

Corresponding to Author

¹ Jean Pablo Guimarães Rossi State University of Paraná, Brazil E-mail: psijeanpablo@gmail.com CV Lattes

http://lattes.cnpq.br/8403751902893496

2 Thaíse Fernanda de Lima Mares State University of Western Paraná, Brazil

E-mail: thaisemares@gmail.com CV Lattes

http://lattes.cnpq.br/0135070884131454

3 Eliane Rose Maio

State University of Maringa, Brazil E-mail: elianerosemaio@yahoo.com CV Lattes

http://lattes.cnpq.br/9562371036022440

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Women, professors and researchers: experiences in pandemic times

Jean Pablo Guimarães Rossi ¹ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5263-7703

Thaíse Fernanda de Lima Mares ² https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4187-9387

Eliane Rose Maio³ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9280-9864

ABSTRACT

Introduction: In this research, our general objective is to present issues that can be identified and analyzed, around the experiences of women, teachers, researchers, who were in the university space at the time of the pandemic (which began in 2019), due to of the Coronavirus/COVID-19. Social isolation, which was imposed as one of the measures to contain the virus, required (and has required) all of us to (re)think new adaptations and readjustments, especially in regard to the academic field. Teachers have been challenged to reflect on their activities in various aspects, both professional and personal. In this way, from the context of a global pandemic, we problematize: what issues can be identified and analyzed, around the experiences of women, teachers, researchers, who were in the university space at the time of the pandemic? Method: To do this, we applied a questionnaire through the Google Forms platform, to ten women, teachers, researchers and who were inserted in Postgraduate programs during the years 2020 and 2021. The data collected was analyzed from the Feminist and Gender Studies, relevant for the analysis and discussion of the nuances of "being a woman" and their experiences in the face of the demands of this historical moment. Results/Conclusion: The data highlighted the gender inequalities associated with female researchers, and also pointed to the need to rethink gender issues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEYWORDS

Women. Teachers. Gender. Pandemic. COVID-19.

Mulheres, professoras e pesquisadoras: vivências em tempos de pandemia

RESUMO

Introdução: Nesta pesquisa, temos por objetivo geral apresentar questões que podem ser identificadas e analisadas, em torno das vivências de mulheres, docentes, pesquisadoras, que estiveram no espaço universitário frente ao momento de pandemia (a qual teve início no ano de 2019), em função do Coronavírus/COVID-19. O isolamento social, que foi imposto como uma das medidas de contenção do vírus, exigiu (e tem exigido) de todas e todos nós, (re)pensarmos novas adaptações e readequações, principalmente, no que concerne ao âmbito acadêmico. As docentes têm sido desafiadas a refletirem sobre suas atividades nos diversos aspectos, tanto profissionais quanto pessoais. Desta maneira, tomando por base, o contexto de pandemia mundial, problematizamos: quais as questões que podem ser identificadas e analisadas, em torno das vivências de mulheres, docentes, pesquisadoras, que estiveram no espaço universitário frente ao momento de pandemia? Método: Para tanto, aplicamos um questionário por meio da plataforma Google Forms, para dez mulheres, docentes, pesquisadoras e que, encontravam-se inseridas em programas de Pós-Graduação durante os anos de 2020 e 2021. Os dados coletados foram analisados a partir dos Estudos Feministas e de Gênero, pertinentes para análise e discussão das nuances do "ser mulher" e suas experiências frente às exigências deste momento histórico. Resultados/Conclusão: Os dados evidenciaram as desigualdades de gênero associadas às mulheres pesquisadoras, além disso, indicaram a necessidade de repensarmos as questões de gênero diante do contexto de pandemia ocasionada pelo COVID-19.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Mulheres. Professoras. Gênero. Pandemia. COVID-19.

Mujeres, docentes e investigadoras: experiencias em tempos de pandemia

RESUMEN

Introducción: En esta investigación, nuestro objetivo general es presentar cuestiones que puedan ser identificadas y analizadas, en torno a las experiencias de mujeres, docentes, investigadoras, que estuvieron en el espacio universitario frente al momento de la pandemia (que inició en 2019), debido a del Coronavirus/COVID-19. El aislamiento social, que se impuso como una de las medidas para contener el virus, exigía (y ha exigido) de todos nosotros, (re)pensar nuevas adaptaciones y reajustes, especialmente en lo que se refiere al ámbito académico. Los docentes han sido desafiados a reflexionar sobre sus actividades en varios aspectos, tanto profesionales como personales. De esta forma, a partir del contexto de una pandemia mundial, problematizamos: ¿qué cuestiones se pueden identificar y analizar, en torno a las experiencias de mujeres, docentes, investigadoras, que se encontraban en el espacio universitario frente al momento de la pandemia? Método: Para ello, aplicamos un cuestionario a través de la plataforma Google Forms, a diez mujeres, docentes, investigadoras y que se insertaron en programas de Posgrado durante los años 2020 y 2021. Los datos recolectados fueron analizados desde los Estudios Feministas y de Género, relevantes para el análisis y discusión de los matices del "ser mujer" y sus vivencias frente a las exigencias de este momento histórico. Resultados/Conclusión: Los datos destacaron las desigualdades de género asociadas a las mujeres investigadoras, además, señalaron la necesidad de repensar las cuestiones de género en el contexto de la pandemia provocada por el COVID-19.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Mujeres. maestros Género. Pandemia. COVID-19.

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1 Introduction

Because you're a girl is never a reason for anything. Ever. (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2017, p. 21).

Considering the demands of the current context (coping with a pandemic caused by the Coronavirus/COVID-19), such as, for example, social distancing, this study proposes to analyze the life experiences of ten women, professors, inserted in the scope of Graduate Studies (Strictu Sensu), rethinking the demands imposed on "being a woman" in the current historical context.

We start from the understanding that "being a woman" is historically overburdened with unequal functions and understandings. An example is how the rise of women in the job market forced them to work in two times, three times, four times more, several, working hours. So to speak, they are, at the same time, women, professionals, mothers, daughters, wives, friends, religious, and so on; who work hard to "manage everything" (house, children, jobs, etc.). However, generally, this multiplicity of functions is socially romanticized under the label that women are just: "warriors"; "strong"; "fighters", when in fact there is also a logic behind this romance that sustains gender inequality, as highlighted by Chimamanda Adichie (2017, p. 18, our translation),

Our culture praises the idea of women capable of "taking care of everything", but does not question the premise of this praise. I have no interest in the debate about women who "take care of everything", because the assumption of this debate is that the work of taking care of the house and children is a particularly feminine field, an idea that I strongly reject.

For Flavia Biroli (2019), the representations of women and the roles they play in this society are associated with the sexual division of labor. This fact also defines the daily difficulties of their lives. In this perspective, the exercise of numerous tasks can occur differently between men and women, such distinction assigns functions to women, from which men are "freed". Here, activities related to caring for children and/or household activities stand out. Fabiane Freire França (2020, p. 53) also adds that the invisibility of misunderstandings related to the condition of being a mother, professor and researcher, reinforce the daily practices of overburden and exhaustion of girls and women who are taught that household chores are exclusive theirs. "It is not by chance that men occupy the highest-ranking seats in the Senate, in companies and in other public and power spaces".

We consider that the pandemic moment reinforced the scenario described above, by Adichie (2017), Biroli (2019) and França (2020). The pandemic caused by COVID-19, which began in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019, is a phenomenon that has been the subject of many questions and doubts by researchers around the world. This is aggravated, above all, due to its high mortality capacity, especially in the most vulnerable populations. Suspicions generate the resulting uncertainties, which arise withing so much instability.

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Faced with this scenario, an urgent need for initiatives by researchers inserted in the academic sphere who seek to problematize themes that overlap the current context, including on issues related to gender inequality are highlighted. In the field of Human Sciences, Feminist Studies and Gender Studies, we can, for example, discuss how gender inequalities have been characterized during the pandemic, as Fernando Seffner points out, in an interview with Jean Rossi and Ricardo Pátaro (2019, p. 9, our translation), in "moments of crisis – whether economic or political – gender and sexuality issues have great chances of becoming a reason for panic [...]". In Brazil, we are aware of the lack of public policies to ensure women's positions in the labor market, insufficient day care, possible parental leave, and so on (GONÇALVES, 2020). In social distancing, mothers provided daycare, school, food, home, work, care. Therefore, thinking about being a woman in an interface "with gender, race, class, health, as well as its articulations with public policies and their techniques, is then updated by this new scenario, in which bionecropolitics is an instrument that imperil our existence" (NASCIMENTO, 2020, p. 399).

Given this context, in this work, we proposed to answer the following question: considering the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, what are the issues that can be identified and analyzed, around the experiences of women, professors, researchers, who were in the university setting in the pandemic moment? To answer the presented problem, we have listed some objectives. As a general objective, we sought to present the issues that can be identified and analyzed, around the experiences of women, professors, researchers, who were in the university environment in the pandemic moment. As specific objectives, we sought to reflect on the experiences lived by women, professors, researchers during the development of their activities, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to understand how gender inequalities are presented from the readjustment of study and work activities, required by the need for social distancing.

In this context, in view of the socially and culturally allocated demands and responsibilities on "being a woman", the hypothesis is that, currently, through social distancing, in the context of readjustments required by the COVID-19 restrictions, gender inequalities on "being a woman" are even more emphasized and reinforced. In addition, if we consider the specificities of women who are professors and/or researchers, especially those in public universities, we have another aggravating factor here, as while researchers in Graduate Studies, they find themselves under pressure to maintain constant productivity.

Given this scenario, some questions have urged us: how has this pandemic moment been configured for graduate women professors? How did they maintain academic productivity, in social distancing? What issues/problems have they faced in the development of their activities? What resources and strategies were and are necessary for them to continue carrying out their work? How have they and their family members, spouses, daughters, etc., shared everyday chores? Are there overburdens of activities in relation to other family members and colleagues?

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To respond to the proposed objectives, we used, as a research methodology, the application of a structured questionnaire through the Google Forms platform, for a total of ten women professors who belong to the graduate setting (Sctrictu Sensu). To establish a dialogue with them, we relied on the Snowball technique, which presupposes that the initial participants of a research, refer other participants successively, until the desired objective is reached.

This paper is divided into three items, the first one presents part of the theoretical framework used to discuss gender issues and the theoretical underpinnings of Feminist and Gender Studies, in addition, it reflects on gender inequalities in the pandemic context. In the second item, we present the methodological paths of the research, this section also includes two other sub-items, the first one entitled: working hours, dissatisfaction and discontent; and the second one entitled: the organization of the self in the face of maternal responsibility. Both present the analysis of data collected through the questionnaire and seek to understand how the readjustments required by the need for social distancing affected the development of the researchers' activities. Finally, considerations about the research carried out are presented.

2 Gender inequalities during the new coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic

This research was anchored in the theoretical underpinnings of Feminist and Gender Studies, considering, as stated by Louro (1997), that gender discussions are theoretical propositions that were born articulated to the feminist movement, more specifically from the Second Wave, with the emergence of the concept of gender as an analytical category for differentiating the term sex, in the 1970s.

The category "gender" has been used many times in a trivialized way, almost always replacing the term "sex". Thus, it is plausible to explain that the term sex should be used to describe biological characteristics and differences, as well as the anatomy and physiology of organisms belonging to the male and female sex. Different from gender, which, as described by Joan Scott (1992), represents a constitutive element of social relations based on differences between the sexes, which can be considered a primary form of significant power relations between men and women.

In view of Scott's (1992) considerations, historically, the differences between men and women were based on biological aspects. However, it is considered that the construction of gender concerns a set of meanings impregnated by normative concepts and cultural values attributed to men and to women and conditions them to occupy different positions in the world.

In this same perspective, Linda Nicholson (2000) justifies that the concept of gender did not emerge as a substitute for the biological conception of sex, but rather to oppose and question the justifications based on biological bases to argue the inequalities between men and women. In this sense, the concept of gender broadened the understanding of such as disparities and stereotypes, are constructs that occur in historical, social, cultural, financial, economic, religious aspects, and so on. In other words, Furlani (2008, p. 53, our translation) points to the

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vast contribution that Feminist Studies had in understanding the need to overcome social inequalities between women and men, in which,

Feminism allowed to criticize the models of domination and subordination of women; demonstrated social inequalities between men and women in terms of access to the right to education, to vote, to family property, to justice, to work, to material goods, etc.; it questioned the representations about "being a woman" and "being feminine"; studied patriarchy, sexism and heteronormativity and has been demonstrating the character of social and cultural construction of these representations in a misogynist and sexist society.

Evidence that we still live in a sexist society can be seen, for example, in positions of power, since "there are more women than men in the world -52% of the world population is female – but positions of power and prestige are occupied by men" (ADICHIE, 2015, p. 20, our translation). This fact mirrors the understanding that power is, supposedly, a merely male field. Questioning such premises has been the struggle of feminist researchers, as Simone de Beauvoir, in her work "The Second Sex" (2009), with her famous phrase: "One is not born a woman, one becomes one", showed how in the course of history, women have been assigned a place hierarchically below, of submission, of obedience, as is the case with marriage.

Marriage has always presented itself radically differently to men and women. Both sexes are necessary to each other, but this need never engendered any reciprocity; women have never constituted a caste establishing exchanges and contracts on an equal footing with men (BEAUVOIR, 2009, p. 548, our translation).

This social construct, which places men in a privileged position in relation to being a woman, is culturally transmitted, continuously, from generation to generation. An example is the sexism of language itself, as highlighted by Montserrat Moreno (1999), who states that the referencing of language in the masculine form to refer to all people, in general, (everyone, students, them, etc.) demonstrates that the use of language in the masculine form is not neutral, but is well positioned alongside the patriarchal structure that permeates the social structure.

Another fact that illustrates gender constructs concerns how, from a very early age, gender stereotypes are established. In pregnancy, when the baby's sex is discovered, soon the body begins to be inscribed and delimited within a discourse, since the layette, the colors, the toys, the plans for after the baby's birth, the popular "baby revelations", are made according to what would supposedly be more suitable for a vulva or a penis (PIRONI; ROSSI; MAIO, 2022). After birth, these gender representations intensify. This can be seen, for example, in games, in which boys have the "freedom" for sports, to be superheroes, police officers, criminals, that is, more aggressive and active games. As for girls, they are supposed to be "free" to be cooks, fairies, princesses, mothers, that is, to express behaviors aimed at care, family, home, motherhood and marriage, highlighting certain "fragility" (ADICHIE, 2015; LOURO, 1997; MORENO, 1999).

It is precisely the understanding exposed by Adichie (2015), about how much more value marriage is attributed, from an early age, to girls than to boys, which reflects what we have noticed about how women have been overburdened and stretched out in the current

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pandemic context, to perform the functions assigned by teaching remotely, for keeping up with academic production, together with other aspects of their experiences. To do so, we turn to Figure 1, from the research carried out by Parent in Science (2020), which shows that at all intersections (gender, race, parenting), there is a significantly lower number of women, compared to men, who have managed to maintain teaching in times of social distancing.

In this way, we consider the plausibility of gender studies and feminist studies, for the discussions we seek to undertake in this research, mainly around the analysis of the participants' responses about being a woman, professor and researcher in the context of the pandemic. In other words, we seek to question the power relations imbricated on "being a woman", which can contribute to shaking existing inequalities, as also stated by Louro (2013, p. 48), that a destabilizing strategy will, problematize, for example, the fact that women "are called "the second sex" (an assertion that is, as a rule, consensual and indisputable) and will lead to an analysis of the narratives [...] that established this place for the feminine". The pandemic caused by COVID-19 is a recent phenomenon that has directly impacted women's lives. In the midst of so much instability, initiatives by researchers inserted in the academic field emerge that seek to problematize the issues that overlap with the current context, such as gender inequalities that have been characterized in the pandemic.

In this way, as researchers, we understand the plausibility of aiming at gender and feminist studies to contribute to the understanding of the phenomena of the current context. One example that shows how much women have been affected by this moment is the increase in violence against women during the pandemic. In Brazil,

According to data from Ligue 180 made available by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, there was an increase of around 17% in the number of calls with complaints of violence against women in March, the initial period of the recommendation of social distancing in the country. In Rio de Janeiro, data from the State Public Attorney's Office reveal a 50% increase in cases of domestic violence in the first weekend after the state decrees that proposed social distancing, with most complaints involving violence against women. Likewise, in Paraná, there was a 15% increase in domestic violence records verified by the Military Police in the first weekend of social distancing. Similar situations are reported in Ceará, Pernambuco and São Paulo (MARQUES, et al. 2020, p. 1-2).

These data show how gender inequalities, superimposed on women, are accentuated more intensely during the lived context. In the case of professors, researchers, what happens is that women find themselves under the need to cover multiple functions, while at the same time trying to meet the demands of academic production. An example that illustrates this fact is the survey carried out by the Parent in Science Movement (2020) during social distancing. The report "Academic productivity during the pandemic: effects of gender, race and parenting", had its data collected in April and May, 2020 and "the questionnaires were answered by almost 15 thousand scientists. graduate students, post-doctoral students and among professors/researchers" (PARENT IN SCIENCE, 2020, p. 2).

Among the data obtained by Parent in Science (2020) that we highlight is the number of professors who have been able to work remotely. In short, 18.3% of men claimed to be able to

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work remotely, while only 8% of women claimed the same. Regarding the effects of gender and parenting, only 4.1% of women with children said they continued to work remotely, while 14.9% of men with children maintain their teaching work through social distancing. As for women without children, 18.4% said they keep teaching remotely, while 25.6% of men without children continue teaching during the pandemic (PARENT IN SCIENCE, 2020, p. 3).

As shown in the following figure, we visualize the data presented by Parent in Science (2020), and verify the percentage of researchers who were able to perform their work remotely, in addition to the family composition of the participants and the racial issue.

Figure 1: Representation of researchers who developed remote work¹



Source: Parent in Science, 2020.

From the presented illustration, the disparity between men and women in carrying out remote work during the COVID/19 Pandemic is verified. The figure reveals that men, about 18.3%, were able to perform such activities, in contrast to women, with only 8% able to carry out their activities remotely. In addition to gender, the data take into account race and parenting, that is, whether or not the person has children. Regarding the latter, when compared to white women and men, the number of black women and men who developed their professional activities remotely is smaller. Given these data, it is worth noting that, in

Women Men (left column)

Effect of race

Black-10.6%

White - 11.5%

Black women 8.1%

White women 8.2%

Black men 14.1%

White men 18.8%

Effect of gender and parenting (right column)

4.1% women with children

18.4% women with no children

14.9% men with children

25.6% men with no children

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¹ Professors who are able to work remotely

contemporary times, feminism has paid attention to issues linked to the so-called intersectionality, which verifies that the oppression directed at women does not occur independently, but in an interrelated way, thus, it is not only expressed through gender, but crosses social class and race/ethnicity.

In general, the aforementioned data illustrate how much women professors and researchers have their activities affected by the pandemic, in addition to the gender and racial inequality they have suffered. We consider that these data are intimately reflections of a historical process, which for centuries, imposed on women the place of "second sex" (BEAUVOIR, 2009) and that until today signal its marks.

Historically, it was only at the heart of feminist struggles, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, with the advent of the First Feminist Wave, with suffragettes' demands for the right to vote, and subsequent initiatives (right to education, to work, better salary conditions), which gave space to traditional values such as "Respect", "Obedience", "Submission", "Delicacy in Treating", "Purity", "Giving Capacity" and "Manual Skills" (ALVES, 2000, p. 237), considered as fundamental attributes for the definition of a "good girl" (white women), began to be questioned, which meant "'stopping being in the front line of the education of the girl/young girl, remaining, without doubt, in a "covert" way, while the woman conquers the right to schooling and to exercise diversified professional activities" (ALVES, 2000, p. 237, our translation).

Thus, the advent of women in the world of work and in the academic setting is the result of a process of historical struggle, but which, at the same time, has also made gender inequality even more evident, since the entry of women into the labor market did not mean a fairer sharing of functions between men and women, or the reduction/relief of tasks naturalized as "female", on the contrary, it accentuated the overburden and the multiple working hours.

In other words, the fact that women started working outside the home was (and continues to be) conditioned to the maintenance of other activities, such as motherhood, household chores, marriage, etc.; which implies the deployment of various tactics so that they can perform all these functions, including abdicating themselves and their desires. An example that illustrates this reality can be contemplated "when women say they took a certain attitude to 'have peace in their marriage', is because in general they gave up a job, a step in their career, a dream" (ADICHIE, 2015, p. 34, our translation).

Regarding the scope of teaching and graduate studies during the pandemic, we can reflect that it is a challenge for them to maintain the level of productivity, causing them to stretch out and discover new ways to continue meeting the demands required of them, such as: research, advising, production of articles, delivery of remote classes, online lectures, participation in meetings, defense boards, among other activities. In addition, all these professional activities take place together with other aspects, such as: motherhood, marriage, household chores, etc.; that can reveal how gender inequalities are reinforced more intensely in the current moment.

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3 Women researchers: experiences in pandemic times

To identify and analyze issues around the experiences of women, professors, researchers, who are in the university setting, in the COVID-19 scenario, in this research we applied an interview questionnaire to 10 women. To this end, all of them had to fulfill the following criteria: be women, professors at a public or private Higher Education Institution, researchers who were part of a Sctrictu Sensu Graduate Program (Master's and Doctorate). Other aspects such as: motherhood, marriage, religiosity, etc.; were not placed as mandatory selection criteria for the participants, as we understand the particularities of their experiences. Thus, we deal with the possibility that some participants may be married with or without children, others may be single mothers, single, divorced, etc.; which leaves us open to possible intersections that may become present in their lives.

In the first stage of the research, the Research Project was created and registered on Plataforma Brasil. In the specific case of our investigation, the research was duly approved by the Permanent Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Human Beings of the State University of Maringá, process n° 35200720.1.0000.0104, Review n° 4.188.050. After the project's approval, there was an active search for research participants through the snowball technique. This technique assumes that the research subjects will be found through the referrals that meet the selection requirements and, successively, will form a snowball, thus constituting the totality of participants (BALDIN; MUNHOZ, 2011).

It was necessary to ask each of the first 5 participants (seeds) to indicate one more person of their knowledge to participate in the research. Thus, constituting the total of 10 participants. To request the participation of each professor, an email was sent inviting them, explaining the research intentions and other ethical procedures. Upon accepting to participate, each one received and signed the Free and Informed Consent Term (FICT). The data collection instrument was an online questionnaire, made possible through the Google Forms platform, since this is an advantageous tool, which facilitates and optimizes the collection, both for participants and researchers as the form can be made available through an electronic address and when the respondents finish filling it out, it is immediately forwarded to the researchers' email box. In the case of the questionnaire built for this research, it consisted of eight questions, both open ended and multiple choice that deal with how professors performed teaching in times of a pandemic, about research activities, routine and other everyday activities.

After collecting all of them through the completed questionnaires, the data were analyzed and tabulated, using thematic axes. This form of organization presupposes the grouping of responses according to the common content, present in the participants' speeches. Data collection took place during the months of August and September 2020, according to a pre-established schedule. For ethical reasons, the participants are identified by fictional names, inspired by feminist women, who proposed to fight for gender equality, and racial equality. They are well-known personalities nationally and/or worldwide, as shown in Chart

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Chart 1. General data regarding research participants

PARTICIPANT	AGE	MARITAL	CHILDREN	RELIGION
		STATUS		
1 – Ângela	46	Single	2	Catholic
2 – Eliane	47	Divorced	1	Catholic
3 – Simone	54	Married	Does not have	Catholic
4 – Djamila	47	Married	2	Does not have
5 – Dandara	42	Married	Does not have	Does not have
6 – Judith	35	Common-law	1	Catholic
		marriage		
7 – Frida	56	Married	2	Catholic
8 – Olga	43	Married	Does not have	Does not have
9 – Joana	53	Divorced	1	Catholic
10 – Rosa	47	Married	2	Catholic

Source: By the author, 2021.

According to Chart 1, the participants were identified as: Ângela, Eliane, Simone, Djamila, Dandara, Judith, Frida, Olga, Joana and Rosa. When verifying the general data about the interviewees, we noticed that some elements and information converge among them and others diverge. The first questions collected personal data about the life of each of the participants, they were asked about their age, marital status, whether they had children or not and, finally, whether they had any religion. Regarding the age group, we found that all of them were over 35 years and under 56 years. Among the ten professors, six were between 40 and 49 years, three were between 50 and 56 years, and only one participant was 35 years old.

When we asked about their marital status, most of the interviewees, in this case, six participants, declared as married. In addition, two others were divorced, one was single and one had a common-law marriage. Among the ten participants, seven had between one and two/two children and three participants had no children. Finally, when asked if they belonged to any religion, seven said they were Catholic and three others had no religion.

Still on the general data, the next graph presents the participants' responses in relation to color/ethnicity. In this regard, most of the participants, in this case, eight women (80%), identified themselves as white women, one identified as brown and one as black, as shown in graph 1:

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BRANCA
PARDA
NEGRA

Graph 1. Representation of research participants' color/ethnicity²

Source: By the authors, 2021.

The data presented through the graph reveals that 80% of the surveyed women are white, while 20% identified themselves as brown or black. If we consider the Brazilian reality, it is possible to identify that Brazil is the country, outside the African continent, with the highest percentage of black people. According to the National Survey for Continuous Household Sample (Pnad), released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2019, about 56% of the Brazilian population was black or brown. However, in the country, it is verified that some environments are little occupied by this part of the population. The University is one example.

The Brazilian social formation was based on the slavery of black people, which lasted for almost three hundred years and provided the basis for the institution and strengthening of racial inequalities and the constitution of structural racism that remains in the country and affects, in a more profound way, black men and women. Regarding aspects related to structural racism, Silvio de Almeida (2019) considers that institutionally expressed racism is based on a social structure. It is through such a structure that institutions materialize a mode of socialization that has racism as one of its organic components. For the author, institutional racism is characterized by the imposition of racist rules and standards by the institution that is somehow articulated to the social order that it seeks to protect.

According to Cisne and Santos (2012), by bringing together racism and sexism, the effects produced on black women is violent. We note that under the soil of sexist and racist violence, it is naturalized that black women are often in the condition of subservience. They are the cooks, the cleaning ladies, the servants or even the prostitutes.

The authors (Cisne; Santos, 2012) when presenting data regarding the Feminist Policy

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² Color/ethnicity

White - 8

Brown - 1

Black - 1

elaborated in 2002, noted that black and indigenous women benefited little from the achievements of Brazilian women, even after years of expansion and achievement of women's rights. It is black women who still occupy the base of the social pyramid, performing functions considered to be of lesser prestige. In addition, they have a higher unemployment rate and earn lower wages compared to the economically active population.

Black women still face gender inequalities and racial inequality to a greater extent when compared to white women. According to research carried out by Pnad (2019), racial inequalities can be verified in several statistics, however, they are even more glaring when it comes to black women. When it comes to the insertion of black women in the labor market, Pnad reveals that between the first quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2018, black women's vulnerability to unemployment was characterized as 50% higher, in comparison to white women, for whom the percentage was 30% if we consider the economically active population. We also highlight that this situation has worsened in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic (SUDRE, 2020).

In addition, according to the study Social Inequalities by color or race in Brazil, released by the IBGE, white men earn more than twice the average salary of black women, and white women earn 70% more (SUDRE, 2020). Regarding Brazilian women education, according to data from the "Gender Statistics" survey released by the IBGE (2018), we found that women study for more years than men. Among people between 25 and 44 years, the percentage of men who completed graduation is 15.6%, while the percentage of women reached 21.5%, indicating 37.9% higher than that of men. However, the percentage of white women with higher education (23.5%) is 2.3 times higher than that of black or brown women (10.4%) and is more than three times the one found for black or brown men (7%).

The University, although an environment to find diversity, still has limits for the entry and remaining of certain groups. To respond to the demand of some socially excluded groups, in 2012, Dilma government (2011-2016) sanctioned Law No. 12,711 (BRASIL, 2012), known as the Quota Law. Although recent, the law represents an advance in terms of access to education by the black population in Brazil, especially black women.

Regarding the education level of the women participating in the research, as shown in Chart 2, we note that all of them graduated between 1988 and 2008. In addition, all of them have a Graduate degree and most have attended or are currently attending the Doctorate or Post-Doctorate in Education.

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Chart 2. Education level of participant researchers

Participant	Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Graduate Course
	course	(Doctorate)	Course	
	(End year)	(End year)		
1 – Ângela	1998	2018	History	PhD in Education
2 – Eliane	1993/2000/2008	In course	Did not reply	PhD in Education
3 – Simone	1995	2006	Pedagogy	PhD in Education
4 – Djamila	1995	2006	Pedagogy	PhD in Education
5 – Dandara	2006	In course	Pedagogy	PhD in Education
6 – Judith	2005	2014	Pedagogy	PhD in Education
7 – Frida	1988	2004	Social work	PhD in Education
8 – Olga	1998	2002	History	Did not reply
9 – Joana	1988	2016	History	Post-doctorate in Education
10 – Rosa	1995	2016	Pedagogy	PhD in Education

Source: By the authors, 2021

As shown in Chart 2, two professors graduated in 1988, one graduated in 1993, three graduated in 1995, two in 1998, one in 2000, one in 2005, one in 2006 and the last one in 2008. In addition, we observed that one of the participants had three degrees, the others had only one. Most of the interviewees had a degree in Pedagogy, they represented half of the research participants, that is, five professors. Subsequently, three professionals had a degree in History, one graduated in social work and participant Eliane did not reply which undergraduate course she took.

Regarding the Graduate Program at the Doctoral level, some similarities are observed. Among the ten participants, eight answered having a Doctorate in Education, Joana was the only one who had a Post-Doctorate in Education and Olga did not reply. In addition, among the participants, it is important to point out that Dandara and Eliane were still taking their Doctorate in Education. Regarding the other participants, the end year of the doctoral course was concentrated between the years 2002 to 2018.

During data collection, the prerequisite was that the participants were teaching in the Graduate Program, or studying for a Master's or Doctorate, in addition, all of them had to be professors of undergraduate and/or Graduate courses. Therefore, the next Chart presents the results related to the research participants' professional experience:

Chart 3. Education and professional experience

Participant	Years working as Professor	Years working in Public School	Years working in Private School
1 - Ângela	27	27	15
2 - Eliane	23	22	19
3 - Simone	31	31	1
4 - Djamila	25	22	2
5 - Dandara	14	Did not work	12
6 - Judith	12	10	2
7 – Frida	26	26	1
8 – Olga	20	Did not reply	8
9 - Joana	24	24	1
10 - Rosa	25	25	7

Source: By the authors, 2021.

As shown in Chart 3, all professors had more than ten years of experience in Higher Education, whether in undergraduate or graduate courses. Until the date of data collection, seven professors pointed out that had been working between 20 and 29 years. Simone had been teaching for 31 years. Dandara and Judith had worked between 10 and 19 years in Higher Education. We also verified that all professionals worked in private education, but currently what prevails was acting in public education. Among the professors, only one, Dandara, worked and had worked exclusively in private education. In addition to the fact that the period of performance in public education is longer when compared to the performance in private education. Regarding the following question: "What activities have you been able to develop working from home? Select as many points as you wish". The answers were as follows:

Graph 2. Activities developed by the participants during remote work³



Souce: By the authors, 2021.

3

³ Other -1; Offer of remote classes in postgraduate courses -3; Participation in defense boards remotely -7; Participation in meetings remotely −9; Student advising −8; Holding lectures and/or e-learning courses −5; Participation, as an attendee, in courses and/or lectures −9; Production of didactic material/class preparation −7; Development of teaching and/or extension projects −4; Research, production and/or review of articles -8

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As verified in graph 2, the highest incidence of activities carried out from home was concentrated in participation of meetings remotely and in the participation, as attendee, in courses/or lectures, accounting for 9 responses. Nevertheless, the items referring to student advising and research, production and review of scientific articles, presented a total of 8 responses. We also highlight the incidence of 7 affirmative answers about participation in defense boards remotely and the production of teaching material/class preparation.

The professors' responses show that changing the place of the activities did not suppress or minimize the responsibilities that were previously carried out on site, on the contrary, it demanded they continue to develop them under new configurations, "reorganizing patterns, redefining patterns and processes, with the risk of an extrapolation of the usual levels of stress due to the (new) situations to which they are having to submit" (AZEVÊDO, 2020, p. 13, our translation).

An example is the fact that the majority - nine participants - claimed they have currently participated in courses and lectures remotely, which shows that even during the pandemic, the training of educators did not stop, it continued to happen and, then, primarily, through online events, since in this context, technologies play an active role in enabling the continuity of academic and professional activities. Azevêdo (2020, p. 14, our translation) highlights that this context is characterized by the quest to keep the pedagogical processes "alive":

Now, with the compulsory physical distancing, given the pandemic, the demand to keep the pedagogical processes "alive", it happens that the ties with the students need to be (r)established, under new formats. What was once contingent, superficial, now emerges as essential, strategic.

Azevêdo (2020) helps us to reflect on how educators, who participated in this research, stated, mostly, that they continued with the activities of advising students, since the research activities are the functions they have carried out constantly, even in the context of the pandemic. An example that corroborates this is the fact that eight participants pointed to continuing the research, production and review of scientific articles. Regarding the question "what are the biggest problems currently faced, during the pandemic and working from home, that hinder the development of your work in relation to your activities? Select as many points as you wish":

PROBLEMAS ENFRENTADOS DURANTE O HOME OFFICE

OUTRO
AUSÊNCIA DE REGISTROS DAS ATIVIDADES DESENVOLVIDAS
FALTA DE AMBIENTE ADEQUADO PARA A REALIZAÇÃO DAS ATIVIDADES
PROBLEMAS DE SAÚDE
POUCA DISPONIBILIDADE DEVIDO A DEMANDA FAMILIAR
FALTA DE ACESSO À INTERNET DOMICILIAR
INTERNET DE MÁ QUALIDADE/PROBLEMAS DE CONEXÃO/INSTABILIDADE
FALTA DE EQUIPAMENTOS ADEQUADOS
FALTA DE COMPUTADOR
FALTA DE COMPUTADOR PARA MEU USO EXCLUSIVO

0 2 4 6 8

Graph 3. Problems faced by participants while working from home⁴

Source: By the authors, 2021.

From the data above, we observed that the topic with the highest incidence of responses concerned "little availability due to family demand", with the number of six educators. Secondly, five educators chose the topic about "poor quality internet/connection problems/instability". Thirdly, four participants highlighted the alternatives "lack of records of carried out activities" and "lack of an adequate environment for carrying out the activities". What draws our attention is the fact that the topic with the highest incidence concerns the difficulties arising from family demands that burdens them, which may mean that the domestic and parental fields are aspects that continue to be allocated to the figure of women within the family environment.

Family relationships have been discussed from different perspectives. From the perspective of Biroli (2019), the family corresponds to plural arrangements, permeated by affective, parenting, marital and cohabitation relationships, which organize everyday life in different ways. Furthermore, this arrangement is historically modified and is not organized today as it was in other decades. In this same perspective, the values and roles assigned to the feminine and to the masculine did not remain the same. However, women and girls remain primarily responsible for household chores.

As for motherhood, Biroli (2019) considers that such activity does not usually occur full-time, however, when it does occur, it can present the marks of unemployment and precariousness. In addition, women's choices can be influenced by the difficulty of accommodating child care and paid work. It appears that the logic to which work relationships are linked does not incorporate the dependence of other people on workers. In this sense, it is understood that the responsibility of women for domestic activities and care for children and family well-being is linked to a historical and cultural construction of women's roles in this

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⁴ Other – 2; Lack of records of carried out activities – 4; Lack of adequate environment for carrying out activities – 4; Health problems – 3; Low availability due to family demand – 6; Lack of internet access at home – 0; Poor internet quality/connection problems/instability – 5; Lack of adequate equipment – 1; Lack of computer – 0; Lack of computer for my exclusive use - 2

society, which directly impacts their professional practice.

3.1 Workday(s), dissatisfaction and discontent

The rampant contagion by the COVID-19 variant has impacted several professional categories, when professors were forced to adapt to remote activities as a way of maintaining their jobs. Thus, this item proposes to present some reflections on the workday, dissatisfaction and discontent of women researchers who performed remote work in 2020 during the pandemic. As explained by Ana Lemos, Alane Barbosa and Priscila Monzato (2020), the adoption of the remote work in the context of the pandemic forced professionals and their families to adapt to a new reality in the domestic, educational, professional and social settings. In the domestic sphere, activities intensified due to the decrease in the supply of normally outsourced jobs.

Physical and social activities became less frequent. The activities carried out by schools and universities had the content taught remotely through digital platforms. Such changes had different impacts on the workers' professional lives. Faced with the pandemic, professors and researchers sought other alternatives to carry out their research and work. In this research, remote work became a reality in the lives of the 10 interviewed women, all of whom were compelled to adapt to the new reality. Thus, when asked about the way they carried out their activities at this time of the pandemic, the researchers replied that:

I have carried out my activities at home, organizing, processing and analyzing the data collected before the pandemic, as well as doing theoretical studies and working on the writing of my thesis. At the same time, I have remotely supervised the research for the final papers of the students to which I am linked as a professor (Eliane).

As remote meetings, article reviews and academic papers have increased in the last two months, I have been lacking time to dedicate myself to research. Regarding access to data, the pandemic does not make my research activity unfeasible because I do documentary and bibliographic research and I already have the sources collected. While the pandemic and the concerns it raises interfere with the ability to concentrate, on the other hand they increase the willingness to research educational and social policies (Djamila).

From the two aforementioned statements, we observe that the research activities were perpetuated, however, with another format. In Eliane's case, in parallel with the analysis of the data from her research, there is a process of advising the undergraduate students. In this case, when performing routine activities, she shows that she has adapted to the new reality. However, the activities performed by Djamila stood out, according to her there was an increase in work during this period, a fact that prevented her from dedicating more time to carrying out her research. From the reality presented by both (Eliane and Djamila), it is verified that they would be working longer and performing simultaneous tasks when performing their research activities from home. When asked about the negative aspects of working and carrying out research activities at home, the researchers: Eliane, Simone, Judith, Frida and Joana replied that:

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Working from home mixes family, household chores and university work, but you have to know how to deal with it. Sometimes it is tiring (Eliane).

One loses control of the working day (one works beyond the workload): we are the ones who have to bear the expenses to perform the functions (electricity bill, internet access, equipment, office supplies, etc.); lack of face-to-face interaction with the team makes the activity lonelier; anguish and uncertainty due to the pandemic (Simone)

The exhausting feeling of working 3 periods a day and still hearing judgments from outside people or even family members who are unaware of the academic universe and think we don't work (Judith).

The lack of distinction between the time for carrying out professional activities. There was an excessive increase in working hours (Frida).

Fatigue. Blurred vision. Back pain (Joana).

It is notable that, professionally, women suffered from the impacts of social distancing. As shown, through the interviews, the professors are tired of working longer than usual. As pondered by Judith, Frida and Simone, during the remote work period, there was a loss of control of the performed activities. In addition, they point to the excessive increase in working hours and the feeling of working for longer periods than usual. Simone also considered that the researchers, to carry out their professional activities, end up having to bear some expenses: electricity bill, internet bill, cost of equipment, office supplies, etc. The researcher also revealed her anguish in the face of the pandemic. Finally, Joana highlighted the physical fatigue in performing such activities and Frida revealed a certain fatigue when involving working from home, family and housework.

When we asked about the positive aspects of carrying out research activities at home, Dandara and Frida explained there were no positive aspects. However, the other interviewees claimed there were some advantages when carrying out activities from home. For the researchers:

- [...] no time is wasted with commuting, flexible working hours, increased productivity, more time for the family (Eliane).
- [...] producing knowledge collectively, even if the interaction takes place in a virtual environment (Simone).
- [...] monitoring the children's activities more closely, freedom to manage schedules, use of the personal computer (Djamila).
- [...] administrative meetings became easier to develop. I do asynchronous undergraduate classes through Padlet and the students enjoyed them a lot (Joana).

As expressed by Eliane and Djamila, through remote activities it was possible to closely monitor the children's activities and have more time with the family. Regarding commuting to work, Eliane considered it positive that there was no need for commuting, in addition to that, schedules became more flexible and, according to Joana, administrative activities became easier to carry out. However, the impacts of the health crisis on women's work contributed to worsen precariousness, and exploitation of the researchers' work. Thus, we perceive a

dubiousness, because at the same time that in this period, women worked more and still performed simultaneous tasks with the family and domestic activities, at the same time there are some positive findings of social distancing, since we found reports of improvement in interpersonal relationships (on the virtual environment), in close proximity to family members and in closer monitoring of their children's education (CANUTO et al., 2020).

3.2 Organization of the self in the face of maternal responsibility

We organized this axis in view of the perception that issues related to motherhood stood out in the participants' speeches. Discussing this issue is relevant, given that, culturally, motherhood is seen from a positively idealized facet, which has it as a supposedly innate aspect of being a woman, accompanied by requirements for the "good mother", for example: tenderness, love, sweetness, affection, donation, sacrifice, etc. (ROSSI; PADOVANI; BRESCANSIN, 2020).

In some of our participants' responses, it was possible to observe that the organization of themselves occurs through the organization with the other, mainly, with the children. An example was Angela's response, who stated her preference for studying at night or at dawn, as it as the time when her son, daughter and mother were sleeping, so she had a quieter space to carry out her activities without interruptions. In Eliane's response, the participant showed that she was the only one responsible for activities at home and with her daughter, which ends up overburdening her.

I sometimes study during the day, but I have to follow my daughter and son in their studies when they need, organize the house, breakfast, lunch/dinner. I try to study more at night or at dawn, more peacefully, while everyone sleeps, the daughter and the son, and my mother (when she is here at my house, in this Pandemic she stayed here for 3 months with us, she is 76 years old and needs attention too) (Angela).

I don't count on anyone to share housework and care for my daughter. I believe these issues burden women both in the pandemic and before it, because we need to take care of professional life and care for the children (Eliane).

The situation described by Ângela illustrates how many women abdicate themselves, due to family care, since it is clear that the other members of their family do their activities at previously established times, while their own activities end up being relocated to the background. In the context of the pandemic, this factor was shown more clearly, as when carrying out teaching and research activities from home, the task of organizing the multiple functions became even more arduous, as they were (almost) all inserted in the same environment and at the same time: the work environment, the research environment, being a mother, being a daughter, being a worker, etc.

Both in Ângela and Eliane's case, it is noteworthy the fact that they were single mothers, which seems to be an even more tenuous issue, since single parenthood can also represent some "difficulties to continue working without a support network, which varies greatly depending on the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of these women" (OLIVEIRA, 2020, p. 158).

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Other participants, Eliane and Djamila, described they were not always able to comply with what they had planned. In Eliane's case, she sought to establish a schedule, even so that she could give her daughter some attention, but she claimed she was not always able to comply with it, as unforeseen events arise in her daily life. As for Djamila, she claimed there were several interruptions when she was studying/working, due to family and domestic demands.

I try to make a schedule, establishing work and study schedules; for organizing the house (food, cleaning, etc); for paying attention to my daughter and monitor her school activities. However, I can't always follow the schedule, given the unforeseen events that arise in the house, some health problems and the "distress" caused by the pandemic situation (Eliane).

[...] although I mentioned the possibility of accompanying my children as positive, the family and domestic demands are sometimes exhausting. It is not always possible to continue reading or producing a text when we want or are excited, as we say. The interruption of activities due to domestic demands would be one of the biggest disadvantages. In addition, the internet instability in a residential network where four people need to have meetings, classes... (Djamila).

In Eliane's response, the fact that the participant herself elucidated her responsibility to take care of her daughter and monitor her school activities stands out. In Djamila's response there were the domestic and family demands, in line with the fact that she was not always able to complete her activities as she desired, as was also stressed by Eliane, when she mentioned the schedule she established sometimes could not be fulfilled.

Another point that also draws our attention is the fact that the spouses/partners were barely mentioned in the participants' responses, which, perhaps, may indicate that they occupy a secondary role in the children's education, which may show that:

The children's care and household chores as attributions that are related to motherhood and not to fatherhood, denoting the sexual division of work in the domestic sphere, something already pointed out by studies that sought to investigate the involvement of men and women in domestic work, in the family and in caring for their children (MACÊDO, 2020, p. 195, our translation).

Two statements that exemplify the citation are those of Olga and Judith's. In Olga's response, what stands out is the fact that, despite announcing a partnership between her and her husband, in the end, she highlights that he "helped" her a lot. In Judith's response, she explained that most of the time, her daughter was under her responsibility and needed to wait for her partner to be available to be at home, so that, only then, she could dedicate herself to certain activities.

[...] my husband and I are partners, he does his part of the housework, which helps a lot (Olga).

For 2 months I had my partner at home, given the need for social distancing. After this period, he returned to work (he is a commercial representative and travels during the week). In these two months he cooked and took care of our daughter when I was in classes. Today I count on frozen meals, my mother's and our friend's (our housekeeper) support who works overtime when I need her to stay with my daughter. I need to concentrate some of the activities on Saturdays and Sundays, when my partner is at home, such as preparing master's and undergraduate classes (Judith).

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Such a situation still denotes a strong idea about burdens that would be intrinsic to the role of women and that, therefore, it would be up to them, in the search for equality, to make an effort to get their spouse's "help". It is worth noting here the word "help", which is widely used by women, points to the stereotype that taking care of household chores is a predominantly female role. When using the word "help", in the sense of "providing help, assistance, assisting and aiding", the man would have a kind of "support" to the woman, since the function is hers, not his. Adichie (2017, p. 8), in her book "How to raise a feminist" advises to ban the language of help, because when "we say that fathers are 'helping', what we suggest is that taking care of children is a maternal territory, where fathers bravely venture to enter. It is not".

Shirley Macêdo (2020), when discussing what it means to be a mother and to be a worker in times of pandemic, explains that in Brazil, the demand for domestic work is still strongly seen as a maternal responsibility, the result of the naturalization of subalternity, hierarchically established by the "traditional family structure, which leads to exhaustion in the face of the care required by all family members" (MACÊDO, 2020, p. 189). With regard to the profession, during the pandemic, such inequality is reinforced by the fact that, in contemporary times, in addition to work enabling one's own identity, there is also overvaluation, which is a requirement for "contemporary women to be successful, strong and warriors" (MACÊDO, 2020, p. 189).

4 Final Considerations

The global pandemic of the new coronavirus has impacted the lives of people all over the world, since its outbreak some alternatives have been adopted to continue professional activities. During this period, the academic work of researchers did not cease, and among the alternatives to develop such activities, remote work/work from home stands out. However, for women this happens differently, in view of the stereotypes that perpetuate on them. Exhaustion, the number of demands and unfolding tend to appear in a more prominent way.

Thus, in this research, we proposed to learn about the experiences of ten women who worked, during the year 2020, as professors and researchers, in this context, due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19. Through the research, we verified, in the face of the health crisis, that gender inequalities associated with women researchers were present in remote activities.

The participants presented their anxieties, fears and discontent with the exercise of remote work. They reveal the increase in working hours, as well as working more, when caring for their children and the house. This fact indicates the need to rethink the way in which the idea of the "women's role" that "does everything" also supports a logic of work overburden, as it puts pressure on and falls on women in a very unfair way, in addition to continuing to supporting a series of gender stereotypes.

22

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