

## Challenges of Ethiopian Working Mothers towards Childcare and Its Implications on Workplace Performance: The Case of Selected Higher Education Institutions

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### Abstract

In most developing countries, childcare falls on women's shoulders due to their gender role assigned by society. This study investigated the challenges of Ethiopian working mothers towards childcare and its implications on workplace performance in selected higher education institutions (HEIs). To achieve this objective, 343 working mothers from 9 universities, 3 focus group discussions and key informant interviews were included in the study. Mixed method design that combines both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were employed. The findings of the study indicated that working mothers do not have access to childcare facilities both within and outside their university. It was found that childcare incentives were inadequate but informal extended maternity leaves were common. Working mothers at higher learning institutions perceive various challenges related to childcare, and affects their work performance negatively. Daycare facilities and other incentives are recommended for working mothers to create a better working environment and thereby enhance the performance of working mothers, while supporting the development of healthy children.

**Keywords:** Working Mothers, Childcare, Maternity Leave, Higher Education Institutions, Workplace Incentive

### 1. Introduction

Ethiopia is a rapidly developing country where both male and female, who are the two most important pillars of growth and development, work together. Without their mutual contribution, it is impossible for any country to progress. Ethiopian women actively take part in productive and non-productive activities all over the country; and in most cases, women here play triple roles. At home, they play the role of mother (reproductive role) and at the workplace, they take

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part in the labor force (productive role) and they also play social roles (community role) like arranging for funerals, weddings, and social events (World Bank, 2008).

The role of women as mothers is very important. Mothers provide children love, affection and care from birth. Childcare has become a major issue in most countries of the world. It is a universal truth that children require the love of mothers the most (Abdul et al, 2012).

The ever-increasing work pressure is taking a toll on working mothers leaving them with less time for themselves and their children (Delina and Prabhakara, 2013). It has been proved through experiments and research that a major part of children cognitive, affective, and psychomotor growth takes place at an early age, the first three years. Moreover, there are many research studies that have proved that absence of parents' attention at an early age is very harmful. This is displayed by children whose mothers worked part-time before their child was one-year old had fewer disruptive behavioral problems than children of mothers who worked full-time before their child's first birthday. This increased risk for behavioral difficulties was apparent at age three, and during first grade (David, 2013).

As Abdul et al (2012) stressed further, it is necessary for a mother to nurture and take care of her children more at an early age and must create good relationship with her children. Mothers who prefer to remain at home are more fruitful since they are full-time mothers. According to Emma et al (2016), childcare services have serious impact on working mothers' workplace performance and to the organization where they work as it reduces productivity, increases turnover and absenteeism, tardiness, tiredness, and reduced concentration at their work (Emma et al., 2016).

Similarly, a survey result at workplaces shows that childcare has a direct impact on employee performance and productivity (Regina, 2015). The largest part of today's workforce is composed of Millennials (age 18 to 34), who represent 90% of new mothers in 2014. Thus, the decline in workplace performance exhibited with these working mothers emanates from absenteeism and workplace disruptions (Donna et al., 2006).

In the developed countries, parents' mainly rely on formal childcare establishments who provide child rearing services minimizing the burden on mothers and increasing the number of working mothers who support their families economically. However, in Africa including Ethiopia, despite the immense problem of child rearing on working mothers, the issue has been neglected. There have been only few studies that focus on impacts from absence of childcare services to working mothers. In the earlier years, due to the patriarchal nature of the society, Ethiopian women traditionally suffered sociocultural and economic discrimination and were granted fewer opportunities compared to men for personal growth, education, and employment (Thomas and LaVerle, 1991). Nowadays, following urbanization, implementation of various structural changes and other related policies encourage participation of women in the labor market. As a result, the share of women in the labor force has increased in Ethiopia compared to yester years (Tewodros, 2011). And as this is supported by Gashaw (2015), it is over the past few decades the situations changed radically and more women entered the labor force. Although women are involved in productive work outside of the home sphere, taking care of their family especially, the role of child rearing is left to women. As explained by Tewodros (2011), the responsibility of child rearing and the absence of childcare has negatively affected women's employment. Although there is no research done in this particular area, there was research undertaken at Arsi University that dealt with the investigation of working mothers' parental practices, challenges they faced in providing parental services, and the implications for future progress of parents and their children. Despite the fact that working mothers face enormous

challenges routinely, little has been empirically studied on the challenges and the implications of childcare services on their workplace performance. To fill that gap, this research explores and investigates the challenges of working mothers with the absence of childcare services and the implications on workplace performance in the context of higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

Accordingly, the following research questions were devised a) What are the main challenges working mothers experience in relation to childcare? b) To what extent does the lack of childcare services affect working mothers' performance at the workplace? c) Who experiences more challenges in relation to childcare (in terms of position, income, and number of children, single mothers, and parents, etc.)? e) How cognizant are universities on the implications of absence of childcare services on working mothers' performance? And f) To what extent do extended maternity leaves and/or daycare facilities on university campuses benefit working mothers and enhance child development?

## 2. Model Specification and Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Model Specification

The study employed survey strategy, which allows one to collect quantitative data which can then be analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. Survey strategy is more popular with descriptive and explanatory research (Saunders, et al., 2009). The data collected using survey strategy can be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables and to produce models of these relationships. The model below was used to determine the quantitative association between the variables:

**Model 1:**  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon$

Where,  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$  are constants

Y= working mothers self- rated Performance

$X_1$ = availability and affordability of child care facilities

$X_2$  = child care related problems

$X_3$ = child care providers capacity

$\varepsilon$  is the error term

**Model 2:**  $A = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon$

Where,  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$  are constants

A= working mothers Attitude

$X_1$ = availability and affordability of child care facilities

$X_2$  = child care related problems

$X_3$ = child care providers capacity

$\varepsilon$  is the error term

**Model3:**  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4A + \varepsilon$

Where,  $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ , are constants

Y= Working mothers performance

$X_1$ = availability and affordability of child care facilities

$X_2$  = child care related problems

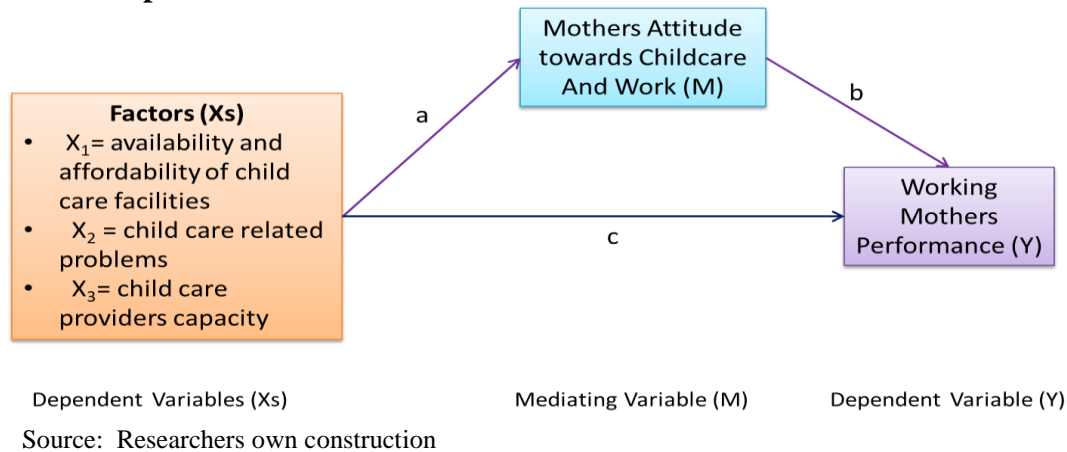
$X_3$ = child care providers capacity

A = attitude of working mothers

$\varepsilon$  is the error term

Particularly, the study assessed working mothers' attitude as a mediating factor. The argument here is that working mothers with positive attitude towards their job or career as well as childcare will likely prove to be more productive, motivated, and reliable employee than one harboring negative attitudes (Burns & Burns, 2008). In this study, the researchers investigated the relationship as stated in Figure 1 below.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework



## 3. Research Methods

### 3.1 Research Design

This research work employed concurrent mixed method design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches due to the very nature of the study objectives related to the challenges of working mothers towards childcare and its impact on workplace performance at Higher Education Institutions.

Some of the data were collected through questionnaires, which is a quantitative data collection technique while it also implemented in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) which are qualitative data collection techniques.

### 3.2 Research Site

The research is conducted at the purposively selected nine public university campuses which are found in 6 regions and 2 administrative cities.

### 3.3 Population and Sampling

The study considered Higher Education Institutions as a target population. The Higher Education Institutions are classified into three categories: 1<sup>st</sup> generation universities (established from 1950-1999), 2<sup>nd</sup> generation universities (established from 2000 -2005) and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation universities (established from 2006 -2011). Consequently, there are 8 universities under 1<sup>st</sup> generation, 15 and 12 universities are categorized under 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, respectively. In this study, third generation universities are excluded due to their recent opening. Thus, nine universities from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations, by regional categorization or regional disparities i.e. (6 regions and 2 administrative cities) are purposively selected. These are: Addis Ababa University, Bahir Dar University, Mekelle University, Hawassa University, Adama University, Dire Dawa University,

Jigjiga University, Semera University, and Ethiopian Civil Service University. Working mothers are selected randomly from these nine universities from both academic and administrative staff.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The study employed probability and non-probability sampling techniques such as random sampling, purposive sampling and convenient sampling method. Based on Kish, Leslie (1965) sampling formula with 1.96 for 95% confidence level with conservative estimate of 0.5, an estimate of a total of 384 participants were considered for the study. Depending on the number of working mothers each university has from both academic and administrative wing, the researcher allotted proportional number to each university; actual participants were selected based on convenient sampling technique.

FGD was conducted with three groups, each comprising eight participants selected based on convenience of the researcher. In addition, purposive sampling technique was used to select key interview informant such as university presidents, gender unit director and childcare providers for an in-depth interview.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

Since the study employed mixed concurrent research method, various tools were developed and used to collect appropriate data from the participants. For primary data, survey methods were used for the collection of data from working mothers (both academic and administrative staff) from each selected university. Questionnaires were designed and distributed to collect data from the target participants. The items were developed using objective type, Likert Scale, open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Moreover, FGD, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews were conducted (with childcare providers, gender office director and experts, lecturers who teach gender courses and top management of the university, respectively). The interview was undertaken based on semi-structured interview guideline which gave respondents the opportunity to provide in-depth information on the themes raised by the researcher. The various tools and techniques used in this research are listed below:

#### **3.5.1 Survey**

The questionnaire is composed of open and closed ended questions. Most of the items, especially those that are intended to collect attitudinal dimensions were developed using Likert Scale. Careful consideration were taken in preparation of well-crafted questions and the questionnaire was originally prepared in English and then it was translated into Amharic and was pilot tested to check the appropriateness of the questionnaire in engendering the right answer. It was a self-administered questionnaire which enabled the working mothers from both wings to give them convenience and ability to choose the time, place, and manner in filling the questionnaire.

#### **3.5.2 In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 9 university presidents, 7 gender directors and one childcare giver from Bahir Dar University.

#### **3.5.3 FGD**

The study undertook 3 Focus Group Discussions, where each FGD comprised of 8 discussants. The first FGD took place with lecturers and gender expert at Bahir Dar University; the second

was conducted with lecturers and a gender expert at Hawassa University; and the third one was with Gender expert at Addis Ababa University.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Analysis**

This study employed both descriptive and explanatory analyses. In addition, in order to see the variation and level of significance; inferential statistics, especially Correlation and Linear Regression were considered to explore relationships among variables. Since data is collected using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the analyses needed to be presented with the intention of simplifying data cross validation and grasping different dimensions of the same phenomena easily. Hence, every data relevant to each research question and specific objective and theoretical framework was presented in mixed manner.

To analyze it qualitatively, categories for the research question were developed in relation to emerging themes and sub-themes. Accordingly, the qualitative data were analyzed based on content analytical procedure which prescribed summarizing comments and then coding perceptions and issues into groups of emerging themes.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the findings of the study from descriptive and inferential analyses. It aims to assess the challenges of working mothers towards childcare and analyze the implications on their workplace performance in selected higher learning institutions in Ethiopia. The variables are dealt with and analyzed under four major categories and seven sub-categories/themes. These four major categories include: demographic characteristics of respondents, organizational and individual factors, attitudinal factors, and working mothers' performance. The analyses of this study have been discussed in light of these categories in general, and other sub-categories in particular. These sub-categories under which challenges of working mothers towards childcare and their implications on workplace performance were explored using socio-economic factors, availability and affordability of childcare facilities, childcare providers' capacity, reproductive factors, personal and organizational interaction, institutional and structural challenges and work environment and facilities. For easy flow of idea, first the descriptive analysis and then inferential analysis were made, then qualitative data were supplemented to each section.

### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

A total of 343 working mothers in 9 universities participated in the study by completing the questionnaires. Respondents from Semera University were relatively less than others because of the small number of working mothers in the university, while respondents from Bahir Dar University were the highest because of the relative proportion of working mothers.

The education level of respondents has implications on childcare and mothers workplace performance. Majority of workers (63%) had first degree and above; whereas, 37% of them were diploma and certificate holders. While it is difficult to make generalizations based on the findings, the results indicated that there are improvements in human resource profiles of our higher learning institutions in Ethiopia.

Regarding the age of respondents, 91% of them were between 20- 40 years, confirming the productive age category of working mothers. The mean age of the respondents was 31.91 years. Most of the respondents (96%) were married, and the majority (86%) of working mothers were on the side of the administrative support staff. Only 13.6% of respondents were academic staff. This shows that still the engagement of women in academics and leadership positions in higher

educational institutions is very low. The average work experiences of respondents were close to 10 years and mean monthly salary was calculated to be 4637.74 ETB.

#### 4.2 Socio-economic Factors

The study showed that the average age when working mothers get pregnant was 29 years. The respondents on average have 2 children which is relatively less than the national average (4.9). This shows that women working at higher educational institutions manage their family size better. Mothers who gave birth returned to work on average in almost 4 months. This means that even though the official maternity leave is 3 months, women took extended maternity leaves informally. From interviews with university presidents, there is no formally set extended maternity leave within their institution policy and majority (75%) replied that it is not possible to set extended maternity leaves within their policy framework since it is the mandate of the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resources Development. However, few (25%) suggested that it is possible to set within the policy. Therefore, from the interviews it can be concluded that, although it is not the mandate of the universities to extend maternity leaves apart from what is given by the law, majority of university presidents agreed that if maternity leaves are extended, it can curb the multifaceted challenges that working mothers are facing.

To substantiate the above argument, here is an interview statement from a gender director of University A:

*There is no extended maternity leave policy in the university. Working mothers have the right to use their maternity leave which is 90 days. Other than that, there is no additional leave days given. But if their supervisors are positive thinkers and gender sensitive, they may informally give them additional leave time.*

All gender directors of the universities claimed that there is no formal extended maternity leave apart from what is set by the law. Universities are working based on the rules and regulations of the country so there is no formal additional leave to be extended for mothers.

The study found that working mothers currently spend on average 35 hours a week at work. This is relatively less than the expected working hour for employees in the public sector which is 39 hours a week. On the other hand, working mothers' spouses spend on average 41 hours a week which is higher than the expected work week. This evidence shows that, working mothers in higher learning institutions are facing challenges in taking care of children as compared to their spouses due to the fact that their spouses spend 41 hours per week outside of the home, and thus the burden of childcare falls on women's shoulders. Moreover, household chores and childcare are done by women and it is sometimes that their spouses do the job together, thus this shows that despite the fact that working mothers spent 35 hours a week at work, they are also engaged in home chores and are very challenged to provide the care the child deserves and this directly affect their workplace performance. To substantiate the above argument, a gender director interviewee from university A stated that:

*"Women who are mothers face many challenges in relation to childcare and taking care of their home in line with their workplace activities"*

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that, mothers are facing challenges in balancing their work in office and their task back at home because they have the responsibility of taking care of their children and are expected to work 8 hours a day. Moreover, it is obvious that, childcare is a

time consuming role for mothers and so it is more difficult to manage their time both at home and the office.

Average annual income of working mothers at universities is calculated to be birr 7660 which is significantly lower than the national average (birr 17,160). This means that women are less paid in the public sectors. While majority of working mothers (95%) are employed in non-exempt positions garnering less salary, the study found that the majority of women (81.6%) work in administrative wings where they are paid less. These working women, though they are working, they face further challenges in terms of income as well. As described by a Gender Director from University B:

*“It is obvious that working mothers with low salaries are being affected with childcare roles as they are financially incapable to employ helpers or to send their children to daycare centers”*

Furthermore, working single mothers face greater challenges in raising their children compared to working mothers with spouses. As explained by a gender director from University B:

*“Women in low economic status and those who are single are suffering a lot as compared to those who have spousal support”*

#### **4.2.1 Availability and Adequacy of Childcare Facilities**

Childcare facilities are critical for mothers who work for income in any given government sector or work at higher educational institutions. One way that workers can receive various kinds of assistance with childcare is through support that they can access through their workplace. Working mothers were asked whether there is childcare facility at their university or not. Majority of them (80.6%) confirmed that there is no childcare facility at their university. Only 14% of respondents agreed to the availability of childcare services within the university. Among those who confirmed availability of childcare facility, 55% reported that the service is adequate, and 45% of them said that the service is inadequate. Unlike other countries, this evidence clearly shows that almost half of public institutions in Ethiopia do not have childcare facilities for their employees. As confirmed by the university presidents almost all respondents replied that there is no daycare center at their respective institutions. However, few of them suggested that they plan to make daycare centers available to working mothers as part of a child support mechanism. Similarly, from the gender director's perspective, the study found that the majority of the universities have plans to build daycare centers in the near future. In some cases, however, few gender directors stated that the idea of building daycare centers didn't occur to them or university management. Here is what one said, at University S:

*“At our university there is no daycare center, the reason why is I think, due to the fact of being a new university and there is no directorate, and for that matter, no mother has come forward to university management asking for such daycare services.”*

Another gender director interviewee from university D, said:

*“No, there is no childcare facility in our university. To be honest, nobody proposed this issue including me. Maybe in the future we will think about it and will contact the concerned body.”*



#### 4.2.2 Childcare Providers Capacity

From the end of maternity leave until the child goes to school, working mothers need childcare services while they are at work. Most respondents 185 (49.1%) confirmed that housekeepers or babysitters are the main childcare service providers. Some use private daycare centers and about 6.9% of respondents use daycare center in the university. Some working mothers receive help from mothers or mothers in-law or other family members (husband, child's siblings, etc.) who may be able to cover at least part of their childcare needs. Although 185 (49.1%) respondents leave their children with housekeepers, it doesn't mean that their children are in safe hands.

Moreover, from Focus Group Discussions conducted, a sad story was told by discussants underscoring the need of daycare centers to ensure children safety. Discussants narrated the sad story about what their colleagues faced due to negligence by housekeepers,

*"There is a sad story that our colleague faced. She left her child with housekeeper and when she came back from work, she found her son in bed. She asked what was wrong with her son, and the maid said he fell from the stairs and that she didn't take him to the hospital in time. By the time our colleague tried to take her son to hospital it was too late, her son was dead. It sure is much better to leave children at daycare providers than at home with housekeepers because if children are at daycare centers at work, mothers can check on them every now and then."*

Moreover, the finding revealed that child's siblings mainly girls were forced to look after their younger siblings. This could mean that lack of childcare may be a factor in the lower attainment in educational level for girls. And this can be supported by a report by Overseas Development Institute in 2016. Across 53 developing countries, some 35.5 million children under five years old, more than the number of under-fives in Europe, were without adult supervision for at least an hour in a given week. Across 66 countries covering two-thirds of the world's population, women took on an extra ten or more weeks per year of unpaid care work. In countries where the care load was heavy and most unequal involving 37 countries covering 20% of the global population, women typically undertook 75% of childcare responsibilities (Emma Samman et al., 2016). These numbers show the scale of the challenges of girls who look after their siblings and mothers face.

However, care responsibilities not only reduce possibilities for female education and inhibit labor force participation, they also affect the types of jobs women do, how productive they are and how much they earn.

#### 4.2.3 Preferred Choices of Childcare Providers

Childcare providers need to balance the needs of children and the needs of working mothers. At one extreme, leaving young children in non-parental care for longer hours in a day due to work is clearly not the ideal for the child or the parents. At the other extreme, providing preschool education for two hours a day may complicate the lives of working parents considerably. Majority of respondents 86 (36.3%) stated that the preferred choice for childcare is one year of parental leave paid at 60% of their regular salary/wage followed by the regulated care in a caregiver's home which is 81 (34.2%). Against their preference, however, one argues that childcare providers can help parents, particularly mothers to ensure continuity in their careers. If they are compelled to resign from work for lack of affordable childcare centers, they tend to have difficulty in re-entering work, particularly at the same level as they were when they left (Catherine and Naomi, 2010).

In addition, feminists argue that moving into paid jobs is an essential step in the process of achieving women's equality and when they asserted the need for childcare, they asserted women's rights to participate in employment, in public life and in roles not exclusively defined by their place in the family structure, thus in order to get that affordable and quality childcare centers must be accessible.

Therefore, childcare services, feminists argue, even where they are available, do not adequately meet the needs of employed mothers and therefore argues that, childcare must be adequately compensated since underpaid, overburdened workers do not provide quality care to children to open the room for mothers to have their preferred choices.

#### **4.2.4 Children Illness as a Challenge for Working Mothers**

The study indicated that about 153 (50.7%) of working mothers at higher learning institutions experienced children illness on average for about 9 days in the last twelve months. Respondents were asked what childcare methods or choices they used when their child got ill. Accordingly, 51.9% replied that they prefer to stay at home or their spouse to take good care of their child. It can be concluded that unavailability of daycare center at their workplace can be one factor that pushes working mothers to resign from their work and to stay at home to take care of their children and this in turn affects women's career development, family income, and affect their workplace performance. Here is a statement from FGD discussant:

*“There are many women who left their job due to the inability to carry out their duty and responsibilities at workplace plus at home”*

The literature also indicates that many of today's mothers face “double-blinded” situations where women work full-time and are primarily responsible for childcare. Such mothers may sacrifice some career advancement and earnings as they enter occupations compatible with child rearing and taking care for ill children.

#### **4.2.5 Problems Encountered in Looking for Childcare**

From the study, some 131 (27.3%) of working mothers responded that they were unable to find childcare services close to home or their workplace; 103 (21%) of working mothers replied that even if they found the services, it was too expensive. Moreover, due to poor quality of childcare and the inability to meet the special needs of children and ineffectuality of childcare services with mothers' schedule makes it difficult for mothers to use the available childcare facilities that they could possibly get. Therefore, working mothers are facing challenges in finding compatible childcare services.

Supporting the findings, many feminists argue that from the growing demands for better childcare, it is critical to adopt flexible daycare programs. Childcare services should be flexible enough to accommodate mothers work schedules, allow mothers to attend to their children when sick, and children's school schedules as well. The best option available is for public universities to provide daycare services on campus for their working mothers.

The finding shows that only one university provides childcare services on site and it then it does not accommodate working mothers from both wings (academic and administrative). Workable and flexible schooled childcare centers need to be established in all public universities according to this study.

#### 4.3 Reproductive Factors

From the study, majority of working mothers responded that everything related to their home chores and childcare are done by themselves, while few mothers stated that they do the house chores and childcare jointly with their spouses. These practices impact working mothers negatively resulting in late arrivals to work and the quality of their work. It also impacts working mothers' chances to get involved in leadership positions and perform competitively to get recognized and be promoted. A corroborating comment from an FGD discussant states:

*"I am responsible for the house chores, to take care of my child and to handle the office work all at the same time. Since I am busy with the house chores, I couldn't even manage to arrive in time for my office work. As a result, it is very difficult for me to finish my office work in due time."*

As well, gender directors from all universities claimed that the dual responsibilities of working mothers have hampered their chances to come to leadership positions, accepting extra assignments, and from involving in research work. While Ethiopian policies do encourage women to come to leadership positions, such realities hinder women in practical terms. Women persevere and earn their higher degrees, but in the end, they become unable to apply their skills and earned degrees.

#### 4.4 Personal and Organizational Interaction

The literature clearly shows that interpersonal relationships at work plays significant role in the development and maintenance of trust and positive reputations that contribute to workers' productivity. An FGD discussant claimed that,

*"Working mothers are being perceived in this university as they don't have motivation for their work. This lack of motivation arises from nowhere else but from the triple burden working mother's shoulders. Because no one attaches value to home bound activities, women experience double loss – no appreciation for work related to child rearing and then lose at work for not having the time to shine."*

Moreover, discussants added that,

*"In general our problems (working mothers) are not seen positively. Management believes that we are lacking the courage to shine in our assigned work, and we are perceived as lazy, which is far from the truth. In times for promotion, decision makers fail to consider working mothers given the challenges."*

The appropriate approach to this global issue would be to value the social good mothers are contributing by raising their children. Their admirable efforts must be supported by programs such as provision of childcare services at the place of work. Children indeed belong to their parents, but they also belong to society.

#### 4.5 Institutional and Structural Challenges

The findings show that the majority of participants 322 (97%) responded that government should develop policies that could avail childcare services to working mothers in a more affordable way. Moreover, majority of working mothers challenge the maternity policy that limits maternity

leaves only to 3 months. Three months are not sufficient to properly prepare infants to carry on without their mother's milk and care. As in most other nations of the world, maternity leaves need to be extended to 6 months.

#### **4.6 Work Environment and Facilities**

In regards to employee support to working mothers, 195 (66.3%) of the respondents confirmed that their employers allow sick-child days, 55 (18.7%) said they are allowed to have flexible work hours, 35 (11.9%) confirmed that they are provided with on-site daycare center, and 9 (3.1%) replied that their employees help them with childcare payments. However, according to the interview results, all university presidents stressed that, there is no enabling environment for working mothers. Therefore, it can be concluded that favorable work environment and facilities for working mothers should be created within this selected universities and the support should be available to all university working mothers.

Furthermore, particular questions were raised on rating their workplace environment and facilities. Accordingly, the majority 228 (53.4%) stated that there is lack of privacy and adequate time to provide breast milk for their children, 83 (19.4%) replied the workplace and work environment were hostile to mothers, 61 (14.3%) responded that there is strict distinction between work and non-work life; and 55 (12.9%) of respondents asserted that the work environment is unsupportive.

In addition, in the interviews with university presidents, the majority of them stressed that the environment is not supportive for working mothers. Another finding is that workplace is very hostile for working mothers disallowing them to play their motherly roles such as expressing breast milk in a comfortable and private space. On the issue of "ideal work arrangements", the majority of working mothers 183 (57.2%) responded that they prefer full-time jobs with flexible hours to take good care of their children at the place of work, whereas 48 (15.0%) replied that it would be ideal for them to work from home. From the above findings, it can be concluded that majority of working mothers ideal work arrangement is to work full-time with flexible hours and whenever possible.

#### **4.7 Working Mothers Attitude Towards Childcare**

According to Zaidatol, and Bagheri (2009), Likert Scale mean score of  $\leq 3.39$  is low, from 3.40 up to 3.79 is moderate and  $> 3.80$  is high. Thus, the findings depict that, most working mothers do not have positive attitude towards their workplace/organization. They believe that the university is not supportive of their interests. Their attitude emanates from the fact that the university does not provide childcare facilities and they do not get adequate maternity leaves. The women believe that their university management primarily values job accomplishments only (mean = 3.72). They positively respond that their husbands are equally responsible for the care of their child (Mean = 3.86). They moderately perceive that combining childcare with academic work/office work is a very challenging task (Mean = 3.59).

#### **4.8 Working Mothers Performance**

##### **4.8.1 Self-rated Working Mothers Performance**

A self-rated working mother performance standard was developed and distributed to working mothers to rate their performance. In almost all cases, their response towards their performance was either at medium or high score according to the mean score categorization of Zaidatol, and Bagheri (2009). However, women perceived that the younger their children the more they perform less at their

workplace. They also perceived that their workload was affecting both their motherhood roles and performance even though they were performing well in their respective universities. However, there are challenges they are facing related to childcare. This means that they can perform better if they get support on childcare services either at the campus or outside the university, but nearby.

#### **4.9 The Relationship Between Childcare and Working Mothers Performance and Attitudes**

##### **4.9.1 Correlation Analysis**

Working mothers' performance is highly correlated with attitude, their child's age, length of maternity leaves, work environment, availability, and affordability of childcare. However, there is no significant relationship between working mothers' performance and childcare providers' capacity.

The study findings concluded that there is a linear association between working mothers workplace attitude and workplace performance. The finding reveals that there is strong, linear relationship ( $r=.24$ ,  $p<.001$ ) between working mothers attitude and their workplace performance. Moreover, there is negative but significant relationship between attitude and availability and affordability of daycare centers. This shows that when attitudes of working mothers towards their workplace is high or positive, their performance will be high as well, the opposite holds true. Moreover, their performance has negatively significant relationship with availability of daycare center.

##### **4.9.2 Regression Analysis**

In the regression analysis, the first model analyzes childcare factors (such as availability and affordability of childcare, childcare related problems, childcare providers capacity) against working mothers' performance. Accordingly, childcare related problems and childcare providers' capacity significantly affecting working mothers' performance. However, availability and affordability of childcare services were not significantly affecting working mothers' performance. In the second model it considers attitude as dependent variable and childcare related factors as explanatory variables. In our conceptual framework, attitude was introduced as mediating variable between explanatory and outcome variable and accordingly, the finding indicates that child care related factors do not have significant effect on working mothers' attitude.

The third model analyses the effect of childcare, and attitudinal factors on employee Performance. Thus, childcare problems and childcare providers' capacity together with attitude determine performance. Attitude is a mediating factor between the two childcare related factors and performance. This implies that attitude of working mothers towards childcare is critical to utilize the available facilities and improve their performance.

##### **4.9.3 Reliability Analysis**

A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was run to determine internal consistency and reliability of the data. The reliability test is an instrument used to measure the items in a questionnaire which act as indicators of the variables. Nunually (1978) suggested that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale must be greater than 0.7. Reliability analysis tells whether the items included in the model are realizable proxies of variables. Therefore, the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (based on standardized items) for performance measurement is 0.708 which clearly indicates that the results are reliable. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

for attitudinal factors is 0.781. Since, the reliability value for both the dependent, independent and mediator variable is greater than 0.7; the results in this study are viable.

## **5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study with socio-economic factors, the average age that working mothers get pregnant is 29 years and on average they have 2 children and this shows that women working at higher learning institutions manage their family size better.

Moreover, it has been found that working mothers are spending most of their time working, taking care of their household chores, and their children compare to their spouses. As a result, the study found that they are burdened with dual roles as mothers and working mothers. Findings from the interviews, FGD, and survey clearly shows that, majority of working mothers are from the administration wing, who face challenges in balancing work-childcare responsibilities. This also runs into conflict with the 8-hour workday requirement. When it comes to availability and adequacy of childcare facilities, the study reveals that there is no childcare facility in majority of Ethiopian universities. Even when it is available, the services are inadequate. Similarly, the study reveals that, despite the dangers working mothers experience from leaving their child with their maids, housekeepers/maids or babysitters. Where mothers become unable to hire helpers, the burden fell on older siblings, mainly girls. The study revealed that majority of working mothers stays at home when their child becomes sick, since there is no childcare service provided at their work place. Over time, if this becomes unbearable, working mothers are forced to resign from work to be able to raise their children. Likewise, the study shows, working mothers who have daycare centers at their respective university take advantage of the services and stay at work.

In regards with personal and organizational interactions, working mothers personal and organizational interaction were in a good order, however, it was found that working mothers dual responsibilities introduce negative impacts on their organizational and interpersonal relations.

Regarding to the reproductive factors, findings from the survey, FGD, and interviews suggested that everything related to home chores and childcare was done by working mothers. This has negative implications with their work environment such as arriving to work on time, getting involved in leadership roles, to perform exceptionally well, and ultimately to be promoted.

In regards to Institutional and Structural Challenges, the findings reveal that unavailability of childcare centers inside their institutions and inaccessibility of childcare centers around their work place, strict 3-month maternity leave policy, non-conducive environment for lactating mothers, lack of affordable childcare services in nearby locations, lack of privacy and adequate time to express breast milk, not having flexible working hours, lack of incentives for childcare, and denying sick-child days are found to be the major institutional and structural challenges these working mothers continually facing.

The research also revealed that, availability of daycare centers in their workplace, incentives for working mothers and adequate childcare and subsidy plans play significant roles to working mother's career development and workplace performance. It was concluded that attitude was a mediating factor between the two - child care related factors and performance. This implies that attitude of working mothers towards childcare is critical to take advantage of available facilities which in turn improves their performance.

## 5.2 Recommendations

From the findings of the study and conclusions, the following major recommendations are forwarded:

- Attention should be given to the creation of a better working environment for working mothers. More working mothers should be promoted to managerial positions and in academic ranks to lay the foundation for the enhancement of working mothers.
- The three-month maternity leaves need to be reconsidered and extended based on a thorough study. The recommendation is that it be extended to six months.
- Flexible working hours should be introduced in the institutional policy for lactating working mothers. The scheduling should consider the needs of the children, working mothers, service providers and the performance required.
- Universities should consider incentives or child allowances for working mothers with lesser salary; and greater attention should be given to single working mothers with lower income.
- Higher education institutions should avail daycare centers at their campuses with adequate services and facilities with affordable prices and accessibility to all working mothers.
- To bring structural changes, in addition to responding to mothers' immediate needs, spouses need to support and share some of the dual responsibilities. Higher education institutions should work hand in hand with their communities, elders, and other concerned bodies to raise awareness on the challenges of working mothers, and introduce solutions that work for the mothers, their spouses, their work, and especially for their children.
- Universities should avail conducive work environment for working mothers by providing a safe and private nursing space on site.
- Although sick leaves are permitted for mothers, sick-child leave policy should be enacted at each university.
- All Universities should work together to harmonize and align their institutional policy in creating enabling environment for working mothers.
- Universities should work on attitudinal changes toward the use of childcare facilities.
- Further research is highly recommended with larger sample size, more time and including other public institutions.

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