Perceptions of Motherhood Roles among Women of Different Nationalities Living in Swaziland

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Abstract
This study examined perceptions of motherhood roles among twelve mothers living in Swaziland. The study used the qualitative phenomenological design. Data was collected through questionnaire and focus group discussion and analysed thematically. Participants agreed that motherhood roles were determined by society and ranged from child bearing to managing the home and family. There were two constructions of motherhood: the stay-at-home and the working mother. However, mothers were expected to fulfil similar roles regardless of their employment status. Sharing of mothering responsibilities between participants and their husbands differed according to cultural background. Participants in employment found balancing employment and motherhood problematic.

Key words: Motherhood, roles, employment, responsibilities

Introduction
Motherhood is viewed differently by different people. Glenn et al. (1994:357) and Collett (2005) define mothering as "a socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people" and also "the main vehicle through which people first form their identities and learn their places in society". Arendell (2000:2-3) argues that mothering and motherhood are viewed as "dynamic social interactions and relationships, located in a societal context organised according to gender and in accord with the prevailing gender belief systems". An issue that emanates from this perspective is that, even though women are biologically made to conceive, gestate and breastfeed children, society also expects them to rear and nurture them, thereby linking mothering and women's identity (McMahon, 1995). As a result of this, Goldstein and Ross (1989) argue that depression is a common experience, especially among married working mothers trying to juggle the responsibilities of their job and caring for their children with limited resources.

Statement of the problem

From the literature reviewed above, it has been argued that motherhood poses challenges to many women with career aspirations in the employment sector, as balancing the competing roles of motherhood and employment seems to be difficult. The present study sought to explore how middle-class educated mothers living in Swaziland manage these competing roles.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to find out how educated middle-class mothers of different nationalities living in Swaziland managed the roles of motherhood and employment.
The objectives of the study were to: -

- Establish what women of different nationalities living in Swaziland perceive as the roles of motherhood;
- Examine the challenges the women experience with mothering roles;
- Explore the possible effects of motherhood on career prospects.
- Assess how the women cope with the roles of motherhood and employment.

Research questions

1. What do educated women of different nationalities living in Swaziland perceive as the roles of motherhood?
2. What challenges do women face with roles of motherhood?
3. How does motherhood affect the career prospects of women?
4. To what extent do women manage to balance the roles of motherhood and employment?

Review of literature
Determination of motherhood roles

The social role theory posits that men and women perform different roles in social situations; a man is viewed as the breadwinner who possesses commitment and competence at work while the woman is the caregiver who is warm, nurturing, and submissive (Eagly, 1984). Therefore, compared to men whose main responsibility is viewed as providing financially for the family (Coltrane, 2004; Madden, 2004), employed women never seem to satisfy their career expectations as family responsibilities often intrude on their careers (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). According to Kuperberg (2009), mothers leave work to assume the full-time responsibilities of raising children or opt for unstable work positions with no security so that they have time for nurturing their children. Furthermore a female employee who becomes a mother is viewed as being more committed to her children than to her work. (Eagly, 1987).

Roles of motherhood

Ross (1995) argues that another's socially ascribed roles are shaped in different ways by different people. On the one hand, the husband's ability to provide for the family determines what role the wife performs. On the other hand, children shape their mother's work by placing different demands on her at different stages of their lives (Ross, 1995). As a result, mothers sacrifice their own needs and individual selves for the sake of their families (Collins, 1994).

On another note, Stearney (1994) equated motherhood to the earth as a natural mother which provides bare necessities, for example, air, water and food. This stresses the nurturing and

caring role of mothers. In accord with this, Phoenix and Woollett (1991) state that motherhood is the daily management and caring of children which should result in the promotion of good child development and in which success is measured by the achievement of the woman's children (Collett, 2005).

Constructions of motherhood
There are different constructions of motherhood. Hays (1996) coined the term intensive mothering which refers to the labour-intensive and emotionally absorbing work that mothers perform. This implies that mothers are the best suited to care for children. As a consequence of this, the woman ceases to care for her own needs and interests but becomes an instrument through which the needs of other people are met (Bassin *et al.*, 1994).

Another construction of motherhood has been evolving since mothers of all social classes are returning to the work force and many women with young children are gainfully employed. This dramatic change has created two dominant mothering categories, the stay-at-home mother (SAHM) and the working mother. Both are influenced by the expectations of intensive mothering (Arendell, 2000; Johnston & Swanson, 2007).

Stay-at-home mothers (SAHM) are women who engage full-time in care-giving and domestic work. Often characterized as the "traditional mother" (Arendell, 2000), the stay-at-home mother has been a mainstay in many societies. Universally projected as the idealized model of motherhood, the SAHM is "at home" and "not working" because she prioritizes "being there" for her children above earning an income and advancing in a career (Johnston & Swanson, 2007).

The opposite of the stay-at home mother is the working mother who is employed outside the home (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Arendell (2000) notes that the employed and unemployed mothers are still expected to perform the same child care activities. The working mother is often characterized as a "super mom" who should effortlessly switch from career woman to attentive mother/homemaker without sacrificing job or children (Hays, 1996; Hochschild, 2003). However, the super mom image and the very label itself suggest that, when women work outside the home, motherhood should still be their primary duty. Additionally, the connotation associated with the term 'super mom' suggests that both responsibilities are performed with an artful ease of organization, effortlessness and attentiveness.

Douglas and Michaels (2004) and Burgess (2013) view this "New Momism" ideology as a penalty for motherhood because it portrays motherhood as revolving around mothering, limiting one of a fulfilling career. Yet many married women have difficulty in managing full-time work and family responsibilities because of competing commitments identified as devotion to work and devotion to family (Blair-Loy (2003). Consequently, mothers are pressured to stay home and take care of their family if they can afford it (Gerson, 1985; Arendell 2000). Those who continue to work when there appears to be no financial need are treated as deviants and often experience a sense of guilt at leaving their own children. The challenge is that the norms of motherhood are dictated by intensive mothering, even for working mothers (Segura 1994), creating the super mom syndrome referred to above.

Methodology
This study used the qualitative research paradigm which enabled the researchers to study motherhood as it is experienced by the participants. The researchers used phenomenology which enabled them to understand the phenomenon "motherhood" from the perspectives of educated employed and unemployed middle-class Zimbabwean, Indian, Portuguese, Canadian, American and Swazi mothers living in Swaziland. The aim was to understand how

participants make sense of motherhood and the meanings of their experiences of the phenomenon with special reference to roles of motherhood.

Twelve participants believed to be able to share their experiences with motherhood were purposively sampled. All twelve women, aged between 25 and 60, were information rich participants who were articulate enough to give rich data and information on motherhood from their different cultural perspectives.

Open-ended questionnaires and a focus group discussion were used to gather data and to probe deeper for underlying meaning. Of the twelve participants, eight chose to participate in the discussion. In an atmosphere of trust and safety, the participants willingly shared their perceptions, opinions and experiences of motherhood and its various aspects. Consequently, the women revealed perspectives which had not been evident in their questionnaire responses, such as the sense of powerlessness some participants felt with regards to sharing some motherhood responsibilities with their husbands.

After the researchers recorded the discussions electronically they adopted Smith and Osborn's (2007) suggestions on analysing phenomenological data. Their data analysis started with the field notes which enabled them to record what each saw, heard, experienced and understood as they reflected on both questionnaire and focus group discussion data.

In line with phenomenological data analysis, the researchers read the transcripts several times individually first making margin notes. They then summarised and paraphrased the filed notes and compared notes. The agreed upon summaries were then used to identify and list themes. After clustering the themes, the researchers wrote narratives again individually first and then compared notes. Throughput this process, the researchers continually returned to the original data to ensure that nothing was lost in the process.(Smith and Osborn, 2007)

As a way of ensuring validity of data, the researchers who were all mothers, had to bracket their own experiences and belief about motherhood roles to ensure that the participants' experiences with roles of motherhood (Carpenter, 2013).In writing the narratives verbatim extracts for original data were used to corroborate and support the case.

After the researchers had drafted the full report, they shared it with the participants as a means of ensuring validity and acquiring confirmation that the report had correctly captured and represented the participants' perceptions of the roles of motherhood.

Results

In this section we present the data according to the themes identified through their data analysis, which are maternal roles, maternal choice-making regarding work and careers, challenges of maternal roles and employment and coping strategies.

Demographic details of the participants
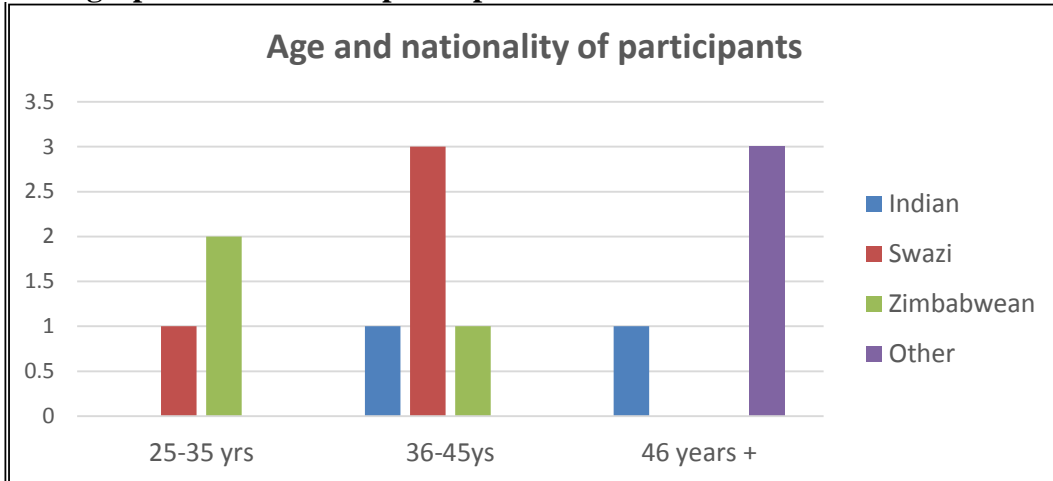
Figure 1: Age and Nationality of Participants

Four (4) of the participants were Swazi, two (2) Indian, three (3) Zimbabwean and three other nationalities. Of these there were one (1) Canadian, one (1) American and one (1) Portuguese. Three (3) participants were in the age group 25 to 35 years; five (5) were in the 36 to 45 years age group while four (4) were in the age group 46 years and above.
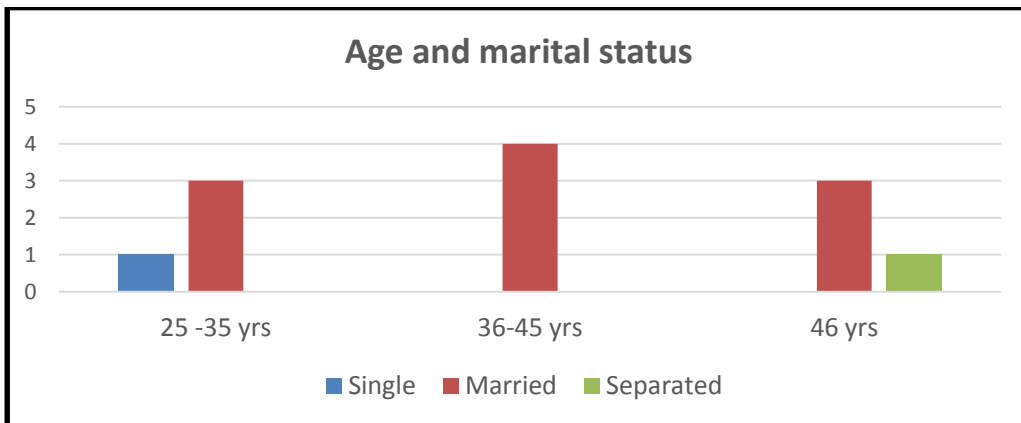
Figure 2: Age and marital Status of Participants

Ten (10) of the participants were married. These were in all age groups. Only two were not married; of these one was single and the other separated. Three (3) Swazi, the Indian, Portuguese and Zimbabwean participants were married to men of their own nationalities. The Canadian was married to a man of a different nationality while the American was separated from a Zimbabwean husband.

Maternal roles
Linto (1945 defines "role" as the culturally prescribed rights, duties, expectations and standards of behaviour expected of a person in a particular position in society. In the case of this study, maternal role refers to the behaviour and functions expected of a mother in societal situations. Each role would normally entail a number of responsibilities a person has to perform. The results will be presented and discussed according to themes the researchers came up with.

Mothers' perceptions of their roles before child-bearing
Nine (9) of the participants felt that, before they were mothers, being a mother meant just taking care of the children, providing for their needs and ensuring the children were healthy and strong. Two (2) of them thought it might involve other responsibilities like taking care of husband and home. Only one (1) participant indicated that, because her mother had had many children, she knew what was involved in being a mother. The excerpts below capture some of these perceptions.

- *To ensure that the child is always wearing clean clothes, well fed and happy including the whole family* (Swazi)
- *I thought that giving them food, clothing and sending them to school were the main roles* (Swazi).
- *I thought taking care of a child was not that demanding until I became one* (a mother) (Zimbabwean).

Eight (8) of them generally agreed that their views about what motherhood entailed before they became mothers were far from the reality. These views focused on the giving of birth and providing the basic physiological needs of the child and family.

Changed perceptions after child-bearing
Six (6) participants indicated that their perceptions had changed after they had had children. They realised that mothers had to do more than provide for the children, they had to love and discipline them, and give up things they used to love. The issue of sacrifice comes through clearly. There were also other responsibilities such as household duties and even church:

- *Yeah, being a mother entails a lot, not just household duties.* (Zimbabwean).
- *I came to know that being a mother meant sacrifice, hard work and perseverance* (Swazi).
- *Caring for a helpless human being is a huge responsibility. This little baby is totally dependent on you for its existence and wellbeing, so you must do the very best you can in every way, to fulfil the baby's needs* (Portuguese).

After they became mothers, participants realised that motherhood roles were more complex than they had imagined before they became mothers. The great responsibility of bringing up a child who is totally dependent on the mother appeared to be the most demanding of the mothers' roles to the participants.

Effects of these roles on mothers as individuals and as women
Eight (8) participants felt that motherhood affected them as individuals in various ways. Firstly, they had to think of other people first. They came second now. They also had to multitask in order to cope effectively. One (1) participant referred to limited movement, which affected the mother's own time for having fun. Another participant always tried to put her children first, thus denying herself personal time and feeling powerless to request that time from her family. Yet another participant had to leave full-time employment to take care of her children. The excerpts below from the questionnaires further demonstrate these views.

- *It means you have to put the children first always and to consider them when making your decisions* (Zimbabwean).
- *I spend too much time taking care of my children, which I still do and I have very little time for myself. As a woman I find myself busy all the time –I have to go to work and take care of my family* (Swazi).
- *I feel that they are part of how I define myself. When I think about my identity, "mother" is always proudly part of it. At the same time, there are times when I really need time to myself but I feel terrible about asking for it.* (American).

- *They affected me a lot- in fact when my youngest was two years old I left my permanent career/job after 12 years of hard work and being on track for further promotions. (Canadian).*

These sentiments highlight the difficult choices the participants had to make in connection with meeting their own needs, being employed or meeting the needs of the children successfully. On-black participants whose husbands could afford it chose to be stay-at-home mothers. The others had to work to augment the family income. One issue that stands out is that the participants had to commit their time and priorities to the children at the expense of their own needs.

Sharing of responsibilities with men/husbands/partners
In the focus group discussion, six (6) of the participants indicated that husbands shared some of the responsibilities. One (1) Swazi participant clearly indicated that, in Swazi custom, a married man never shared any roles with his wife beyond providing for the family. The excerpts below further emphasise these views.

- *Very few responsibilities are shared by men probably because of the Swazi culture- men buy food but cannot cook even when a woman/wife is not around* (Swazi).
- *I can only speak for my husband who has truly participated 100% in fatherhood. In fact the parenting of their children has been a joint responsibility* (Canadian).
- *The husband can certainly help in aspects such as bathing, changing, dressing and feeding the baby and babysitting if you need to go shopping or to go out with a girlfriend. Nowadays men help considerably. In my parents' generation, about 60 years ago, it wasn't common for men to help with raising children* (Portuguese).

Two contradictory viewpoints are obvious: some participants' husbands were not willing to share responsibilities (Swazi men) and non-Swazi participants' husbands shared responsibilities with their wives. While the non-black husbands perceived the child-rearing roles as jointly belonging to husband and wife, the husbands of the Zimbabwean participants believed that the roles belong to their wives but they shared them to lessen the wives' burden.

Responsibilities shared by partners/men/husbands
Generally participants felt that sharing of responsibilities with men differed from family to family and could also be influenced by culture and socialization, as *'it depends on what kind of a man he is, his beliefs and background etc.-mine was /is very supportive* (Zimbabwean).

There was a remarkable difference in experiences of non-African, Swazi and Zimbabwean participants. For the non-African participants husbands had a direct responsibility for the baby, like feeding, bathing the baby and babysitting while the mother is away, as shown below:-

The Swazis and Zimbabweans felt that what men did was somehow aligned to cultural expectations where men focused on providing the financial means needed for the child's upbringing.

When probed further participants explained that culturally child- rearing when done by men is viewed as an embarrassment. However, where men participate in the responsibility of childcare it is concealed within that nuclear family. One (1) Zimbabwean participant whose

husband participated fully alleged that she does not even discuss her husband's involvement with friends or family members.

In the focus group discussion, one (1) Swazi woman expressed the sense of powerlessness she felt in that she could not even discuss sharing of responsibilities with her husband, as this was not done. She explained that both she and her husband were employed and yet after work she had to do all the chores and help the children with homework while he watched television. The other three (3) Swazi participants confirmed this when they explained that it appears that in Swazi culture the woman is treated like a slave whether the husband is educated or not. These Swazi participants indicated that for the Swazi woman marriage was seen as a favour which should be returned with dedicated service to the husband, children and in-laws.

Determinants of mothers' roles
Eight (8) participants indicated that society generally determines mothers' roles. Two (2) participants felt that God determined these roles. The participant who had to give up her job felt that employers' policies also determine mothers' roles. She would have been happy to work half days but the employer would not allow this so she had to become a full-time stay at home mother. The twelfth participant felt that, while society determines the roles of motherhood, she had taken them on without thinking about it.

- *The society basically; we just follow the norms and culture. Changing one or two things as we go* (Zimbabwean).
- *Swazi culture and religion- culturally women have to bear children and take care of them. A woman's place is in the kitchen even when the woman is employed* (Swazi).
- *Society determines these roles. It is expected that the mother will be the primary caretaker of the baby. The husband usually goes out to work and the mother stays home to look after the baby and the home* (Portuguese).

It is worth noting that one participant referred to her career as a determinant of these roles and responsibilities, citing the employer's inflexibility in terms of working part time or full time:-

- *The jobs we hold in the formal workforce often shapes the roles and responsibilities that we have (i.e. the flexibility of the employer, whether we work part-time or full-time, etc.).*

This last comment raises the issue of the effect of motherhood on employment, similar to Arendell's (2000) finding about women being pressured to leave employment to become stay-at-home mothers.

Rejection of roles
Nine (9) participants indicated that women cannot reject these roles. In Swazi culture, it is taboo for the man to be seen doing the chores meant for women. Failing to fulfil these roles was considered equal to neglecting their children. One (1) participant, however, pointed out that some women neglect these roles and get away with it. A major point raised by one (1) participant - separated from her husband - was that, as a wage earner, she had the power to define how she plays the roles.

- *To a lesser extent because it would be taboo for a woman to expect a male member of the family to do household chores while she sits* (Swazi)
- *No power at all – if as a mother you neglect them then who will take care of them?* (Zimbabwean)
- *To a very little extent because even my religion and culture expect me to comply*

(Swazi).
- *As a mother I can't reject them* (Indian).

During the focus group discussion there was a mutual feeling that a mother cannot reject these roles because no one would do them. A question was posed that if as a mother you ignore these roles, who will take care of them? Rather than rejecting the roles ignoring them was cited as a better option. One participant explicitly equated rejecting the roles with neglecting children, as shown below:-

- *Some mothers neglect their children, I suppose. They don't love them as selflessly as I think they should!* (Portuguese).

Only one (1)participant viewed a working mother as having the power to interpret and adopt the roles as she likes, as shown below:-

- *Since I earn my own money, I have a certain leeway to define how I want to be a mother* (American).

In general, the participants felt that they could not reject the roles expected of them. Only one participant who was working and separated felt that she could determine how to perform those roles.

From the focus groups discussions it was made clear that there were sanctions for ignoring motherhood roles, as both the paternal and maternal sides of the woman's family put pressure on the mother to comply to avoid tarnishing their family name. It was pointed out that other cultures, especially developed countries, impose legal sanctions or take the children to foster homes.

Maternal choice-making regarding work and careers
Stay-at-home mothers
Four (4) participants indicated they were stay-at-home mothers while eight (8) indicated they were not. Out of these four (4), only three (3) answered the questions that were linked to this, namely the decision to stay home on a full-time basis, the financial and emotional impact of this decision, and the description of life as a full-time mother. One (1) of these participants was between 25 and 35 years old, while the other two (2) were 46 years and above. The three (3) women were all non-Swazi: one Zimbabwean, one Canadian and one Portuguese and all were married.

Decision to stay home full-time
For the three (3) participants, the decision came about because they felt guilty or because they saw it as their motherly duty to take care of their (young) children.

- *I felt guilty when I was at home and also when I was at work. Leaving my job was one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make in my life which was primarily made for the benefit of the children.* (Canadian)
- *When my babies were born it was expected that I would stay at home to care for them, it was my duty.* (Portuguese)
- *My children are still young, so they need great care from me.* (Zimbabwean)

It can be deduced from the above that the women viewed themselves as the best suited to take care of their children. The three (3) of them saw it as their duty to take care of the children.

Impact of staying at home
The three (3) women who decided to be stay-at-home mothers were able to do so because their husbands brought financial security to the homes:

- *My decision to stop work was made easier by the fact that my husband had a very good job* (Canadian)

- *My husband was able to support us financially on his salary.* (Portuguese)

For these women, the choice to stay at home did not negatively affect the family finances.

In addition the three stay-at-home women generally felt positive about having spent time with their young children. Here is what they felt:

- *Overall I have no regrets especially since their children have all thanked my husband and me so many times for the life they lived with me at home full-time.* (Canadian)
- *I was and am happy that I didn't have to work and leave my sons in the hands of someone else to care for them when they were babies.* (Portuguese)
- *Feeling good actually because I got time to spend with my husband and little children and socialise them the way I want.* (Zimbabwean)

For these participants staying at home had a number of benefits. One benefit common to all three is spending time with the family and providing the care required by the children without external support.

Three participants indicated they loved their lives as full-time mothers, but one also indicated that this type of life could be "boring" (Zimbabwean participant) because of all the routines involved. Different cultural norms and social expectations shape how people construct their lives and opinions. The Canadian participant was looking forward to the "liberating" feeling of having her children grown up and leaving the house:

- *Well, two of their children have since left home for University; the last one will leave home in 18 months or so. So over the past five years I have been able to start to concentrate more on post-mid-life and in particular what I want to do for the next 30 years of my life! It feels great and liberating although as I mentioned above I wouldn't have changed anything in the past.* (Canadian)

The Canadian participant's observations show the sense of freedom she now feels as she looks to a future where she would be able to what she could not do while her children were still young. . The Portuguese participant went back to work after her children grew up and left home, a clear indication that there is life after child rearing for these three (3) participants.

Working mothers: decisions, feelings and life as a working mother?

All eight (8) working mothers were already working when they became mothers. They continued working after assuming motherhood, mainly for financial reasons. Seven (7) of these women indicated that life as a working mother is "hectic", "busy", "exhausting" and "tough", but that they liked their life as working mothers at the same time: "*it is a nice experience*" (Indian).

There was an overwhelming feeling among the women that they needed to work for financial reasons and, for some, because they were single parents (American and one Swazi participant).

Discussion

In line with the objectives mentioned above, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of the roles of motherhood among educated middle-class women of different nationalities living in Swaziland. The participants viewed the roles of motherhood as varying from childbearing, to rearing and educating children. These roles echoed the findings of Fouquier (2011) in her study of African American women where some found out that mothering involved providing the emotional and spiritual needs of children in addition to child bearing and rearing(Collins, 1994). The older participants across the nationalities observed that the roles of a mother continued throughout the lifetime of both mother and child regardless of the

age of the children. In this case the role was not just limited to motherhood but extended to grand motherhood and to the community where mothers had roles in church and other arenas. An additional role for the participants was taking care of the home and the family regardless of whether one was employed or not. One overall theme was that motherhood meant sacrifice, hard work, self-denial and commitment to children and home. This view of motherhood echoed the characteristics of Hays' (1996) intensive mothering.

Generally the women in this study were in agreement that motherhood was socially determined (Collett, 2005; Burgess, 2013; Eagly, 1984, 1987). In this regard the women felt that they had little choice about fulfilling these roles. It would appear that many of the women accepted the responsibilities without even thinking about it, believing that it is natural for women to fulfil them because of their biological make-up. By accepting these roles without question, the participants were inadvertently perpetuating gender stereotyping (Deweese-Boyd, 2003). Only the participants who found the responsibilities burdensome are the ones who reflected on them. Participants indicated that while there were sanctions for non-compliance with the roles, some women got away with it. Sanctions were generally informal imposed by the husband's or wife's family.

Differences of opinion were evident when the participants were discussing the sharing of responsibilities with their husbands. The non-Swazi participants all indicated that their husbands performed responsibilities that could be termed as mothering. It further appeared that the husbands to the Canadian, Indian and Portuguese participants took the responsibilities of parenting as their own and worked jointly with their wives. The Swazi participants expressed strong sentiments about the Swazi cultural norms which do not allow a man to do any work that may be considered as woman's work. The effect of the Swazi culture on the Swazi participants echoes the effects of culture on appointment to leadership positions for women in the education sector (Nyawo and Nsibande, 2014).
The Zimbabwean participants felt that, when the husbands were performing these chores, they were only doing it to help their wives. In other words even for the Zimbabwean husbands, the view was that the roles of rearing children and looking after the home belonged to women. What may be interesting to find out is whether the Zimbabwean men would help their wives if they were in their own country.

Eight (8) of the participants are in full-time employment; one (1) is studying and the other three (3) are stay-at-home mothers. From the perspectives of most of the participants, motherhood is viewed in the same light asArendell (2000) and Johnston & Swanson (2007) who suggested the term stay-at-home mother (SAHM) as opposed to employed mother. The reasons for women going to work varied, with the main one being the need for security and disposable income for the family. The one (1) participant who is studying is doing so in order to improve her chances of getting employment in Swaziland. She would not choose to be a stay-at-home mother. It is worth noting that with regards to being stay-at-home mothers, it appeared that the non-African participants found it comparatively easier because their husbands could support the family financially, while the African participants generally had to work to augment the family income.

Mothers who chose to stay at home were prepared to act as engaged primary caregivers and as household managers. By placing the mother at the center of the children's well-being and as the one who is ultimately responsible for the future of the children's moral character, the SAHMs contend that staying at home is the only way to guarantee that their children would be raised "correctly" (Woollett, 1991). However, in the case of the Canadian woman, her

employers forced her to become a full time mother (Gerson, 1985; Arendell 2000). They would not accept her desire to work part time, probably believing that her devotion and competence would be compromised by her devotion to her children

Conclusions

The following conclusions could be drawn from the findings of this study: -

1. Participants agreed that they were surprised to find that there were four specific roles of motherhood, which are child bearer, caregiver, wife and paid worker; and each of these had responsibilities of its own.
2. They also agreed that the roles that society placed on mothers were so demanding and time consuming that they ended up not paying attention to their own needs.
3. Two major constructions of motherhood were evident in this study – the stay-at-home mother who took care of children, home and family on a full time basis and the working mother who was employed but still had to take care of the children.
4. In spite of the different constructions of motherhood, all twelve educated middle-class participants were expected to fulfil the same maternal responsibilities towards their children and families, as determined by their societies;
5. For all participants, the decision to be or not to be employed depended on their husbands' ability to provide financial security for the family.
6. Most of the working mothers in the study found it difficult to cope with the demands of employment and motherhood, creating a sense of guilt that they could not give adequate care and attention to their children.

Recommendations

This study has shown that women's experiences with motherhood differ. The study therefore makes the following recommendations: -

1. Further research on motherhood as perceived by a wider spectrum of women in Swaziland should be carried out in order to give voice to women about their experiences of the critical phase of motherhood in a woman's life.
2. A further area of study would be the impact of culture on the mothering experiences of women of different cultures in Swaziland;
3. Since Swaziland is facing a huge problem with HIV and AIDS, further studies could be carried out to explore the effect of HIV and AIDS on motherhood in the Swaziland.

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