

Explore the Family Responsibility and Career Dilemma of Professional Women in Marriage

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Abstract: This paper investigates the reasons why married women in the banking industry choose occupational mobility by qualitative research method, analyzing the factors that influence women's choices of doing or undoing gender. The investigator interviewed 20 female bank clerks in marriage as the object of the study. All the women have had higher education in the past. In the background of modern labor society and the social identity of gender, professional women in marriage are under the dilemma of their work and family which includes occupational promotion, spouse, childcare, and eldercare. The consideration of family factors such as spouse, children, and the elderly, ultimately leads to the choice of occupational mobility for these married women. Personal career prospects, aspirations for a better future, the need for better educational conditions and opportunities for children, and the need to support parents and in-laws, all influence women's choice to make active or passive career mobility. It is still difficult for women from higher education backgrounds to make free choices after marriage.

Keywords: Do gender, undo gender, occupational mobility, professional married women

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy, people have gradually received better education. According to the data for the education of China's sixth and seventh national population census, the number of people with university (junior college education and above, in this paper, junior college education, undergraduate education and graduate education comprise main part of Chinese education) education has increased by 73.20%, while the number of people with high school education has increased by 7.26%; the number of people with junior high school education level has decreased by 11.04%, and the number of people with elementary school education has decreased by 7.51% [1]. The number of people with junior high school education decreased by 11.04%, and the number of people with elementary school education decreased by 7.51% [2]. Among the analysis, the number of people with higher education has increased the most, and here we need to mention that, in China, higher education includes junior college education and above. The educational level of women has also gradually increased, and the number of women receiving higher education has increased significantly. Among the people receiving higher education, the proportion of higher-educated women far exceeds that of men. The number of female students with junior college education and undergraduate education has reached 16.742 million in 2020, accounting for 51.0%, while the number

of women with adult undergraduate and junior college programs has reached 4.506 million, accounting for 58.0%, both of which have increased by 0.1 and 4.9 percentage points compared with that of 2010 [3]. Good education backgrounds provide individuals with good occupations, professional opportunities, and rising income which will lead to a large number of people joining the labor force [4]. As women's education level rises, highly educated women develop into an indispensable force in the labor force. Due to the employment opportunities offered to women by education, more and more women with higher education are entering various fields [4].

Professional women with marriage are a huge group in the labor force of society. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2020, the employment rate of married women in China's cities and towns had reached 78.3%. Women are required to do gender by engaging in feminine behaviors to be a so-called real woman with social femininity, and family tends to be the place for women to embody their femininity [5]. However, as women's education level increases these days, gender stereotypes are broken by professional women and these women who get rid of the traditional social attitude toward females try to undo gender [6, 7]. Now, professional women in marriage have become a strong force in the social labor structure. Many married women will choose to doing gender, taking on the main responsibility of household work in the family and serving as household labor, even if they are busy working outside [8, 9]. However, in terms of career planning, those women will undo the gender that chooses occupational mobilization for career development [10]. With the complicated condition of a booming economic society and labor market in high demand, Giddens states that people make rational reflexivity in their lives to face difficulties in social circumstances [11]. Family is the factor of hesitation for those married women to choose the occupational location.

Theoretical debates of women in terms of the research on doing and undoing gender have made great progress advance and more empirical research could be made from various aspects to enrich studies of this field [12]. This study analyzes the factors and reasons that lead married women in the banking industry who are a representative female group to choose occupational mobility by using theories of doing gender, undoing gender, and household labor. Discussing the dilemmas of married women in terms of their family and work could help the government, enterprises, and social institutions to pay more attention to the living conditions of married women consider more welfare measures, and provide more help.

2. Theoretical Framework: Doing Gender and Undoing Gender, and Household Labor

The advent of socialization is followed up by the emergence of the theory of doing gender in which it is argued that women tend to do feminine behaviors that conform to socially gendered identity to show their femininity [5]. Based on the theory of doing gender, Butler then proposed that social norm is a component that restricts the behavior of other people and that the norm in gender that society assigns to people can be eliminated by undoing gender [6, 10]. By doing gender, married women are forced to do emotional labor to balance the relationship between family and work, which they have to hide and sacrifice their real emotions. Emotional labor requires not only personal attention from the worker, which means that they have to sacrifice something of themselves and not just a simple response, but also a valuable contribution to the social reproduction of the labor force and social relations of production, besides, the emotional labor has had to resolve the divergence between household and work [13]. Household works are often considered as 'women's work', women spend more time on household work and perform more than men even when they become parents after marriage, whereas men do less household work in the family and take on smaller responsibilities when they have children [9]. Employment hours are usually cut down by new mothers, and new fathers often increase theirs, findings about housework are best understood within the contexts of larger economic, social, and family. The women mentioned above believe that they should do

household labor to take up more household chores [9]. A large number of highly educated women undo gender to change this status quo of social identity and social structure of labor to realize their goal of occupational promotion and development [14].

There is a large group of married women working in the banking industry, which has been the first choice of many highly educated women due to its stable income and benefit packages. Facing the inequality in social identity, women do gender and choose jobs such as bank clerks, secretaries, and other types of jobs to show their femininity which are considered appropriate for women [5, 15]. Women's education may enhance their power by increasing their socioeconomic resources which is the motivation that stimulates them to undo gender [16].

They gain a higher right, freedom, and probability in household divisions including professional and household work, but living with parents-in-law weakens their power to make independent choices [17]. The domesticated burden of spouse, children, and the elderly enables the women in the bank to do gender that choosing to focus on the family rather than self-career development, which considers family as the most important factor in deciding career mobility.

Under the overall and reasonable analysis and investigation of banking women in marriage, the influential factors affecting their occupational mobility include personal motivation and family motivation. These women's choice of their final working place is based on doing or undoing gender for family and professional career future. The result of the analysis reveals the paradoxes and difficulties faced by married women in the banking sector in balancing self-profession career and family.

3. Research Method

This study used qualitative method research to conduct 20 married women in banking with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Before starting the interview, the interviewers have been told and agreed to do this interview including the audio-recorded consent. The language used in the whole interview was Chinese, the mother tongue of the respondents, to facilitate deeper communication conveniently.

The women were all married at different ages, including 20-30s, 30-40s, and 50s. These women had received higher education in China, and their educational backgrounds included specialized, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The women in the survey were all in heterosexual marriages. Sixteen women had children, and four did not. One of the women divorced in recent years, but was in marriage at the time of the job transfer. Fourteen women did not have children at the time of the job transfer after marriage, and six had children at the time of the job transfer. Of the six women who did not have children at the time of the job transfer after marriage, one became pregnant and gave birth to a child after the transfer. In this interview, the mentioned name "Yantai" referred to the urban areas of Yantai in Shandong Province, China, and the researcher and respondents in this study regarded the name "Yantai" as the five urban districts only (Zhifu, Laishan, Fushan District Development Zone, and Muping District), and the name Penglai, Laiyang, Longkou, Qixia, Laizhou, and Haiyang refer to county-level areas of Yantai. The place of occupational mobility that the respondents described referred to the transfer among the five urban districts, as well as mobility between the urban districts and the county-level areas in terms of workplace. Intercity transfers, i.e., transfers between other cities and "Yantai", were also included.

The investigator asked the respondents a series of questions about themselves, including their age, the content about whether they had children at the time of the job change, the situation of their spouse, the reasons for the occupational mobility, the influential factors, the thoughts about future and their ideas and considerations about their career. The answers to the questions were collected by the interviewers for analysis and research.

4. Results

Men and women do gender to express their essential nature and value [5]. The traditional concept of division of labor in married families that women are mainly responsible for childcare and household work has been followed until now. Married women are considered household laborers even if they have a busy working schedule, while men only need to do fewer domestic duties or simple household work like paying bills [8,9]. In addition, many married women also have the responsibility of supporting the elderly (in-laws and their parents) [18]. With the overwhelming changes in society and labor structure, married women with higher education have to continue to work after marriage, and professional married women in China are under pressure from work, family, and elderly care.

4.1. Occupational Promotion and Development

80% of women in the survey undertook occupational mobility and changed working places for better occupational development, which includes inter-city, inter-urban, and county-to-urban transfers, and all transfers from less-developed regional or urban workplaces to more-developed cities or regions. Half of them took the initiative to transfer in ways of having examination or selection, and this part of women always choose to undo gender, taking the occupational promotion and development of a career as the motivation and set the goal of the achievement of self-care value [6]. Those who refuse to be household laborers put a professional promotion in the first place and transfer to a new place for a better working platform and environment, instead of putting their spouses into consideration. Highly educated women of nuclear households in China, by undoing gender, will have higher decision-making power, and they do something that is often considered masculinity and not conforming to the norms of femininity, therefore, they live not for caring the sake of others but themselves [10, 16, 19]. However, some of these women also believe that a better working platform will provide them with better chances of promotion, following a higher position, salary, and work capacity, which can better support their families and make a better life condition for them. However, these women still say that the main reason for their mobilization is still professional development.

4.2. Household Responsibility

In many nuclear families, women will choose the position of household labor in the division of household works and take main responsibilities of the family including childcare, in which standard both women and spouse think it fair and right to divide the degree of self-contribution to the family, as if it seems undeniably fair distribution [8]. The female bank staff under investigation take household responsibilities as the most important thing after marriage, who do gender putting childcare, spouse and parents first. They get accustomed to being the household labor which is connected to the role of emotional labor that women are doing gender and often subordinate to men and live in a state of submission [5, 20].

4.2.1. Relationship with Spouse in Marriage

25% of female interviewees mobilized among “Yantai”, country-level areas of Yantai, and cities. Transfers from “Yantai” (five urban districts) to country-level areas and from other cities like Beijing and Jinan to Yantai, which the occupational mobility is from the developed regions to undeveloped areas, is harmful to occupational promotion and development. The development opportunities are different in urban districts of Yantai, country-level areas, and developed cities such as Beijing and Jinan. Promotional opportunities and career development space are extremely limited in the process of occupational mobility that transfers from “Yantai” (five urban districts) to country-level areas and intercity mobility from other cities Beijing and Jinan to Yantai. Different levels of development of

different working places provide better or worse conditions. They indicated that their mobility is only for living with spouses wherever the place they mobilize to for work is high-developed or low-developed. Those women couldn't accept the long-distance relationship and the idea of being separated from their spouses after marriage, hoping to commute with their spouse by shortening the spatial distance between them in this way, which is the married life desire. More than half of them do not have children, doing gender and choosing to shift the focus of life to their partners, and they enjoy life with their spouse and long to struggle with their spouse. They believe that work belongs to household life. They put family and spouse as the center of their married life, and give up better employment opportunities in favor of their identity as wives.

4.2.2. Childbearing

The women surveyed who had children at the time of their occupational mobility regarded their children as the crucial and decisive factor in their determination of mobility. Among the women who pursue their self-care development, a large number of women will also consider their children's future education as a factor in changing their place of work. They believe that the infrastructure, living environment, and educational conditions in "Yantai" (five urban districts) are much better than country-level areas. Their children will receive better education in the future, which is conducive to the growth and development of children. Some women also think that changing their work locations to achieve reunions with their spouse will help set up a harmonious atmosphere that contributes to the healthy physical and mental development of their children, in addition, a complete daily parental education will make for their children to grow up. Children of both categories of respondents were in kindergarten, primary, middle, and high school. Besides, there are also some women, whose children are in college and graduate school, who say that although their reasons for occupational promotion for work are the main determinant of mobility, most of them firmly added that they will not mobilize if their children haven't started university yet.

4.2.3. Elder Care

Two interviewees mentioned that their parents were old and in poor health, and they felt that their filial piety to their parents should not be sacrificed for the job. One of the interviewees elaborated a lot of her feelings that his occupational mobility for career development was due to the pressure of the bank, she thought that the transfer of workplace from the urban districts to the county-level areas should consider men first rather than women, and she thought that as a housewife, she had the obligation to take care of the elderly. The condition was so hard that his parents and his in-laws were already nearly 80 years old and were ill, his spouse was unable to take care of the elderly because of the heavy pressure of work, his children were far away from home and found it difficult to take care of their families, and he thought that all this was attributed to "irresponsibility". His parents and parents-in-law are nearly 80 years old and are sick, but his spouse is under pressure at work and is unable to take care of the elderly, and her children are far away from their hometown it is difficult for the children to find a job and take care of family. She attributed all mentioned above to the "irresponsible" bank, which makes it impossible for her to do gender and fulfill his family duties.

5. Discussion

The results of this study show that there are two aspects influence married working women's career mobility: on the one hand, it is the prospect of personal career development and the desire for a better life future that occupational mobility will bring higher salaries, a higher level of development platform and a better living condition; on the other hand, it is the consideration for the family that occupational mobility can reduce the distance of commuting with the spouse, improve family

communication and create harmonious environment, which the better education conditions and education opportunities in developed areas is beneficial to their children. The adoption of the parents-in-law and parents is also one of the indispensable considerations for Chinese families after marriage. From these conclusions above, it can be further analyzed that the influence of social identity, family division, and social division of labor is still obvious even though women are in higher education. Professional women under the limitation of marriage and family will do gender that taking family as the core of their life, although they will also undo gender that pursuing their career development to some extent.

6. Conclusion

The patriarchal society system still prevails worldwide, though China has accelerated social and demographic education progress nowadays, especially women's growing population with higher education. Due to this, there is a tendency for patriarchy social attributes, but according to the survey and research on this group of married professional women even though women tend to undo gender by restructuring their perspective of gender behavior and choosing occupational development as the focus of their life, most of them are still choosing to do gender in consideration of family, their spouse, and childcare which account for a large part of their life. Many of them believe that children and spouses are the most important in their lives, even if they continue to work, they still regard the family as their first choice and give up bringing their cause to life or that can be described as realizing freedom right themselves.

This study provides a reference value for future research on married working women in higher education. Even though the education level of women in modern society has been improved, and society and women's cognition and thinking have been emancipated to a certain extent, the structure of social production and the traditional division of labor in the household will still be affected by gender inequality and identity. Professional women in marriage face great challenges in their work and life as usual. In the future, researchers should continue to focus on the living conditions of working women in different fields, as well as gender inequality and other issues of gender. The multifaceted relationship between social welfare policies and professional women can also be considered from a new perspective of social policy and welfare.

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