in cases where they submit applications

for promotion. It is therefore, not surprising that other participants infer that patriarchal culture in the higher education system continues to hamper the academic development of Black female academics.

Work overload

The participants further identified work overload as another challenge confronting Black female academics. About 4 respondents have reported having heavier workloads. These findings are consistent with those of Naicker (2014). In a study titled, "The journey of South African women academics with a particular focus on women academics in theological education", Naicker reported that participants reported heavier teaching loads than their other colleagues, with some junior faculty having a double teaching schedule every day (Naicker 2014). Increased workloads often leave women with limited time and energy to participate in academic development programmes such as article publications and attending seminars. The following quote from Lindiwe (52) gives a clear picture of what Black female academics go through during the course of their working day:

I am expected to do a lot of things at work and I often do not have time to complete everything. As a result, I normally finish my daily work at 6pm or even 8pm. Like I said I want to be promoted so I have to work overtime for me to publish articles. I am forced to work overtime because it's difficult to do it during the normal working hours because of my busy working schedule. For instance, three weeks ago I received comments from reviewers, but I haven't had time to work on them. This is in turn affecting my prospects of being promoted [Lindiwe, 52, Senior Lecturer]

The above quote from Lindiwe clearly demonstrate how an increased workload often affects Black female academics' professional development aspirations. The struggle of juggling between fulfilling their work obligations and professional development is complex and daunting. An increased workload means that these women do not have time to participate in career development initiatives such as article publications. Therefore, the balancing act of trying struggle have also identified work overload as also show that academics. The challenge is that as Lindiwe noted, article publications is a key requirement for promotion. This phenomenon is called publish or perish. Publish or perish is defined as the pressure that academics have to publish articles in order to progress in their academic career such as securing a promotion (Rawat and

Meena, 2014). This is mainly because academia article publication and student research supervision are seen as two most powerful methods that academics have to demonstrate academic acumen to peers (Rawat and Meena 2014). Consequently, scholars who do not frequently publish may lose out on promotional positions (Rawat and Meena, 2014). Increased workloads means Black female academics will always struggle to publish articles on a regular basis as compared to their male counterparts. These findings resonate with earlier findings showing that Black female academics have less discretionary time to conduct research, publish and present papers as they struggle to balance their professional and family commitments (Pillay, 2009; Magano, 2011). Others might argue that male academics also have the same workloads as Black female academics, but they still published on a regular basis. While this might be true, it is important to note that in addition to their workloads, women are also expected to fulfill their household duties as shown earlier. This leaves them with limited time in which to dedicate for article publication. These dynamics mean Black female academics will always lag behind their male counterparts in terms of article publication. This means that Black female academics will always miss out on promotional positions. There is therefore, a great need for support programmes geared at assisting Black female academics manage their workloads and article publications. Such initiatives will level the playing field and ensure that Black female academics have equal opportunities as their White female and male counterparts for promotion.

Conclusion

In this article findings show that Black female academics are confronted by both personal and professional challenges that hinder them from achieving a work-life balance. Identified personal challenges included family responsibilities, patriarchal and cultural practices. While work overload, lack of recognition and lack of respect by male senior colleagues were identified as work-related challenges. Guidelines for developing work-life balance by institutions are offered next.

The paper thus offers the following suggestions on how to genuinely support women Black academics in higher education:

1. Development of workplace support whereby employer can sponsor family events;
2. Creation of peer support networks whereby women may reach out to their colleagues for support when they need assistance;

3. Development of mentorship programmes that consider their unique needs;
4. Creation of recognition systems tailored for Black female academics;
5. Holding of workshops to discuss sharing of responsibilities with a partner that goes beyond the cultural perception of gendered roles;
6. Creation of small psychoeducational support groups for Black female academics;
7. Encourage black female academics to make use of external help for research and personal development; and
8. Support the use of flexible schedules and time management techniques.

Reference

- Augustus, Jo. 2021. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women working in higher education. In *Frontiers in Education* 6:648365. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.648365>
- Ampah, Akua Frempong. 2013. On successful work-family balance: A case of educated Ghanaian women with white collar jobs. PhD Thesis, Ashesi University College.
- Bauer, Greta R. 2014. Incorporating intersectionality theory into population health research methodology: challenges and the potential to advance health equity. *Social Science & Medicine* 110: 10-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.03.022>
- Beninger, Anna. 2010. Women in academia: a cross-cultural perspective on work/life balance. PhD Thesis, London School of Economics.
- Cole, Elizabeth R. 2009. Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist* 64(3): 170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014564>
- Delina, Graya. and Prabhakara Raya. 2013. A study on work-life balance in working women. *International Journal of Commerce, Business and Management* 2(5): 274-282.
- Department of Education. 2008. Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Institutions. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. 2019. Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics. Pretoria, South Africa.

- Dominguez-Whitehead, Yasmine, and Moeniera Moosa. 2014. New academics in the South African research-oriented academy: A critical review of challenges and support structures. *Alternation* 12: 260-282.
- Garnett, Andrea, and Mahomed, Faza. 2012. I want to publish but....: Barriers to publishing for women at a University of Technology. *Perspectives in Education* 30(2): 81-90.
- Hjalmsdottir, Andrea, and Valgerour S. Bjarnadottir. 2021. I have turned into a foreman here at home: Families and work–life balance in times of COVID–19 in a gender equality paradise. *Gender, Work & Organization* 28(1): 268-283. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12552>
- Hunt, Robert M. 2006. When do more patents reduce R&D?. *American Economic Review* 96(2): 87-91. <https://doi.org/10.21799/frbp.wp.2006.06>
- Jansen, J. D. 2017. *As By Fire: The End Of The South African University*. NB Publishers Limited.
- John, Issahaku, Nkyi K. Anthony, and Dramanu, Y. Bakari. 2020. Impact of work life balance on the psychological wellbeing of employees in the University of Cape Coast. *Journal of Psychology* 8(1): 8-19. <https://doi.org/10.15640/jpbs.v8n1a2>
- Joubert, Marina, and Lars Guenther. (2017). In the footsteps of Einstein, Sagan and Barnard: Identifying South Africa’s most visible scientists. *South African Journal of Science* 113(11-12): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2017/20170033>
- Khunou, G., Phaswana, E., Khosa-Shangase, K., & Canham, H. (Eds.). (2019). *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience* HSRC.
- Kohll, Alan. 2018. The Evolving Definition of Work-Life Balance. *Forbes*. 20 September 2020 www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2018/03/27/the-evolving-definition-of-work-life-balance.
- Magano, Meahabo Dinah. 2011. The social and emotional challenges of female postgraduate students in South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences* 29(3): 205-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2011.11892971>
- Mahasha, Khomotso Lucy Mamphare. 2016. *Balancing work and family responsibilities: the case of women in management positions in Nkangala District.* PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Mangolothi, Brightness. 2019. Advancing gender equality in academia. *The Mail & Guardian*. September 20 <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-09-20-00-advancing-gender-equality-in-academia/>.
- Mangoma, Arinao, and Anthony Wilson-Prangley. 2019. Black Tax: Understanding the financial transfers of the emerging black middle class. *Development Southern Africa* 36(4): 443-460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2018.1516545>

- Maodzwa-Taruvunga, Mandivavarira, and Joseph Jinja Divala. 2014. Experiences of black women teacher educators in the South African higher education system: part 2: being and belonging in South African higher education: the voices of black women academics-leading article. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 28(6): 1961-1971. <https://doi.org/10.20853/28-6-436>
- Mokhele, Matseliso. (2013). Reflections of Black women academics at South African Universities: A narrative case study. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4(3): 611-611. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n3p611>
- Monnapula-Mapesela, Mabokang. 2017. Developing as an academic leader in a university of technology in South Africa: Dealing with enabling and constraining teaching and learning environments. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 5(2): 69-85. <https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v5i2.103>
- Mubekwa, Evelyn, and Thobeka Nkomo. 2016 .Exploring the perceptions of Wits academic women about women empowerment and the changing roles of women in 21st-century South Africa. *SAGE Open* 6(4): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016675014>
- Mudau, Tshilidzi and Obadire. Segun. 2017. The role of patriarchy in family settings and its implications to girls and women in South Africa. *Journal of Human Ecology* 58(1): 67-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2017.1305614>
- Naicker, Linda. 2013. The journey of South African women academics with a particular focus on women academics in theological education. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39: 325-336.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2008. Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review* 89(1): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.4>
- Nash, Meredith, and Brendan Churchill. 2020. Caring during COVID-19: A gendered analysis of Australian university responses to managing remote working and caring responsibilities." *Gender, Work & Organization* 27(5): 833-846.
- Naz, Sadaf, Shawana, Fazal, and Muhammad, Ilyas, Khan. 2017. Perceptions of women academics regarding work-life balance: A Pakistan case. *Management in Education* 31 (2): 88-93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020617696633>
- Ntsele, Busisiwe Octavia. 2014. Is affirmative action an enabler of the advancement of the right to gender equality in the South African workplace post-1994? A case study: Taking a glance into South African academia." PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Pillay, Venitha. 2009 .Academic mothers finding rhyme and reason. *Gender and Education* 21(5): 501-515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250802467927>
- Potgieter, Carrell, and Moleko, Shanaz. 2004. Stand out, stand up, move out: experiences of black South African women at historically white universities. In: Mabokela,

- R.O. and Magubane, Z. (eds). *Hear our voices: race, gender and the status of black South African women in the academy*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press. 80-95. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004492479_008
- Rawat, Seema, and Sanjay Meena. 2014. Publish or perish: Where are we heading?. *Journal of research in medical sciences: the official journal of Isfahan University of medical sciences* 19(2): 87.
- Rugunanan, P. 2019. Valuing/belonging and devaluing/unbelonging in the academy: An intersectional perspective. In G. Khunou, E. Phaswana, K. Khoza-Shangase, & H. Canham (Eds.), *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience* (pp. 134-146). HSRC Press.
- Sav, Adem. 2019. The role of religion in work-life interface. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 30(22):3223-3244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1255905>
- Segal, Jenna. 2014. A South African perspective on work-life balance: a look at women in academia. PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2012. Why women still can't have it all. *The Atlantic*. 20 July 2020 <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>.
- Whaley, Diane E., and Vikki Krane. 2012. Resilient Excellence: Challenges faced by trailblazing women in US sport psychology. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 83(1): 65-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599826>
- Yadav, Taruna, and Sushma Rani. 2015. Work life balance: challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Applied Research* 1(11): 680-684.