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Chapter

Effects of the Pandemic on Academic Women in Latin America

Julianna Ramirez Lozano

Abstract

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has brought us a serious global economic, health and social crisis. In this context, there has been an increase in the inequality between men and women around the world. In this situation of home confinement, uncertainty, stress and fear, women have been the most affected, regardless of their level of education. In the case of women academics, they have experienced an overload of remote work, but also an increase in the household chores and other activities such as the care of older adults and school teaching of their minor children. The greatest impacts on the perception were the lack of gender equity (SDG 5) and, therefore, the increase of the gender inequality gap (SDG 10) during the pandemic in Latin America (LA).

Keywords: women academic, pandemic, gender equality, reduced inequalities, SDG 5, SDG 10

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared, on March 11, 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the worldwide evolution and spread of the virus [1]. Since then, the lifestyle (work, studies and social relations, among others) of millions of people has changed, in many cases drastically. This pandemic has made evident the worldwide problems of inequity, inequality and lack of opportunities, especially among women in Latin America, as evidenced by many studies to date. The results of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index for Latin America as of 2019, prior to the pandemic, indicated that there was inequality between women and men in three dimensions of interest: reproductive health, empowerment and labour market. It also indicated significant levels of discrimination in the laws, traditions and social norms of the countries.

In education, studies have focused mainly on the impact of learning methodologies on students, without considering other aspects such as the experience of women academics in Latin America [2]. Regardless of their level of studies, economic situation or position within the institutions, they have to deal with the remote work-related tasks, but also with other tasks such as the care of children, the sick, the elderly and domestic work, among others [3].
This qualitative study analyses the perception of women academics from three universities in Ecuador, Peru and Chile. It identifies the different types of work they performed throughout their working days during the pandemic. It analysed the difficulties and repercussions that virtual teaching has had on their personal lives; the implications of the training, the material support received from their universities, as well as the policies and actions taken by these institutions during the pandemic.

2. Gender equality and women’s empowerment

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are fundamental rights protected by the Human Rights promoted by the United Nations [4]. They also represent a basic pillar to build a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been some progress in Latin America during the last decades: there are more girls in schools; more women have reached executive and leadership positions in organizations and companies and there are more laws that promote gender equality in the Latin American countries [5, 6]. However, the increase of women in economic activities has not reduced women's unpaid domestic activities.

Workplace gender discrimination [7] deals with sexism or discrimination based on sex, where people face situations of denial or blindness, which do not appear in other types of discrimination. For example, racial discrimination in the workplace is evident despite it being absurd to take into account the skin colour for job performance. On the other hand, there are cultural assumptions with deep historical roots about women's physical weakness, their vulnerability during pregnancy or their special and irreplaceable role for a certain family model. According to these concepts, it is fully justified to protect women, even if said treatment covers discrimination. The structure of society itself is founded on these assumptions, which, over time, have proven to be prejudiced. These prejudices turn certain jobs into niches, within which women are supposedly protected and truly trapped, with lower wages than men and few possibilities for promotion. There is a scarce presence of women in the highest positions, a phenomenon called “glass ceiling”, a metaphor used to refer to the set of invisible, bounded and solid barriers and obstacles that women must overcome to access high positions and positions of responsibility in the organizational pyramid, affecting women as a group [8].

In the countries studied, women invest more time than men on unpaid domestic and care work, such as caring for children under 6 and 15 years and people over 60 years, which can have a negative impact on their availability of hours for paid work. This is because these members of the nuclear family require more attention and care, which is normally provided by women, according to traditions. This reduces their possibilities of increasing their incomes and limits their incorporation into the formal labour market [9]. These gender gaps also exist in the labour sector, where the current women’s labour force participation rate is nearly 49%, while that of men is 75%, a difference of almost 26%. Therefore, women find it more difficult to be employed, compared to men, in Latin American societies, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) [10] report. As for the time use, the indicator 5.4.1 follows up the SDG No. 5. The time invested on household chores and unpaid care, by sex, for Chile (2015) is 10.8% for men and 24.7% for women; in Ecuador (2012) 4.7% for men and 19.8% for women and in Peru (2010) 7.3% for men and 21% for women. Although time use measurement methodologies respond to the specific objectives of each country, they show trends of unequal time distribution [11].
3. Gender equity (SDG 5) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10)

The pandemic has highlighted the gaps that exist between men and women (SDG 5) and the increase in inequality between men and women (SDG 10), as well as the lack of access to training opportunities and formal and decent work for women. Informal work in Latin American countries accounts for more than 70% of the national economy and its main protagonists are women.

According to António Guterres [12], Secretary-General of the United Nations, “the threat to women’s rights and freedoms posed by the COVID-19 goes far beyond physical violence. The deep economic downturn accompanying the pandemic is likely to have a distinctly female face.” This indicates a profound impact of the pandemic on the work and family lives of women. Moreover, according to ILO/ECLAC [13], remote work can have a significant impact on the psychological balance of the worker, and, in several countries, there have been reports of an increase in cases of gender-based violence during the quarantine and, therefore, to the workplace, when a home is the workplace. This occurred because the pandemic forced to implement remote work in universities without prior planning for training, reorganization of processes, technological infrastructure or even a regulatory framework specifying the new rules of the game. This generated latent concerns for both the directors and professors, especially for women professors, who became the most vulnerable group [14].

Gender equity includes women’s working conditions that have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. According to ECLAC [11] in its special report on COVID-19 No. 9, women’s economic autonomy in sustainable recovery and equality mentions that the labour participation rate of women maintained at 46% in 2020, while that of men at 69% (in 2019 they reached 52% and 73.6%, respectively). The unemployment rate for women in 2020 reached 22.2%, a higher percentage than the rate originated in 2019.

In 2020, there was an overwhelming outflow of women from the labour force, who did not resume their job search because they had to meet the demands of caring for their homes. The United Nations estimates that nearly 118 million Latin American women would be in poverty, 23 million more than in 2019. Ibero-America experienced a complicated year in 2019. Some examples are the political issues in Spain, demonstrations and strikes in Chile, zero economic growth in Mexico, radical change of government (again) in Argentina, accumulated socio-political tension in Brazil and Colombia and violence and migration from Central America. Therefore, the pre-pandemic scenario was ideal for all those issues to occur, characterized by a weak institutional environment and state fragility [15]. As Farrell [16] points out “poverty, income inequality and the subjugation of women undermine capabilities and deprive people of their effective freedoms to engage in worthwhile activities”, making it increasingly relevant. (p. 1002).

The relationship between gender inequality and time use has changed over the last 40 years. There seems to be a gradual evolution towards symmetry in women’s and men’s time and a substantial change in the relationship between unpaid work and gender [17]. However, it is unlikely that there will be a greater movement of men into unpaid work and women into paid work, particularly in the case of fathers and mothers [18]. The truth is that without changes in the institutional and normative context, timely decisions and cultural changes in institutional constraints could not be made, such as an employment model that prioritizes paid work over family and a culture that values a fast and efficient work ethic [19]. However, confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic meant an immediate increase in unpaid care work,
particularly for families with young children, often combined with remote work from home. A nationwide study of UK adults [20, 21] revealed that the gender division of unpaid care work at both an individual and couple level before and after confinement produced psychological distress in men and women. The study also noted that women spent significantly more time doing housework and childcare than men. Women were more likely than men to reduce work hours and adjust employment schedules due to increased unpaid care time [22]. In addition, increased time spent doing housework and childcare was associated with higher levels of psychological distress for women only.

4. Gender inequality of opportunities at the university level

It has also led to the emergence of the first gender asymmetry produced by COVID-19 and related to the reproductive dimension of care and housework. This reproductive gap also affects all groups of women workers at the university level, as well as another series of asymmetries associated with the productive dimension, derived from their gender condition that varies according to the functions they perform in the university and the contractual relationship that each one has with the institution [23–25]. A report by the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research confirms the fact that women academics are losing research time. The results of the survey revealed that women professors with children are the most affected; however, in general, it is considered that both parents have been affected [26].

According to the 2013 “She Figures” report, women accounted for 20.9% of the teaching and research staff at the highest level of the academic career in the 28 EU countries in 2013. Probert [27] pointed out that marriage and having a family, along with other cultural barriers, negatively affect the role of women. In Spain, the literature concludes that the problems to balance personal work and social life for women academics is complicated due to a university power system that does not offer the possibilities for a happy exercise of a good personal and professional coexistence of men and women academics, professors and researchers [28–31]. In addition, there is an implication that educational agents and decision-makers have an impact from a gender perspective on both the explicit study plan and the hidden study plan. Therefore, it is necessary for academic decision-makers involved in the creation of the study plan and the training of university students to be aware of some fundamentals of gender theory [32, 33]. For example, the fact that women and men do not have essences derived from biology, but that those are symbolic constructions regarding the order of language and representations [7]. Moreover, they should consider that in societies and in the academic environment, the androcentric ideology persists. In this context, the definition that Scott [34] raises is very useful: “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, but it is also a primary way of signifying relationships of power”.

5. Methodology

This qualitative, exploratory-descriptive study has a nonexperimental field and cross-sectional design that used the field technique of focus groups [35–38]. This study considered three countries, Peru, Chile and Ecuador because they had profiles of universities with different characteristics. This allowed us to make a
comparison between different realities [39]. In the case of Peru, we analysed a private, Catholic and nonprofit university. In the case of Chile, we analysed a public and secular university; and in the case of Ecuador, a public (free) and secular university.

The study involved the participation of 33 undergraduate and graduate women academics. In the case of Peru, part-time and full-time professors, who participated in the study, worked at CENTRUM PUCP Business School of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. In the case of Chile, full-time professors worked at Universidad de Valparaíso. And, in the case of Ecuador, full-time professors were from the Universidad de Guayaquil. In all cases, women academics had regular contracts and others had tenure (i.e. they obtained job stability after winning a public competition).

The study had three objectives: Identify the different types of work performed by women professors during their workday during the pandemic, Identify the main difficulties and consequences that virtual teaching has had on their personal lives during the pandemic and analyse the context and institutional support where women professors have worked during the pandemic.

Table 1 shows the relationship between the three research objectives, the seven factors of the study and the 39 variables used to develop the focus group questions.

### 6. Research results

The main relevant factors perceived by women professors on their work and family lives during the pandemic included time use, the perception of the impact of the pandemic and the institutional support to do remote work. These factors are related to two very important SDGs linked to our study: Lack of gender equity (SDG 5 - Gender equity) and the lack of equal roles between men and women (SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities).

Research results are presented below based on seven factors that explain the impact of the pandemic on the work and family/personal lives of women professors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study factors</th>
<th>Variables of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociodemographic factors</td>
<td>• Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employment status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Hired/Tenure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Field of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of time use in remote work</td>
<td>• Time invested in online work (in classes, department meetings, tutorials, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time invested in off-line work (checking assignments, using the virtual platform,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preparing reports, preparing classes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of time use in household chores</td>
<td>• Time for cooking and feeding dependents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time for cleaning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time for caring for family members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time for caring for pets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time for accompanying and teaching their children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Public Economics - New Perspectives and Uncertainty

Study factors | Variables of analysis
---|---
Perceived factors of the impact of the pandemic on personal and family lives. | • Affective and emotional impact  
• Physical problems caused by remote work  
• Poor support networks/no social life  
• Work-Life-Balance Issues  
• Guilt feeling for neglect of caregiving tasks.  
• Guilt feeling for neglect of household chores  
• Psychological violence at home  
• Physical violence at home  
• Family disruption  
• Reduction of family living spaces
Perceived factors of the impact of the pandemic on the working life. | • Frustration or low self-esteem  
• Emotional restraint of students and their families  
• Emotional restraint of colleagues  
• Assume economic costs for students and their families  
• Workplace Harassment
Factors on institutional support (resources) for remote work. | • Use of the platform Aprendo en línea (I learn online) by their students  
• Use of the digital platform (as a professor)  
• Attendance to a course or webinar  
• Training on distance education provided by the institution  
• Allocation of supplies to do remote work provided by the institution  
• Financial incentive provided by the institution
Factors of institutional coexistence during remote work | • Has the institution made your schedules and demands more flexible when faced with emerging remote work situations?  
• Do you feel that your needs and requirements are listened to at work?  
• Do you feel supported by your school in case of criticism from parents, guardians or students?  
• Relationship with authorities  
• University administrative management relations  
• Relationship with fellow professors  
• Relationship with students

Source: Author’s own creation. Adapted from [40].

Table 1.  
Factors and variables in the study on the impact of the pandemic on women academics in LA.

a. Sociodemographic factors: The women professors who participated in the study were between 25 and 60 years old. Most of them were married and had young children (who had virtual classes during 2020 and 2021) and others with older children. A minority group were women who live alone. Half of them were full-time professors and the others had tenure. All of them were part of the undergraduate and graduate teaching staff of various faculties of economic and administrative sciences. In Table 2 we can find the 4 profiles of the academic women found in the study. The types of women academics derived from the reality observed in this research.
b. Time use factors during remote work: According to women academics in the three countries, the new virtual work method has created 24/7 jobs due to an increase in their academic responsibilities. But also, an increase in their household chores and the care and accompaniment of older adults and minor children. The results have reflected that women assumed the greatest burden in their households, mainly type 1 and 2 women.

“I thought I was going to have more time to study certain topics. Now I feel like I have less free time than before. I can't move from the office to home.” (Woman type 4- Peru). “My husband helps me. He knows how to do everything a woman does. However, we have to help the girls with their homework. We live in a house here in Brazil and we have to clean. It is very challenging. My husband is my support.” (Woman type 1- Peru). “I don’t leave my house and I have to take care of my daughters. They tell me: Mom, tell your boss that you have to play with us. It is difficult.” (Woman type 1- Peru). “... If someone would help me, my life would be much easier and I would say, you know, that I have time, but now I feel like I don’t have time at all” (Woman type 2- Chile).

c. Time use factors at home: three sub-variables were included in this factor: machismo (superiority of men over women), unequal distribution of household chores and the increase in the workload. Women academics recognized their role as women, compared to that of men. However, generally speaking, in the three countries, women professors showed a sexist attitude because they naturally assumed at all times that unpaid care work at home has to be done by women. It should be noted that the majority of them lost the support of the maid/domestic worker or nanny.

According to the SIGI study (2019), women invest more than 4.5 hours a day on housework or caring for children and elders, 3 times more time than men do,
prior to the pandemic. The time invested on housework has replaced research
time [41]. This is why gender differences persist between academics equally
capable and motivated. Many women academics stated that they have no time for
their research activities.

“We have to do the housework because we don’t like the way men do things at
home” (Women, type 2- Chile). “The strategic position of women is alarming
to me because I get the impression that now we are working more but it is an
instrumentalized work. We are in charge, we are the visible faces, because of
the accreditations and certifications, but if the result is negative, the prestige of
women, not men, might be affected (Woman type 3, Chile). “I don’t get the idea
that because we are women, we have to cook or take care of everyone. No sir,
I ask respect before anything. Nobody should interrupt me” (Woman, type 2,
Ecuador). “Even though the caring role is not the priority, women’s responsibili-
ties cannot be abandoned, we women must show that we are good and can do
things well” (Woman, type 1, Ecuador).

d. Factors of the perception of the pandemic’s impact on the personal and family
lives of women professors. The participants from the three countries indicated
that the pandemic and subsequent quarantine had caused them feelings of
anguish, uncertainty and permanent stress due to the home confinement. In
the case of Ecuador, the pandemic was directly linked to the word “death”. This
is because unfortunately in this country, the media showed tragic “deaths in the
streets” because of the pandemic.

The pandemic has also had a socio-economic impact on families. This means an
increase in economic expenses, new members in the family nucleus and changes
in local and international residences. The economic impact in Ecuador was
complicated because the women professors of the University of Guayaquil expe-
rienced a two-month delay in the payment of their salaries, once the pandemic
began, between April and May 2020. This caused labour uncertainty. “During
the first months we faced the economic problem that the government owed us 2
months of salary, but we joined with other family members and children to help
us” (Woman type 3, Ecuador). In Peru and Chile, the women professors did not
have economic problems, and some of them even pointed out that they are sav-
ing money on transportation due to remote work.

All the participants stated that they had not been direct victims of violence by
their partners, but all of them mentioned that they knew women who had been
abused during the pandemic, and some of them had even been direct witnesses
of the physical violence that their friends, neighbours and colleagues had suf-
f ered. Chilean professors reported labour discrimination and mobbing due to
gender, whereas Ecuadorian and Peruvian women professors indicated that they
had not been victims. Violence is often physical and sexual, but also, sometimes
psychological. This violence is mostly silent and has a tremendous impact on the
mental health of thousands of women who may be victims of their partners or
the people they live with at home [42, 43]. In fact, during the pandemic, cases of
violence have increased due to home confinement, and to this date, there are still
no public programs or policies in force to address the effects of this public health
problem [44].
“If you are a woman, you have everything to lose. One day the police came and said to the woman, who was assaulted; if you want, you can report it and I will take the guy.” I said to the police officer “Sir, I reported the assault.” The police officer told me that it had to be reported by the victim, but my neighbour did not want to do it”. After witnessing this event, seeing a woman being abused, I got sick for a month, but well, we had to move on and continue with my work. It was very painful”. (Woman, type 4- Peru). “The University psychologist deals with many complaints of domestic violence. There is evidence of many students who live with uncertainty, mistreatment and sexual abuse. The situation within the households is complicated. I think we have gone back 20 years” (Woman, type 1 - Chile), “I associate violence and domestic and child abuse spaces with imprisonment situations because the aggressor’s condition is that of a delinquent. People around the aggressor are disturbed by the space in which he lives and that is the biggest problem. He considers himself the king of the house, he has no borders or limits”. (Woman, type 3- Ecuador), “Distancing from authorities and peers because of the quarantine has been beneficial, it has been some kind of escape from work” (Woman, type 2- Chile).

e. Factors of the perception of the pandemic’s impact on the work lives of women professors. In the three countries, the women professors indicated that remote work has produced greater workload, stress and fatigue, especially for type 1 and 2 women professors. However, those of types 3 and 4 also associated the pandemic with the words: home confinement, death, infection, pain, fear, loneliness, sadness, fear of death, anguish, nervousness, tension and nightmares. The women academics analysed the negative aspects in the two subcategories: personal and work. In general, participants felt that they were in a situation of job uncertainty, especially those women professors who were working under contracts. In Ecuador, some professors dropped out and others retired because they preferred to take this path rather than take on the challenge of virtual teaching. This situation has increased the fear of instability and work overload since many of them have doubled the number of classes. There is also uncertainty about the time remaining to resume the “normality” and in-person classes. In this regard, according to ECLAC [11] in its special report on COVID-19 No. 9, women’s economic autonomy in sustainable recovery and equality mentions that the labour participation rate of women maintained at 46% in 2020, while that of men at 69% (in 2019 they reached 52% and 73.6%, respectively). The unemployment rate for women in 2020 reached 22.2%, a higher percentage than the rate originated in 2019. In 2020, there was an overwhelming outflow of women from the labour force, who did not resume their job search because they had to meet the demands of caring for their homes.

“I’m afraid we’re dehumanizing ourselves. We are losing touch. That worries me”. (Woman, type 4- Peru), “I feel fear because of the lack of socialization and not having a limit at work”. (Woman, type 2- Peru), “I am a problem for the university because sometimes I am not that available, but I need to work, I wonder what will happen at the end of the year, will they hire me again? The institutionality has been based on the mental health of women; it worries me because if this scenario does not change, it will be very difficult for me”. (Woman, type 1- Chile), “Now my life is my work, and it overwhelms me that my work is in my house”. (Woman, type 2, Chile), “I experience states of sadness and depres-
sion caused by home confinement and routine”. (Woman, type 3- Chile), “It is a constant challenge to balance work and family life while attending family needs” (Woman, type 1- Ecuador).

The women academics also analysed the positive aspects in the two subcategories: personal and work. As for employment, in the three countries, the women professors pointed out that the positive aspects have been the opportunity to use ICT platforms and improve the use of technological tools, work reinvestment, the possibility of being in many places and working remotely, as well as the access to international networks. “For me, (the benefit is) the group work and connection through technological platforms” (Woman, type 2- Chile).

The positive impacts reported by the women professors included the possibility of being with their children, raising the young children and in general spending more time with the family. “Being closer to my daughters and my husband” (Woman, type 2- Peru). “Enjoy each day because there are certain variables that we do not control, today everything is ok, but tomorrow we will see. I feel like a guilty mother, I missed my daughter’s growth and now I am living it” (Woman, type 1- Chile). “Family time has been wonderful and watching my 1-year-old daughter grow up” (Woman, type 2- Ecuador).

f. Factors of institutional support (resources) for remote work. The participants said that they needed resources to carry out their work activities from home. The participants from the three countries indicated that they had received training for the new virtual teaching method. However, the women professors had to create a space in their homes for teaching classes and in many cases buy chairs, lamps and internet access to improve their connectivity.

“My laptop crashed and died. The computer I use now was given to me immediately. They brought the laptop to my house” (Woman, type 3- Peru). “I bought a gamer chair because I had severe lower back pain, I was on medical rest” (Woman, type 3, Ecuador). “At the beginning, I had to adapt my office in a common space at home, later I managed to set it up in an exclusive space for me” (Woman, type 3, Chile). “I was overwhelmed by all the trainings. Eventually, it became too much. We never had so much knowledge at hand” (Woman, type 2, Peru).

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g. Factors of institutional coexistence during remote work. The study revealed that women academics have carried out their virtual teaching tasks facing two challenges: the management of the virtual classroom and the relationship with students during virtual classes. It is evident that the relationship and experience with students have improved with the use of applications, social networks and virtual classroom resources. In Peru and Chile, women professors were trained right after the quarantine started, so they felt more confident. Whereas in Ecuador, the training process took place more slowly, which is why they have had greater difficulties with virtual teaching.

“We see very often that students turn off their cameras during the classes. This creates distance.” (Woman, type 3 - Chile). “There are no conditions for practice, we cannot have contact in the field and do experiments” (Woman, type 3- Ecuador). “The fact that the cameras are on has allowed us to know the realities
of the students. However, the management of the virtual classroom does not replace personal contact and access to more human realities that could help us to transform and influence students so they can overcome their difficulties” (Woman, type 2- Chile).

In terms of their relationship with the institution (academic and administrative staff) and their relationship with their colleagues, Peruvian women professors reported having received support from their authorities. Meanwhile, in Ecuador, there were two types of responses: some women professors felt supported by their authorities and others expressed there is favouritism for other colleagues. In Chile, women professors did not mention direct authorities but emphasized there was a lack of empathy with them. Nevertheless, none of the cases showed that the authorities were particularly concerned about the situation of type 1 women professors who have to deal with the care of their young children, unpaid domestic activities and work overload. It is clear that there is no public policy in this regard or internal policies for universities to address this issue. As for the relationship with colleagues, all of them said they missed their professor friends. Likewise, when it comes to the relationship with students, women professors pointed out that this new virtual teaching method exposes the inequalities of access and opportunities for students, since not all of them have the same conditions.

“I have two female bosses. I felt supported. When I got sick, she told me to get well, be fine and not to worry. I think the managerial area works very well” (Woman, type 4- Peru). “I have a negative perception regarding the lack of empathy for the situation of single women with children because of their condition of caregivers” (Woman, type 1, Chile). “There is an overload of work for women in leadership positions, there is over-exploitation, and I feel impotent about it. It is evident that some miss their colleagues, especially those with whom they have built good relationships” (Woman, type 2, Chile). “Yes, there is recognition at work. They respect the condition of women and their human position. They are honest authorities, who have been awarded two times” (Woman, type 3, Ecuador). “There is no recognition, there is favoritism for the professors with tenure, and nothing for those with regular contracts” (Woman, type 2, Ecuador). “We miss interacting with colleagues; we miss the meetings and the coffees in the morning and afternoon” (Woman, type 3, Ecuador).

In general, with regard to the seven factors analysed, we can conclude that women type 1 - Mothers and wives with young children - have been the most affected. The most important differences observed between the focus groups were that these women with children and adolescents were affected by the decrease in physical space in their homes, raising children and accompanying them in their virtual classes; lack of support; and the increase in hours of unpaid work in an inequitable manner compared to other adults in the house. In addition, we observed feelings of generalized anxiety and stress in women academics who were mothers, as well as feelings of guilt for the absence during parenting before the pandemic; and the lack of time and space in parenting during the pandemic. Some participants mentioned, “I am a guilty mother, I missed out on my daughter’s growth and now I am living it” (Woman, type 3, Chile); “I have sacrificed everything for my mother’s health” (Woman, type 2, Chile). The differences between the focus groups differ more according to the possibility of having family support and/or services to which they have access for unpaid work, rather than cultural differences between countries. Table 3 shows the result of the analysis of the four types of women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of time use in remote work</th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
<th>Type 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal time &amp; working time</td>
<td>Increased workload, assumed household chores, care and accompaniment of the family group including their fathers and/or mothers. Lack of time; lack of tranquility for work; lack of support for household chores and childcare and lack of space for raising their children. High levels of fatigue and stress, and few hours of sleep.</td>
<td>Increased workload, assumes household chores, care and accompaniment of the family group including their fathers and/or mothers – elderly adults. Lack of time; lack of tranquility for work; lack of support for the tasks of care and accompaniment of fathers and/or mothers – elderly adults. High levels of fatigue, lack of free time.</td>
<td>Reorganization of the household chores, assumes domestic chores and childcare tasks, and in some cases the accompaniment of the mother and/or father. There are differences between academics who have support in housework and those who do not. The latter expressed high levels of anxiety, few hours of sleep and lack of understanding of family members and co-workers.</td>
<td>Work time has been diminished by personal and family changes, in some cases taking on moving and caring for the elderly. They appreciate the lack of social time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Factors of time use in household chores gender perspective: Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on families (increased economic expenses, new members in the nuclear family and change of residence: Machismo.) | Some statements of women academics reinforce the gender inequity and inequality fostered by the pandemic in their own homes. | Some statements of women academics reinforce gender inequity and inequality. | Some statements of women academics reinforce gender inequity and inequality. | Some statements of women academics reinforce gender inequity and inequality. |

<p>| Perceived factors of the impact of the pandemic on personal and family lives. Gender perspective: Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on families (increased economic expenses, new members in the nuclear family and change of residence: inequitable distribution of domestic work, etc.). | There is an unequal distribution of domestic work and care among household members. Although activities are shared, the greatest responsibility always lies on the woman. She assumes the greatest responsibility. | There is an unequal distribution of domestic work and care among household members. Few activities are shared. Older adults lose independence due to confinement. | There is an unequal distribution of domestic work and care among household members. Single mothers with children mentioned they had to adapt to work late at night and/or early in the morning. | There is a need to accompany their fathers and/or mothers in household chores, help with paperwork and shop for their fathers and/or mothers. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
<th>Type 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived factors of the impact of the pandemic on the working life.</td>
<td>Women academics accept more activities and tasks beyond their employment contracts. They feel lack of time, fatigue and insomnia.</td>
<td>Women academics perform more activities and tasks beyond their contractual time.</td>
<td>Women academics perform more activities and tasks beyond their contractual time.</td>
<td>Women academics perform more activities and tasks beyond their contractual time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender perspective:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on families (increased economic expenses, new members in the nuclear family and change of residence: increased workload).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived factors of the impact of the pandemic on personal and family lives.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of a sexist working relationship between colleagues and authorities.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of a sexist working relationship between colleagues and authorities.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of a sexist working relationship between colleagues and authorities.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of a sexist working relationship between colleagues and authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of institutional coexistence during remote work</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of domestic violence among their students. The situation of women academics is unknown.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of domestic violence among their students. The situation of women academics is unknown.</td>
<td>They recognize the existence of domestic violence among their students. The situation of women academics is unknown.</td>
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</table>

**Source:** Authors' own creation.

**Table 3.**
Analysis of results for the seven variables in the four types of women.
All types of women academics increased their workload and were affected by an increase in their responsibilities, household chores, care and support to the family group (children and older adults) during confinement. The lockdown restrictions especially affected women with young children because they had to adapt their work patterns to childcare/homeschooling [45]. They had to work late at night, early in the morning or on weekends. They also had poor sleep quality, lack of time to do physical exercises and feelings of loneliness, overwhelm, anguish and great fatigue. Distress levels were particularly high in the cases of single-parent women who were heads of households with young children. They had to adapt their work patterns exclusively, with a greater sense of abandonment and injustice. The adaptation of work patterns due to childcare/homeschooling appears to be more detrimental for single mothers than for cohabiting mothers. Women academics mentioned their partners provided great support but still, they felt the working patterns were unequal. The greatest distress was caused by the care and school accompaniment of young children, but also for the care of older and/or sick adults because the uncertainty and fear of COVID-19 contagion of the latter increased dependence and an impact on their psychological health [46].

In the other factors analysed, no substantive differences were observed. There was a general consensus on the inequitable distribution of domestic and care work among the members of the household; on the perception of a greater workload for women; the existence of sexist labour relations among colleagues and authorities; and in several cases, knowledge and intervention in situations of sexist violence among students and their families. Gender inequality in the division of unpaid care work during confinement increased. Among the three countries analysed, Ecuador was the country that faced the greatest health crisis due to COVID-19, which was reflected in the statements of women academics who reported greater stress due to traumatic situations experienced (Table 4).

7. Conclusions and recommendations

The COVID 19 pandemic has significantly affected women due to their human condition and other cultural characteristics of Latin American countries. Women academics are proof of this. Despite their academic studies and good quality of work, they have become women affected by inequity and inequality in their own homes. During the pandemic, the vast majority of them lost the external support they used to have at home and assumed more household chores. Their workload also increased because virtuality increased the demand for students. This impact has been reflected in an increased gender inequality (SDG 5) and an increased inequality (SDG 10).

According to the results of this research, it is evident that the pandemic has affected the quality of life of women academics. Many of them stated that virtual work from home has meant working 24/7, with no breaks and on weekends. In all cases, high levels of physical and emotional stress were observed due to an increased labour demand in the universities, regardless of the gender. This is mainly because they have had to invest hours to learn how to use new virtual environments and the high demand from students for digital media such as email, WhatsApp and text messaging. According to their statements, women academics have experienced feelings of frustration, anger, nerves and even guilt, which were heightened by the prolonged home confinement in Latin America and the excessive fatigue generated by it. Women academics type 1 were the most affected since they had to add to their virtual working day, household chores and support to their young children during their virtual classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</th>
<th>Description of the goal</th>
<th>Proposal to achieve gender equality for women academics during the pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.</td>
<td>Regardless of the laws that exist in the countries, universities should assume voluntary and ethical policies that promote equality between men and women professors.</td>
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<td>5.4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.</td>
<td>Universities should pay special attention and conduct a survey to know the number of women academics who care for minors and/or elder adults and do domestic work, especially during the pandemic. Based on this, specific actions can be proposed to balance their personal and professional-work lives.</td>
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<td>5.5. Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.</td>
<td>Universities should offer more spaces and opportunities for women academics to access leadership positions, and thus increase the number of women in political management positions in universities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.</td>
<td>Universities should also offer programs that can help women academics to improve their knowledge of new technologies that can be useful for their classes and research.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5c. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.</td>
<td>Besides the laws of each country, universities should incorporate their own policies to promote gender equality through recognition, training and education programs, among others, that allow women academics to become empowered professors.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries</th>
<th>Proposal to achieve gender equality for women academics during the pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1 By 2030 progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average</td>
<td>Universities should have equitable and fair salary bands for men and women academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 By 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or another status</td>
<td>Universities should promote the reduction of inequalities, beyond what is stipulated by law. Therefore, it is necessary to establish internal policies that promote the reduction of inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard</td>
<td>Universities should establish their own mechanisms to guarantee a coexistence that promotes equality among all members of the university community: professors, students, administrative staff and other interest groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation.

Table 4. Proposals for the fight for equality and reduction of inequality of academic women with regard to SDG 5 and SDG 10.
Despite the greater burden of work, care and household chores, many of the women’s stories have shown the normalization of the sex-gender binarism, which leads them to assume these greater burdens as a condition and with guilt. This is particularly evidenced in the naturalization of the unequal distribution of domestic work and the care of the elderly at home, as well as the attendance to virtual classes with their children during the pandemic.

The results of the study show that the perception of women academics from universities in Ecuador, Peru and Chile about gender inequity and inequality gaps has increased during the pandemic, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics, level of studies (with master’s and doctoral degrees) and type of work activity. There is no consensus about the role they play in their private spaces because some of them consider that their family members “have helped them” with unpaid work and that in the workplace, despite not having material support and being demanded without a gender perspective, they have been able to respond motivated, although stressed, to the new challenges.

In this context, women academics had to maintain a balance between their personal and work lives. Despite the high levels of stress and anxiety, they remained the pillars of their households and offered stability to their members. However, the greatest impact has been the little or no time they have had for applied research, development of publications and attendance at conferences. These activities have been totally relegated for 2 years now since the second anniversary of the pandemic will be in March 2022. Said activities were put on hold because they had to prioritize teaching and student care.

In terms of the response of the universities to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the academics stated that, in general terms, the university authorities responded by offering technical support in terms of resources such as computers, internet and, in some cases, training. However, they mentioned that they did not receive special consideration or special treatment for being women with small children or in charge of elderly adults. In fact, several academics even reported having lost direct family members due to COVID-19.

In this regard, the great challenge for the universities is to know the reality that women academics are currently living. It should be noted that to date the pandemic has not ended, classes are still virtual, and we are still living in a state of confinement almost two years after the beginning of the pandemic. Therefore, universities should implement some actions such as research groups where they can include women academics who wish to continue researching and who, due to the situation described above, have not had time to invest in research. The challenge of reducing inequalities within the academic sphere has become a challenging social responsibility program that can help reduce inequalities.

This study about the perception of women academics in the area of administration and trainers of leading professionals in three Latin American universities has revealed the need to propose policies within the universities to promote a culture with a gender focus. There is a need to include the gender perspective in the study plan; an inclusive STEM training (in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics); the creation of gender units or departments with effective power to sanction; promotion of research, creation of networks; alliances with the community; encouragement of leadership and female empowerment; and generation of spaces for women’s entrepreneurship.

Women academics, who are mostly found in pedagogical and administrative spaces and less often in research and power positions, are subordinated to
male-dominated institutional decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to work on the
gender approach considering the work of women academics so that they are aware
of their transformative role to move towards an equity and inclusion revolution.
Therefore, universities should propose internal institutional policies that, besides
the current laws, aim to understand the reality of women academics working in Latin
American universities. The need to work on the promotion of gender equity and the
elimination of inequality in the academic environment are great challenges for uni-
versities. If they succeed, women academics will promote in the classrooms a culture
of respect and appreciation of women’s work, in all social, economic and political
contexts and spheres.

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