

# "Good" Mother versus "Bad" Mother: How Societal Conceptions of Motherhood in Canada and Ukraine Impact a Mother's Access to Opportunities

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## Introduction

This paper focuses on the social construction of motherhood and the subsequent labels ascribed to mothers that impact their access to opportunities at various levels of society. Intersectional factors such as socioeconomic status, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, and job type impact a mother's daily life. Consequently, depending on the area of the world under analysis, the definition of what makes a "good" or "bad" mother varies. Within Canada and Ukraine, for example, a "good" mother may be ever-present and willing to devote their entire being to their children. While on the other hand, a "bad" mother is often an individual who spends time away from their family and may participate in self-indulgent activities that do not involve their children. Public perceptions of motherhood that are often perpetuated and reinforced within media assist in defining what is considered a "good" or "bad" mother by casting judgements about how one ought to behave once they have children. It is difficult to generalize what values exist geographically regarding motherhood, as many societies have different standards. The labels of "good" or "bad" mother create unique implications socially, economically, culturally, and politically in our society because of the inequality that exists because of the two classifications. Through this research, I hope to determine the factors that exist within our society that impede or enhance a mother's access to opportunities.

## Literature Review

Motherhood is an institution that exists globally, regardless of the culture or location you analyze; depending on the part of the world under consideration, motherhood looks different from what one might expect. Much like anything in society, motherhood exists in a hierarchy in which some women are considered "good" mothers while others are considered "bad" mothers. These ideals are perpetuated most often by various factors within society, such as the family, the workplace, and the media. Through an intersectional approach, the inequalities that mothers face are amplified as we begin to see the consequences that exist in terms of restricted access to opportunities throughout their lives.

### *The Ideal Mother*

The ideals regarding what a mother is, and how they should behave are often defined by societal expectations. Douglas and Michaels (2005) discuss a concept that they refer to as "new momism," in which powerful norms, ideals, and practices are represented within our society regarding how mothers ought to behave (p. 5). Essentially, this concept is where the "good mom" versus "bad mom" dichotomy emerges. For example, to be considered a "good" mother, one must be dedicated to her children, and a "bad" mother deviates from that ideal and is therefore labelled a delinquent. Countless women believe they have an obligation to both their home and work, but many societies do not provide enough support to mothers to

sufficiently fulfill each role (Horwitz, 2011). The unavailability of support, such as affordable daycare or equitable wages, contributes to many women being forced to choose between caring for their children, fitting into society's expectations, or being active members of the workforce. Some suggest that motherhood is the source of a woman's uniqueness due to its association with femininity and strength, but this thought process perpetuates the oppression that mothers have experienced within society; that is, to be a woman, one should wholly accept motherhood as an institution (Smart, 2016). In many western societies, certain practices such as breastfeeding, attachment parenting, and co-sleeping are considered essential and natural aspects of mothering. This naturalization of motherhood can contribute to a woman's feelings of shame, guilt, and failure, as they are made to believe that they are fundamentally harming their children if they are unable to adhere to society's expectations (Basden, 2014). These negative feelings potentially impact the opportunities mothers have access to as they may settle for less than they want or deserve so they can ascribe to the notions of being a "good" mother.

The western ideal of motherhood is defined as "intensive mothering," which is a gendered model that influences mothers to spend large amounts of time, energy, and money on raising their children (Ennis, 2014, p. 1). This model perpetuates the belief that a woman is incomplete if she does not have children, which contributes to the gender hierarchy. Essentially, the gender hierarchy is reproduced by the emphasis on mothering, wherein women are expected to care for their children and home while the husband provides for the household financially. Basden (2014) explains that because of intensive mothering, mothers must consistently negotiate between their individuality and their child. It is a constant battle between mother and child; that is, choosing one's desires over a child's wants in a given moment characterizes a "bad" mother when analyzing motherhood from this perspective. The concept of intensive mothering or "new momism," as some call it, is a performative act put on by mothers to be the perfect mom, "...the best dressed, host the coolest birthday parties for [her] children, pack the healthiest lunches, and be the skinniest mom at the park..." as this has become not only the norm, but the expectation within our society (Abatsis & Schultz, 2014, p. 299). Western ideals of motherhood are

problematic as they can damage not only a woman's sense of self but her ability to parent due to criticisms from those around her.

Comparing western ideals of motherhood to eastern Europe, the construct of motherhood is similar in that intensive mothering is a cultural trend. Still, many women do not have the financial ability to care for their children in that manner. Numerous women in these countries have no choice but to seek employment outside of their home countries, leaving their children behind with other family members – often grandmothers (Włodarczyk, 2014). This form of childcare is frequently cheaper than formal options, as grandmothers are usually paid in small gifts, or are just considered to be helping out and therefore not financially compensated. Although this arrangement is not ideal, these mothers acknowledge that they must choose between good motherhood and a promising career, and often have no choice but to leave their child and contribute to the household financially (Lutz, 2016). This concept of childcare has been referred to in the media as Euro-orphans, in which children are separated from their mothers because of economic migration, which creates a sense of panic as many women are not actively present in their children's lives. Many eastern European mothers decide to partake in "social mothering" to combat negative connotations associated with migrating for work, and they communicate with their children via Skype calls and instant messaging (Lutz, 2016, p. 255). Mothers from these countries admit that one of the significant allures to western culture is the privilege to partake in intensive mothering and have the option to be a hands-on parent (Włodarczyk, 2014). The social construction of intensive mothering is prevalent across the entire globe and contributes to the dichotomy between "good" and "bad" mothering and the subsequent feelings and pressures mothers experience as a result.

### **Socialization Process**

There are many ways that women are socialized into trying to live up to the values associated with the social construction of what it means to be a "good" mother. Factors like religion, family, capitalism, and the media interact with the perceptions of motherhood to fabricate an ideal mother that exists within broad parts of our society. Lutz (2016), states, that within eastern European society, both the Catholic and the Russian

Orthodox churches influence women into believing that motherhood is the primary obligation of female citizens. This expectation from the church reinforces the idea of emphasized femininity which encourages women to be empathetic, compliant, and nurturing, which further perpetuates how mothers ought to behave to be considered a “good” mother. In western society, on the other hand, motherhood has become more autonomous since the late 1960s, as contraception became more readily available (Smart, 2016). Historically, women who became pregnant outside of marriage had few options due to familial pressures, forced marriage, illegal abortions, or placing their child up for adoption (Wiegers & Chunn, 2017). In modern western society, it is still considered undesirable for a mother to parent independently, but it is becoming increasingly more acceptable and common.

The capitalist influences of motherhood are maintained by the heavy presence of media within our society, whether on television, print media, or social media. Many advertisements targeted toward mothers rely on a discourse that contributes to the fear of being a “bad” mother. Consequently, ads target mothers, as consumption is a vital aspect of effective mothering because a child's needs can seemingly be met through exorbitant spending (deLatt & Baumann, 2016). This advertising preys on the notion that mothers are expected to care for others, and thus, mothers participate in exaggerated and extreme forms of caring consumption by spending and adhering to market and capitalist ideologies. For example, the “good” mother, according to Douglas and Michaels (2005), purchases their children educational toys that promote emotional, cognitive, imaginative, quantitative, and muscular development.

Beyond capitalist influences, motherhood can be perceived as a form of policing: mothers are constantly monitored by family, strangers, and the media; therein, mothers compete with one another and themselves to be the “best” (Douglas & Michaels, 2005). The media has effectively produced a typology within society's collective consciousness that agrees on how a “good” mom or a “bad” mom looks. A good mom endlessly supports her children, puts their children's needs before their own, is slim and trim physically, and allows their children to take center stage (Douglas and Michaels, 2005). Contrastingly, “bad” moms take up space,

cackle, yell, insult, and have a place in the workforce (Douglas and Michaels, 2005). These ascriptions display how media effectively convinces mothers that there are certain things they must do, such as consuming the products that are advertised, to be perceived as a “good” mother.

### **Workplace Consequences**

Motherhood poses a significant roadblock to women who are currently in, or are looking to return to, the workforce once they are post-partum. We exist in a society where social policies in labour markets reinforce the perception that women are caretakers, and thus the positions that they tend to hold are impacted, meaning that women are encouraged to occupy care-taking roles. Essentially, the labour market is socially constructed to press mothers into secondary jobs, as they are often considered to have unstable work habits, and therefore, they should remain in positions that allow them to take care of their family. Due to a lack of access to affordable childcare, many women do not even have the option to re-enter the labour market as their socioeconomic status does not allow the opportunity to be employed and ensure their children receive adequate care (Nichols, 2016). Ultimately, many employers believe that mothering and paid work exist in opposition to one another; mothers must choose between good parenting or being a good employee (deLatt & Baumann, 2016).

This perception contributes to other forms of discrimination in the workplace, such as a mother's wage compared to other co-workers; overall it has been observed that childless women earn more money than mothers, in what is considered the motherhood wage penalty, which increases with the birth of each additional child (Yu & Kuo, 2017). Specifically, Yu and Kuo (2017) state that, on average, for each child a mother has, she earns 3% less than childless women with similar marital status, human capital, and job characteristics (p. 787). Factors like less flexibility and emergencies at home only allow mothers a finite amount of energy to devote to work and home. The structural aspects of the labour market, such as training requirements and hectic schedules, hinder a mother's access to advancements and other opportunities. When a mother has more autonomy over the hours she works, there is higher job satisfaction and reduced work strain, which would benefit her well-being. Although more

comfortable positions - on average - pay less, jobs that are more competitive and have less desirable work conditions pay more (Yu & Kuo, 2017). Currently, mothers who try to "have it all" by working part-time and still caring for their kids, often face hostility, as they are not living up to the role of the ever-present mother (Douglas & Michaels, 2005, p. 22). Many women want and need their own pay cheques, adult interaction, and independence to have an identity outside of motherhood, and consequently, believe they can still be employed as well as a "good" mother.

### **Analysis**

Specifically, this paper focuses on the opportunities that mothers in Canada and Ukraine have in relation to one another. Both countries have similarities and differences regarding how mothers are treated within their specific societies. The three cases discussed regarding the opportunities for mothers in both countries are as follows: feminism, the workplace, and cultural factors.

### **Feminism**

**Canada.** Feminism in Canada has existed in multiple waves that have overlapped and built upon one another. The first wave of feminism in Canada grew out of the demand for women to participate fully in political processes and attain the right to vote. Although during this time, women who were part of this movement were primarily white, it contributed to the further oppression of non-white women who were not adequately represented in the movement (Coulter, 2007). In 1918, women won the right to vote, but their "natural" social standing was not changed, as many women still believed that their job was to stay home and raise their children once they were mothers. The daughters and granddaughters of those women who fought for suffrage for all Canadian women are said to be the ones who, beginning in the 1960s, began to fight for equitable rights for all Canadian women. They argued that to be better mothers, they must have access to healthcare, education, and the workplace to attain more equality in their social and economic lives (Coulter, 2007). The industrialization and urbanization of Canada from the 1960s to 1990s brought about great stress on mothers as white men dominated the public domain (Anderson, 2009). Mothers were monitored by various institutions within society, such as in science,

medicine, health, and social services, in which strict expectations and judgements were placed upon them. This emphasized class struggles, racism, heterosexism, and the patriarchy within our society, as women were expected to behave in a particular manner as defined by the men in charge (Anderson, 2009). The second wave of feminists wanted to be empowered, and the first way they thought to accomplish that was through entering the paid workforce. There was a consensus that paid work was an indication of women's liberation within Canadian society, as economic independence was the key to women's lives being improved (Marks et al., 2016). By promoting social policies such as pay equity, employment equity, and childcare, women's working conditions were hoped to be improved. As women entered the workforce at a higher rate, onlookers saw that women of middle to higher classes benefited more than women who in poverty. Poor mothers claimed they were now forced to work a "double" shift as they had to enter the workforce and remain sole caretaker at home (Marks et al., 2016, p. 772). Currently, modern feminists advocate for a mother's choice to stay home and parent their children and not be required to enter the workforce in the name of independence and instead promote more government support for mothers who choose to stay home.

**Ukraine.** Regarding feminist movements in Ukraine, following the Soviet Union's dissolution, a push arose to end the values surrounding the cult of motherhood (Tarkhanova, 2021). This became a time of transition in which gender norms were articulated in parliament and subsequently reconstructed by new cultural and social standards. Phillips (2014) explains that Ukraine has many institutions based on patriarchal values, and many individuals believe that women are the "mothers of the nation" and are symbolic of Ukraine's longevity (p. 416). Due to gender stereotypes in post-Soviet Union Ukraine, women were seen as caring mothers and helpless girls who needed protection, perpetuating barriers within their lives. In recent years, Ukraine continues to struggle with adequate leadership and access to services which has negatively impacted gender equality, leaving feminist organizations with many tasks to continue advocating for (Danish Neighbourhood Program, 2021). Therefore, these feminist organizations have been forced to become financially and socially independent from their country's government and strive to make a difference

across multiple sectors of Ukrainian society. Due to the lack of fiscal and formal support from the government, these feminist organizations fight for more assistance so they can focus on gender stereotypes that impact both motherhood and womanhood.

**Comparison.** When considering both Canada and Ukraine together, it is apparent that Canadian women fought for female liberation much earlier than Ukrainian women due to differences in their past political states. The ability to enter the paid workforce was a priority for Canadian women as they saw that as their path to more equitable societal treatment. In contrast, Ukrainian women have been constrained to strict cultural norms that encourage traditional femininity and motherhood over employment. Currently, the Canadian government aids the Ukrainian Women's Fund by offering up to \$4.75 million in funding to support gender equality by strengthening the capacity of local women's organizations to empower Ukrainian women and girls (Government of Canada, 2018). Although both countries are at different points in terms of how women are treated in various areas of society, they both began from a point where women fought against traditional expectations and have now transitioned to believe that women should have the freedom to choose to enter the workforce or raise any children they have as a stay-at-home parent. Ultimately, Canada and Ukraine have feminist voices fighting for more government support regarding gender equality so that all citizens have similar opportunities regardless of their gender identity.

### **Workplace**

**Canada.** The trends in women's employment rate began to change following the end of World War II, most notably among mothers. Statistics Canada (2017) explains that introducing the birth control pill, legalizing divorce, and expanding educational and employment opportunities led more mothers to gain independence outside of their household. Despite more women and mothers entering the labour force, there remain gaps in Canadian public policy regarding motherhood. Some mothers return to work by personal choice, some return for financial reasons, and others are forced to stay home with their children because they cannot afford childcare. Until 2021, parents across Canada paid on average \$120-\$1200 per month for a

single child to attend a childcare facility (Stevenson, 2012). The Canadian government (2021) proposed and put into action a \$10-a-day childcare budget to help Canadians afford the cost of living and allow mothers the choice to return to work. Although these progressive steps enable mothers to comfortably enter the workforce after childbirth, many workplaces do not accommodate the unpredictability of building a family. Many places of work view mothers as unreliable and less productive than childless women; as such, mothers are penalized within the economy (Stevenson, 2012). This means that not only do women, in general, make less than men in the labour market, but mothers also experience another wage gap between themselves and childless women. This wage gap is related to how many children a woman has and the age of those children; for example, a mother who has one child has a wage that is 9% less than that of a childless woman, and a mother with two children will see a decrease in wage of 12% compared to a childless woman, and a mother of three children will see a 20% wage gap between herself and a childless woman (Zhang, 2015). Essentially, without equitable access to childcare, Canadian women will never be able to enter the workforce fairly, as the gendered divisions of labour have yet to be altered within our society, which in most cases leaves them fully responsible for their child's care.

**Ukraine.** Ukraine has attempted to transition away from the traditional way mothers have been treated in their country. They did this by establishing a generous maternity leave policy that pays 100% of a mother's wage for 18 weeks and allows for a potential 3–6-year leave depending on if a child is sick, and provides complete job security (Nizalova et al., 2015). Despite these advancements, Nizalova et al. (2015) reports that many Ukrainians support traditional values of motherhood and believe that men and women have specific jobs they must fulfill within the family unit, and mothers working full-time does not allow for that. Although they boast family-friendly workplace policies and anti-discrimination laws, many mothers report experiencing inequality in the workplace. For example, many job postings are reported to specifically outline characteristics such as age and gender that would be preferred for a particular position (Nizalova et al., 2015). Many women are also forced to agree not to get pregnant or marry within the first few years of employment or face monetary penalties (Nizalova et

al., 2015). Essentially, the labour code is not sufficiently sanctioned, and thus, the human rights of mothers are violated.

The Ukrainian labour market offers no adequate opportunities for women to balance having a child and maintaining workplace responsibilities, which has them being considered as lesser at their place of work. The discrimination surrounding employment opportunities results in the feminization of poverty as women are disproportionately impacted by discriminatory practices related to hiring, fair pay, and leaves of absence. Ukrainian mothers also experience a wage gap between themselves and childless mothers, which is impacted by the number of children they have. A woman with one child has been reported to make 17% less than a woman with no children, while mothers with two or more children make 29% less than childless women (Nizalova et al., 2015). As of 2020, the employment rate of women with children between the ages of 3-5 years old was 52% compared to 71% of childless women of the same age category, 25-44 years old, that were employed (United Nations Women & CARE International, 2022). This implies that women with children are either i) unable to work due to issues with childcare, ii) choosing to be unemployed, or iii) discriminated against in workplace hiring practices.

**Comparison.** Through the analysis of both Canada and Ukraine, Ukrainian mothers are disproportionately impacted by gender-based workplace discrimination. Ukrainian mothers experience a more significant mother wage penalty than Canadian mothers. As previously mentioned, Ukrainian mothers earn 29% less when they have two or more children relative to childless women, while mothers in Canada earn 12% less with two children and 20% less with three children compared to childless women (Nizalova et al., 2015; Zhang, 2015). This statistic indicates that Ukraine adheres more strictly to traditional gender-based treatment in the workplace compared to Canada due to a lack of strict policy enforcement. In terms of employment opportunities, Canadian and Ukrainian mothers have very different options available to them. While mothers in Canada often have the privilege of staying in the same home as their children when they enter the workforce, many Ukrainian mothers often must seek employment outside of their home country to earn a decent wage and escape

poverty (Lutz, 2016). This is referred to as transnational mothering, and in instances where a mother must choose to leave for employment, it is expected that her mother or mother-in-law will take care of the children she is leaving behind (Włodarczyk, 2014). Mothers in Ukraine are expected to provide for their children by sacrificing their personal desires, and thus, they are looked down upon when they leave their children for employment by many parts of their society. Comparatively, in Canada, working mothers possess more ideal conditions. A great deal of work is required in both countries to improve the opportunities and choices that are available to mothers in terms of working.

### **Cultural Factors**

**Canada.** Much of the expectations that exist surrounding Canadian mothers is perpetuated by both media and interpersonal relationships (Abatsis & Schultz, 2014). Social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, and Twitter, is easily accessible and bombards mothers with images of how they are supposed to look and behave. This promotes the western ideal of motherhood, as mothers are influenced to purchase and consume products to be perceived as “good” mothers by those around them and on social media. The norm of intensive mothering is prominent in Canadian culture and is a concept that produces the ‘perfect supermom’ which generates revenue in the market, as mothers become consumers for their children (Brown, 2014). This type of mothering requires professional-level skills in which a mother is expected to sacrifice herself to care for and provide for her children. Not only are mothers expected to behave a certain way, but they are expected to live up to beauty ideals established by those around them, and mothers who are not adhering to the thin and trim archetype of a mother are seen as not trying hard enough (Abatsis & Schultz, 2014). The cultural norms regarding motherhood created within Canadian society potentially damage a mother’s sense of worth and self as they are ever-present.

**Ukraine.** Within Ukraine, despite the efforts of feminist movements, much of the country adheres to strict gender roles that discriminate against many women. The gender discrimination within Ukraine stems from deep-rooted patriarchal cultural norms that

restrict mothers in terms of their roles and responsibilities within the family unit (Danish Neighbourhood Programme, 2021). These patriarchal expectations limit mothers' access to opportunities in several aspects, as discrimination persists at home, in the workplace, and within broad areas of society. Motherhood in Ukraine is standardized to reinforce ideals that promote caregiving as the mother's primary responsibility (Lutz, 2016). This puts intense pressure on mothers to behave in a specific way that may result in feelings of guilt and regret if they cannot live up to stringent societal expectations.

**Comparison.** The cultural norms and ideals surrounding how mothers ought to behave differ between the two countries. Canada is much more liberal regarding gendered expectations, and there is less pressure on Canadian mothers to act in traditionally feminine ways compared to Ukraine. The practice of intensive mothering is from a place of privilege and is not an option for impoverished people (Włodarczyk, 2014). Both countries exhibit mothers who are influenced by those around them through various socialization processes such as the media, the government, and interpersonal relationships.

### **Discussion**

When the above three aspects of feminism, the workplace, and cultural factors are all considered together, various implications are produced in both countries. There are personal, institutional, and societal consequences to limiting a mother's access to opportunities throughout her life that have the potential to impact each of the three levels of society.

### **Individual Implications**

Individually mothers can be impacted by the perceptions of those around them, which has the potential to create barriers within their life. For example, many mothers feel they lose themselves post-partum due to bodily changes and new obligations. Many women report mixed feelings after childbirth including feeling out of control as their new familial addition has left them without employment or regular social interactions with other adults as they are housebound (Fox & Neiterman, 2015). This loss of identity can also be reflected in a decrease in confidence because one cannot achieve the established

beauty ideal following the birth of their child, as a healthy body often reflects good mothering within our society. When a mother is insecure about her abilities or appearance, this can, for example, impact her ability to return to work, as she may feel inferior. Women often express that motherhood handicaps them in the workplace, and they desire to appear as a working woman instead of a working mother (Fox & Neiterman, 2015). The loss of self-esteem that many mothers experience restricts the opportunities they feel they have access to and that they take, as society has pressed them to believe that, as a mother, their child is their sole purpose and doing something for themselves would make them a "bad" mother.

### **Institutional Implications**

Within various institutions of society, mothers experience a disproportionate amount of inequality. For example, because of gender norms in each country, certain expectations exist regarding how mothers behave. The family unit is considered a vital institution within many societies all over the globe, and within family's mothers often must burden much of the domestic labour that follows. This includes raising children, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of their spouse, and because of these tasks they are expected to fulfill, many women feel that they work a second shift after returning home from a day of work. This is one of the reasons that many women avoid returning to the workforce or take up precarious forms of employment so they can still find time in their day to fulfill their domestic duties. Not only do women consciously choose not to return to work out of fear of not being a "good" mother, but many opportunities are also not available to them in the first place, as discriminatory practices exist in many workplaces. As previously discussed, both Canada and Ukraine have data that suggest that a motherhood wage gap exists, and women with children are penalized because of negative stereotypes regarding mothers in the workplace. Government policies that are not supportive of motherhood contribute to the inequalities in both the family and the workplace, as mothers do not have access to necessary programs, such as affordable childcare, which would allow them to participate fairly within the various parts of society. The traditional forms of motherhood perpetuated in different parts of

society contribute to the lack of opportunities available to mothers.

### **Societal Implications**

On a societal level, the lack of equality that mothers face both individually and institutionally impacts the broader fertility rates of Canada and Ukraine. In 2020, Canada's fertility rate dropped to 1.40 children per woman, and Ukraine reported a fertility rate of 1.20 births per woman in the same year (Statistics Canada, 2022; The World Bank, 2020). Statistics Canada (2022) states that Canada's population is only continuing to increase because of an influx of immigration, and the country is soon to be classified as part of the lowest fertility in the world if the births per woman drop below 1.3. Many people have altered their childbearing plans because of COVID-19 and program developments related to childcare, schools, communities, and housing needs. Ultimately, numerous couples are deciding to start having children later or choosing not to have any children due to increased stress in the labour market and economic system. In Ukraine, for example, depopulation is a serious concern of the government, and many citizens emigrate to find employment and life elsewhere, which is alarming for the country's economic growth and overall future (Nizalova et al., 2015). This is directly related to a lack of government support that doesn't make parenting accessible to everyone regardless of socioeconomic status. Despite both countries' attempts to make parenthood more affordable by establishing programs supporting childcare and maternity/paternity leave, the efforts are insufficient to make substantial changes. As a result of society's conceptions of motherhood and subsequent labels of "good" mother versus "bad" mother that exist, many women do not want to commit to such pressures that exist and therefore choose not to have children or have fewer children, so the societal standard of motherhood can be sufficiently met.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, women choose to have fewer or no children in Canada and Ukraine because of the lack of opportunities that exist when they have children. Mothers who have children in Canada and Ukraine experience a disproportionate amount of inequality individually, in the workplace, within their families, and on a societal level. The media dramatically

perpetuates stereotypes regarding motherhood which often results in women feeling immense pressure to be a perfect mothers and experiencing shame and guilt when perfection is not achieved. The gendered norms in both countries impact mothers in the workforce, which is most accurately depicted by the motherhood wage gap. Often mothers are discriminated against in the workforce because of stereotypes regarding how motherhood exists in opposition to paid labour as it is not a family-friendly environment as children's needs are not consistently tended to. Despite drastic improvements in women's lives in both countries because of various feminist movements, domestic labour remains primarily a women's job, and with the addition of children, mothers have more responsibilities on their plate than ever. These factors impede a mother's access to opportunities as the pressures of motherhood are present at every level of society, resulting in women hesitating to pursue their desires and instead focusing on the needs of their children.

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