

# The Sociology of a Covid-19 Virtual University

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## ABSTRACT

The precipitous closing of schools, universities, and colleges across the globe has impacted significantly on the teaching ecosystem. The COVID-19 pandemic has metamorphosed the academy radically. Notwithstanding this histrionic shift, the augmented teaching concomitant loads of online assessments, reconfiguration of teaching templates, research and student consultations, and academic advising has extended the workday beyond any universally accepted standards. This unrecognizable teaching milieu has impacted deleteriously on women in the academy. Socially constructed virtual COVID-19 classrooms expeditiously superseded the substitution of traditional face to face lectures. The demands for a remodeled university environment, novel teaching systems, and inventive conjectural methodologies propelled teaching and learning specialists to work assiduously.

The response to COVID-19 necessitated proficiencies in a cutting-edge technical experience together with complementing pecuniary and clerical capitals to support academics in virtual classroom deliveries. COVID-19 has demanded dexterities to compress academic content for virtual platforms. The failure to safeguard academics' individual private space has expedited irretrievable impairment on their physical and mental health. The destruction of work-life balance and unprecedented role overload imposed on women have heightened gender exploitation in the academy.

This paper embraces two meaningful teaching and learning approaches. The first is centered on first-hand COVID-19 classrooms. It assumes a qualitative desktop methodological approach, which examines the impact of virtual teaching and learning on academics at universities in COVID-19 virtual classrooms. The second is a clinical approach that measures seven universal performance areas that are noteworthy to aspects of teaching and learning approaches for academics. The outcomes of this study indicate the challenges experienced by women who undertake the responsibility to maintain exemplary academic standards. Within the analysis of scholarship and the formulation of a clinical model, this paper examines the impact of role overload and learning to teach virtually in a gendered virtual space. We seek to provide sociological

understandings and offer clinical interventions, deliberating the impact, complexities, challenges, and the position of women in the academy in these unprecedented times.

## **KEYWORDS**

Women, teaching, learning, academics, work overload, online, resources, challenges, virtual

## **Introduction**

On 1 March, 2020, patient zero arrived in South Africa after an Italian vacation with a group of friends. The COVID-19 zoonotic pandemic that began in Wuhan-China was proliferating worldwide at an unprecedented pace, claiming human lives indiscriminately.

Universities around the world are guided by existing enterprise risk management policies that outline carefully constructed responses and measures for student discontent, natural disasters, fire, security threats, and a multitude of associated risks. The absence of a pandemic enterprise risk management response at universities around the world has imposed unparalleled weight on academics. The pandemic has unrelentingly disordered every segment of the academy, with women experiencing the greatest burden.

This paper cognizes seven critical areas of significance in an attempt to understand gendered work in academia pre-COVID-19 and a response to COVID-19, considering significant guidelines and clinical interventions.

These include 1) Personal academic progression; 2) Teaching responsibilities; 3) Administrative duties; 4) Research efficiency and promotions; 5) Academic

advising of postgraduate students 6) Accessing research funding and 7) Community engagement. These seven areas exemplify a pervasive portion of the sociological scholarship, which deliberate intensifying intersections of a COVID-19 state of crises.

## **Personal Academic Progression**

The idiosyncratic strains have distorted the function of women academics, who have of late altogether imported their already excessive pre-COVID-19 workload into the familial personal space. The most significant lockdown challenge that women are experiencing is the act of balancing work and home, which has plagued academics for decades. It is not uncommon for women to work 20-hour days, to meet intensified academic demands. COVID-19 is recognized as an intersecting thread that binds women in embedded struggles.

While a limited portion of disengaged academics uses idem theoretical content repetitively, enthusiastic academics engage with critical, current, and decolonized sociological content, newly constructed for each academic semester. These academics initiated the semester with a set of lecture plans, aligned to the module templates of the course, making effective use of online

platforms (Moodle, Blackboard, Learn) prepared for the delivery and execution of a successful academic year.

The augmented responsibilities imposed excessive expectancies on academics forced into teaching on virtual systems with makeshift approaches for which they have not been adequately prepared. The responsibility foisted primarily on women has been rigorous. As a consequence, the procedure of best practice optimal 'online learning' strategies has yet to be identified, leaving academics scrambling for 'emergency online resources' (Petrie, Aladin, Ranjan, Javangwe, Gilliland, Tuominen & Lasse, 2020: 14).

The obligation to convert teaching and assessment models, reconfigure academic supervision models and amend critical research interventions have encumbered women in the academy. Within a space of two months, academics had to review and revise their curriculum delivery based on the precipitous changes on the cusp of lockdown. Ramnund-Mansingh and Seedat Khan (2020) have identified the gravity of gender inequity in the academy and its devastating impact on women in South Africa. The intellectual inventiveness has created extraordinary work-life challenges, with women experiencing disproportionate workloads. The gratuitous teaching workload and associated assessment template formulations have stretched the workday for women punitively.

The relocation into virtual COVID-19 blended approach classrooms has obliterated the fundamental separation between academic workspace and the solitude of academics' individual homes. The encroachment of the academy into

personal physical spaces intersects at personal and professional levels. This impact of this virtual university underpins epistemological shifts as academics are duty-bound to assume planning, assessment, coordination, development, teaching philosophies, and design of capricious Covid-19 classrooms. The COVID-19 pandemic and university responses around the world have failed to provide solutions that prioritize the historical marginalization of career trajectories of women in the academy. The failure to consider the systemic, entrenched patriarchal tradition in higher education is not surprising. Women's rights and equality have continuously been placed on the back burner in favor of prioritizing contemporary political, social, health, and economic emergencies. The arrival of COVID-19 has hurtled women into one of the most unprecedented exploitative labor configurations since the 1950's.

The work and time invested in content preparation have been voided as academics re-organize presentations, readings, and writing assessment activities. "*There are unparalleled opportunities for cooperation, creative solutions, and willingness to learn from others and try new tools*" (Doucet, Netolicky, Timmers, & Tuscano, 2020, p. 10). Assessments and traditional exams required realignment to blended methodologies to safeguard accurateness and authenticity of accurate online assessments and health safety COVID-19 protocols. Furthermore, academics are required to ensure students have cognized the module outcomes.

Female academics have been hit particularly hard during the COVID-19 lockdown as all indications point to career

stagnation for years to come, high levels of stress and possibly burnout, 20-hour days persist.

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Personal Academic Progression				
Pre-COVID-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender-Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Completion of PhD	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed deadlines.	Women experience role overload, making Ph.D. completion challenging.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Systematic processes prescribed by human resources, to facilitate completion.
Researcher Rating	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed deadlines.	Women experience role overload, making rating challenging.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Systematic processes prescribed by human resources, to facilitate rating with guidance and mentorship.
Promotion	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed deadlines.	Women experience role overload, making promotion requirements challenging. Familial responsibility, young children.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Systematic processes prescribed by human resources, to facilitate promotion with guidance and mentorship.
Fellowships	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed deadlines.	Women experience role overload, making travel for protracted periods challenging. Familial responsibility, young children.	Identify and deliver shorter fellowship experiences to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Equitable access among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Sabbatical	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed objectives outlined in the sabbatical agreement.	Women experience role overlap making travel for protracted periods challenging. Familial responsibility, young children.	Identify equitable among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Equitable access among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Increase Proficiencies	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed deadlines for proficiencies.	Requests for administrative tech support are overlooked.	Equitable response to requests and access to available funds for specialist skills and training.	Equitable access among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>

## Teaching Responsibilities

With just over 60 days of lockdown before universities resumed their curriculum, how well prepared were they? While private institutions transitioned with ease as their infrastructure was already in place for distance learning, having a sound technological foundation, students lost minimal time in the semester. Even months after re-opening, public universities contend with failed blended approaches and challenging data connectivity for students in public and private institutions. Aside from a technical infrastructure that is not complete while many rural areas are

without connectivity from the lack of cellular towers in these geographic regions, many South Africans simply cannot afford the exorbitant data costs. In assessing the successful continuation of the curriculum, researchers have failed to fully cognize the extensive challenges experienced by academics.

What thenceforth are the experiences of South African women in Social and Human Science faculties, where first-year level modules commonly include 1600 students. Women in the academy are overwhelmed by considerable teaching loads, particularly those of the substantial first-year modules

(Seedat-Khan, Ramnund-Mansingh & Johnson, 2020). The physical and now virtual teaching has evolved, demanding additional preparation time, advanced technological proficiencies, and intensified administration responsibilities. Academics skillfully executed first-year modules with 1600 students allocating them into four separate lecture areas contingent on the capacity at university. Online virtual teaching models allow academics to attend to all 1600 students in one virtual classroom.

The challenge lies in the delivery and response to overwhelming student support. South African university students frequently require support specifically in the context of English language proficiencies and understanding of academic content. These challenges intersect with student pandemic anxieties and place female academics under immeasurable difficulty to help students emotionally and academically.

Female academics are perceived as nurturing, maternal figures, and approachable as a source of academic support and guidance (Ramnund, 2019).

The impact of workloads both at home and paid work keeps women struggling to focus. *“Women are experiencing physical symptoms of severe anxiety and burnout at up to twice the rate of men. In the survey of 3,117 people conducted from 13 April to 17, women were two times more likely to report*

*symptoms like a racing heartbeat, problems sleeping, and feeling overwhelmed than men. Women are disproportionately feeling overwhelmed because they are disproportionately the ones working day and night to keep households afloat”* (Stieg, 2020).

A study (García-González, Torrano and García-González, 2020) conducted on female university professors who work at online universities attempted to examine the primary stress factors that women working as online university professors are exposed to that may lead to elevated levels of stress or burnout. This is a significant study, for academics faced with online teaching using a blended approach.

Mental fatigue and role ambiguity played a substantial role in their physical and emotional wellbeing. *“The lack of autonomy is another potential stressor the experts agreed upon. Specifically, it is viewed as a possible hazard because of the excessively rigid scheduling in online teaching and the bureaucratization of the evaluation systems that causes the pace of work to be imposed by the educational system instead of workers”* (García-González et al., 2020, p. 9).

This resulted in burnout, the physical manifestation of illnesses as well as back pain and visual fatigue.

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Teaching Responsibilities				
Pre-COVID-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender-Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Fulfill assigned teaching workload aligned to academic level ( <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> )	Increased workload on women at <i>Senior Lecturer; and Lecturer.</i>	Role overload, with associated administrative responsibilities. Time demands. Student support.	Establish a COVID-19 teaching response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Weekly virtual support meeting with constructive support on teaching challenges <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Measure student academic performance for each assigned module.	Online assessments and evaluations	Inundated with special requests from students. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 administrative response team, with additional human resources.	Subsidize funds for the employment of additional administrative, human resources.
Ensure quality proficiency independent student evaluations for each module. Time demands.	Online assessments and evaluations	Difficult to co-ordinate determined by virtual attendance. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 administrative response team, with additional human resources.	Subsidize funds for the employment of additional administrative, human resources.
Ensure quality proficiency independent peer evaluations for each module.	Online assessments and evaluations	Difficult to co-ordinate determined by the availability of senior academics. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 academic response team, with <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Minimum mandatory peer evaluations per semester.
Develop and design new academic content and programs.	Rationalization of academic programs.	Compromises innovation. Time demands.	Establish and support new areas of scholarship and expertise.	Identify teams of specialists to include <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Include efficient and relevant teaching methods.	Virtual Platforms	Role overload, increased demands for intricate proficiencies and dexterities. No physical contact.	Establish a COVID-19 academic information communication system support team, for <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Accessible information communication system support team, during teaching hours.
Include efficient and relevant use of technology.	Training for all academic staff; online assessments; online lectures, compression of data; online delivery and engagement.	Role overload, increased demands for intricate proficiencies and dexterities. No physical contact. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 academic information communication system support team, for <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Accessible information communication system support team, during teaching hours
Prescribed teaching templates	Modified assessment templates.	Administration imposed on women. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 administrative response team, with additional human resources.	Develop proficiencies among staff at <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Student Consultations	Increased student demands.	Inundated with special requests from students. Time demands.	Establish a COVID-19 academic response team, with <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Minimum mandatory consultations per semester.

## **Administrative responsibilities**

Sustained efforts to maintain and establish gender equity in the academy have been threatened by the onset of a pandemic via the formation of the COVID-19 virtual classroom. The unequal division of academic teaching and administrative workloads and associated undertakings remain the responsibility and added burden of women in the academy. This teaching workload has been exacerbated by the pandemic resulting in the creation of COVID-19 virtual classrooms all over the world. Women are burdened and exploited virtually and are required to “*manage the institutional housekeeping – i.e., committee*

*work, student recruitment, departmental social events”* (Swanson and Johnston, 2003, p. 3). Deep racial and ‘invisible’ gendered, patriarchal structural impairments function to denounce the distinctiveness of women academics. Academics work includes a measure of institutional housekeeping which “*represents the invisible and supportive labor of women to improve women’s situation within the institution much like unpaid domestic housekeeping typically performed by women in family units, institutional housekeeping is usually performed without resources or recognition”* (Bird, Litt and Wang, 2004, p. 195).

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Administrative Responsibilities				
Pre-COVID-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender-Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Fulfill administration aligned to academic level ( <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> ).	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed administration practice.	Increased administrative responsibility. Virtual operations; Absence of physical assistance and support.	Adhere to existing protocol for data protection.	Provide resources and training to deliver requests virtually. Provide additional administrative support.
Fulfill teaching administration responsibilities, academic counseling	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed administration practice.	Increased administrative responsibility. Virtual operations; Absence of physical assistance and support.	Adhere to existing protocol for data protection.	Provide resources and training to deliver requests virtually. Provide additional professional support.
Maintaining student records	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed administration practice.	Increased administrative responsibility. Virtual operations; Absence of physical assistance and support.	Adhere to existing protocol for data protection.	Provide resources and training to deliver requests virtually. Provide additional administrative support.
Administering teaching assistants	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed administration practice.	Increased administrative responsibility. Virtual operations; Absence of physical assistance and support.	Adhere to the terms and conditions of employment contracts	Provide resources and training to deliver requests virtually.
Chair and or membership and or representation on research, teaching, learning, national, international departmental role.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed committee obligations	Women underrepresented in management roles. Women overlooked for senior positions.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Initiate co-chairing with <i>Professor; Associate Professor;</i> to mentor <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Participation in examination and assessment processes and associated administration	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed augmented administrative obligations	Increased administrative responsibility. Virtual operations; Absence of physical assistance and support.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Provide resources and training to deliver requests virtually. Provide additional administrative support.
Serve on approved University Committees	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed committee obligations	Women underrepresented in management roles. Women overlooked for senior positions.	Establish a COVID-19 gender response support network to ensure equity among all staff at all levels. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Initiate co-chairing with <i>Professor; Associate Professor;</i> to mentor <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>



## Research Efficiency and Promotions

Promotions in the academic space are reliant on a sum of key performance areas, and the most significant is research and publication productivities.

The actuality of COVID-19 has augmented the drudgery for female academics, and the consequences are predicted to outlast the pandemic by decades.

It can be conjectured that the numbers of female academics reaching higher academic ranks, such as professorship, will be considerably decreased. The domino effect of the privation of publications will be excessively experienced.

*“Women have long been underrepresented in research, accounting for around 31 percent of coauthors on scientific papers between 2008 and 2017, according to an unpublished analysis by Sugimoto and colleagues”* (Zimmer, 2020).

Zimmer’s (2020) study conducted in the United States established a significant decrease in the number of women listed as first authors for publications dated March to May 2020.

With role overload from prodigious childcare and housework burdens, universities and funding bodies must take into consideration the gendered effect the pandemic has on research when making assessments on promotions and tenure (Matthews, 2020).

The negative resonant impact of the decreased publications will further entrench

women within the lowest academic ranks. Zimmer (2020) and Matthews (2020) studies corroborate the equivalent professional suicide that female academics are undergoing. Zimmer (2020) *“examined authors with typically male and female names on nearly 2,000 COVID-19–related medical studies and found that the proportion with female first authors was nearly 20 percent lower than for medical studies published in 2019”*. Matthews (2020) analysis concluded that globally 60,000 scientific journals confirmed a disturbing reduction in putative publications where female academics are identified as the first author.

The analysis cognizes trends from January to February between 2015 to 2020. There has been a steady increase of women publishing as first authors from 2015 with 31% to 2019 with 34%. Conversely, the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 led to the reconfiguration of universities. There has since been waning in the already low publications statistics authored by women. From 34% in February 2020, the numbers indicated a decline in the historical trends of previous years, which plummeted significantly to 26% in May 2020 (Matthews, 2020).

The negligible advancements secured over by in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) are expected to be impacted unfavorably as *“already existing underrepresentation of women in scientific research and impair women’s scientific careers as well as the quality of research”* (Zimmer, 2020). An add-on, research societies, and journal editors have established that scientific research submissions by male academics have remained unaffected, and submissions by

male academics have increased since COVID-19 safety protocol lockdowns and regulations have been implemented.

The publications or acceptance of papers from male academics in the health science faculties were reported as significantly high during the lockdown period.

*“Having more women researchers may be particularly important with COVID-19, a disease that is increasingly recognized as affecting men and women differently, Pinho-Gomes notes. If ‘women are not shaping the research response to the pandemic. . . there is a gendered lens through which we’re looking at [the coronavirus]’” (Zimmer, 2020).*

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Research Efficiency and Promotions				
Pre-COVID-19	Covid-19 Response	Gendered Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Research Productivity aligned to academic level ( <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> )	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed research productivity units.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to research participants and associated risk to familial household. Mobility determines financial responsibilities. Risk in relation to familial household.	Establish a COVID-19 research response support network. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Co- author with Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Weekly virtual support meeting with constructive support on publications in progress <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Professional profile in the academic fraternity.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to intensify their research profile.	Cancellation of local, national and international conferences. Loss of research funds.	Establish a COVID-19 research response support fund.	Subsidize lost research funds for <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i>
Guest/Editor of a scientific journal/book	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed research productivity units.	Existing academic networks determine opportunity and accessibility to scientific journals and books. Social distancing and virtual engagements further reduce opportunities. Limited networks of experts in the field.	<i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> , required to invite <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> as observers.	<i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> teamed with <i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> to submit a proposal for a <i>special edition journal</i> or a book based on a doctoral study.
Publication of journal articles/ book chapters	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed research productivity units.	Absence of mentorship and support. Social distancing and virtual engagements further reduce opportunities. Financial limitations and costs of publication and editing fees. Existing academic networks determine opportunity and invitations associated opportunities and requests.	Establish a COVID-19 research response support network. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Co- author with Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Weekly virtual support meeting with constructive support on publications in progress <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>
Academic Honors	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to exceed research productivity units.	Limited exposure to executive members of sociological associations; poor mentorship; lack of research funds compromise the ability of women to compete.	All <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> faculty must have subsidized membership to sociological associations.	<i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> teamed with <i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> to become active members of working groups and research committees.
Membership and Executive roles in local, national, continental and international Sociological Associations	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to maintain membership and pursue leadership roles.	Cost of annual membership; funded by research publications in scientific journals and books.	All <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> faculty must have subsidized membership to sociological associations.	<i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> teamed with <i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> become active members of working groups and research committees. Secure membership to a local organizing conference committee. Accept one executive role at a national level, graduating to an international executive role.
Academic local, national and international scientific partnerships.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to establish and formalize scientific partnerships.	Cost of attending meetings, conferences; funded by research publications in scientific journals and books. Impacts adversely on networking opportunities to establish partnerships.	Subsidize one national/international conference per annum for <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Membership to a research committee and attend all sessions to establish significant networks. Volunteer as a regional representative.
Academic mentorship	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to establish and formalize mentorship initiatives.	The absence of a formal mentorship process; debilitates career trajectory, academic growth and advancement.	Assign a mentor to every <i>Senior Lecturer and Lecturer.</i>	Contract between mentor and mentee with weekly meetings and communications.
Conference participation; Session chair; organizer; presenter; keynote speaker; conference committee.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to continue participating in conference at multiple levels.	Cost of attending meetings, conferences; funded by research publications in scientific journals and books. Impacts adversely on networking opportunities to attend and participate in academic meetings.	Subsidize one national/international conference per annum for <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Membership to a research committee and attend all sessions to establish significant networks. Volunteer as a regional representative. Participate in doctoral workshops.

## Academic Advising of Postgraduate Students

The multiplicity of gender, race and identity has been acknowledged within the COVID-19 classroom. It must be recognized that the experience of academics is not homogenous.

Literature unfailingly indicates gender differentiations in the way that academics experience their lives, as well as strategies they adopt to deal with issues of race, gender and identity (Gupta & Sharma, 2002; Johnsrud, 1995; Prozesky, 2006; Thorstad, 2006; Walker, 1998).

South African universities must urgently address gender inequities as they persist as traditionally male directed institutions (Boshoff, 2005, p. 359; Petersen & Gravett, 2000, p. 169; Walker, 1998, p. 340).

Walker (1998, p. 340) maintains “*gender is a critical analytical lens for viewing South African universities*” and “*it cannot be taken as a given that gendered relations outweigh racialized identities...but this is not to discount gender as a shaping practice in academic relations, for both Black and White women*”. Significant to this unaffected précis are structural and

cultural influences which allocate women to large classes while men escape these challenging responsibilities.

Internationally “*there is accumulating evidence of positive changes in the representation of academics in Higher Education*” (Boshoff, 2005, p. 360), generally, women, and Black women in particular, remain in lower levels of the overall hierarchy (Boshoff, 2005, p. 359; Petersen & Gravett, 2000, p. 169) and are often associated with the heaviest workloads (Department of Education, 1997, p. 141).

The allocation of honors research projects to women is common practice, senior academics shy away from this level of academic advising. The likelihood or possibilities of publications is negligible, with students requiring excessive attention, support and guidance.

Male academics are unquestionably favored as preferred recipients of masters and doctoral candidates; which present opportunities for scientific research publications associated with academic advising at advanced levels of study (Ramnund-Mansingh & Seedat-Khan, 2020).

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Academic Advising Of Postgraduate Students				
Pre-Covid-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Fulfill assigned supervision workload aligned to academic level (Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer)	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed supervision workload.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to research participants and associated risk to familial household of students. Mobility determined by financial resources of students.	Establish a COVID-19 supervision response support network. Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.	Weekly virtual support meetings with constructive support on supervision challenges in progress Professor; Associate Professor Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.
Graduate assigned masters and PhD students associated to academic level (Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer)	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed supervision workload.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to students that require face to face advising, learning disabilities and or physical disabilities and access to technology.	Flexible guidelines to accommodate unprecedented COVID-19 circumstances.	Suspended registrations, Limit the allocation of additional students.
Publish with PhD students to academic level (Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer)	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed supervision publication workload.	Advisors with limited publications and experience.	Establish a COVID-19 research response support network. Professor; Associate Professor; Co-supervise with Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.	Monthly virtual support meeting with constructive support on publication related supervision in progress Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.

## Accessing Research Funding

On a ‘regular’ day in pre-COVID-19 times, female academics faced insufferable discrimination in the uneven distribution of research funding (Bailey & Mouton, 2004). The role overload experienced has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Every negligible form of help that women require include schools, daycare, care givers and or domestic staff, were deemed non-essential services and inaccessible throughout lockdown. Subsequently lockdown levels were reduced, high-risk individuals with comorbidities were restricted from procuring support in the home. The routine academic workload as onerous and previously produced complex challenges on work life balance for women (Ramnund, 2019).

The pandemic imposed significantly complex weights. “A survey of about 4,500 principal investigators in the US and

*Europe in mid-April, which found that having a child under five was the biggest factor associated with a drop in research hours. Women were more likely than men to have young children, partly explaining why they reported a larger drop in research time”* (Matthews, 2020). Women contend with domestic roles, partners, elder care, child care and facilitate homeschooling in her 20-hour day. TUAC (2020) and (Matthews, 2020) substantiate women often begin engaging with academic writing, proposal formulation at 8pm. At this stage, exhaustion ceases any possibilities of meeting a funding deadline, and investing several hours preparing a suitable research proposal for consideration.

Teaching preparation, online activities and marking result in inadequate and irregular sleep over time. Working from home fast

becomes a seven-day work week in order to catch up with research funding backlogs.

In Austria, UK and Poland, parents can apply for leave without fear of any deleterious impact on their career trajectories in the academy, even if the leave is time constrained or unpaid. Conversely, associated imbalanced “*gender pay-gaps, women might be much more affected if decisions on unpaid leave have to be taken by families*” (TUAC, 2020: 8). In Japan, this was managed differently as financial support was introduced “to

*employers who let their employees take additional paid leave during Covid-19-measures*” (TUAC, 2020, p. 8). Aside from the domestic chores, the academic workload increased as everything needs to be amended and adjusted for online consumption.

The female academic needs to be a pillar of strength to her family, her partner, children and students who are also facing high levels of anxiety and uncertainty. With all of the responsibilities, how do female academics conduct research or publish?

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy: A Covid-19 Response				
Accessing Research Funding.				
Pre-Covid-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Secure research funding from local national and international donors. aligned to academic level <i>(Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer).</i>	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed areas of performance.	Funding limitations due to COVID-19 safety protocol, impacting on fieldwork and associated ethical requirements. Compromised existing grant agreements.	Flexible guidelines to accommodate unprecedented COVID-19 circumstances. Establish a COVID-19 academic information communication system research training Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.	Defer funding initiatives. Migrate to desktop, secondary research and or quantitative methods.
Proficiencies in grant applications aligned to academic level <i>(Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer).</i>	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed areas of performance.	Funding limitations due to COVID-19 safety protocol, impacting on fieldwork and associated ethical requirements. Compromised existing grant agreements.	Flexible guidelines to accommodate unprecedented COVID-19 circumstances. Establish a COVID-19 academic information communication system research training Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.	Defer funding initiatives. Migrate to desktop, secondary research and or quantitative methods.

## Community Engagement

Higher education institutions globally have identified community engagement as a key performance indicator for academics and strategic value for the institution in partnering with communities and industry.

According to the Carnegie framework, community engagement is defined as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Eckel, Hill and Green, 1998, p. 11).

It is mutually beneficial to all parties. However, the obstacles enlisted by COVID-19 has detrimentally impacted on this engagement and interaction. Limited interaction and support transpired on online platforms and universities took to outreach programmes during this difficult time for many.

Community engagement includes research projects for improvement or advancement. The global pandemic foiled plans of international travels, conference and scientific projects are at risk of non-completion.

Trends on the response to community engagement during COVID-19 have been “*a bit less than half of higher education institutions the impact of COVID-19 was positive – the crisis increased higher education institutions’ community engagement – whereas at a bit less than one third the impact was negative, decreasing higher education institutions’ community engagement activities*” (Marinoni and de Wit, 2020).

Academics have several roles to play expressly during COVID-19. However, it is encouraging to note that amidst these difficult times, specific academics continue to embark on these endeavors.

Clinical Considerations For Promoting Gender Equity In The Academy A Covid-19 Response				
Community Engagement				
Pre-Covid-19	Covid-19 Response	Gender Specific Challenges	Guidelines	Clinical Intervention
Provide Academic Professional service to a community of practice aligned to academic level ( <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> ).	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to community and associated risk to familial household. Mobility determined by resources and co-morbidities of academic.	Promote the Intellectual Project. Adhere to ethical standards.	<i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> to collaborate with ; <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> to provide mentorship and access to networks.
Delivery of consultation assistances to communities, business and industry that aligned to academic level ( <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> ).	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to community and associated risk to familial household. Mobility determined by resources and co-morbidities of academic.	Promote the Intellectual Project. Adhere to ethical standards.	<i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> to collaborate with ; <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> to provide mentorship and access to networks.
Occupy leadership positions in national or international sociology through consultation, policy development, reviews, and clinical interventions.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Limited exposure to executive members of sociological associations; poor mentorship; lack of research funds compromise the ability of women to compete.	Promote the Intellectual Project. Adhere to ethical standards.	<i>Professor; Associate Professor</i> to collaborate with ; <i>Senior Lecturer; Lecturer</i> to provide mentorship and access to networks.
Publish public intellectual opinion editorial pieces aligned to areas of specialization.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Absence of mentorship and support. Social distancing and virtual engagements further reduces opportunities. Existing academic networks determine opportunity and invitations associated opportunities and requests.	Establish a COVID-19 research response support network. <i>Professor; Associate Professor; Co- author with Senior Lecturer; Lecturer.</i>	Featured profiles of individual academic proficiencies and expertise accessible to the corporate affairs division of the university
Facilitate and establish relationships and research that advance the academic project for students, academics and university.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Access to global networks, require funds to participate in sociological forums, conferences and congress.	Promote the Intellectual Project. Adhere to ethical standards.	Provide mentorship and dexterities on developing a global presence in the sociological community.
Deliver key-note address within a sociological space.	No modifications; No concessions; Academics are required to meet prescribed practice.	Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing. Membership to local and global networks, require funds to participate in sociological forums, conferences and congress.	Promote the Intellectual Project. Adhere to ethical standards.	Featured profiles of individual academic proficiencies and expertise accessible to the corporate affairs division of the university



## Conclusion

According to Kelsky (2020), despite significant academic privileges, benefits, job security, and research and development opportunities, now is the time to explore innovative and diverse academic options. Women must, however, continue to navigate prejudiced conventions consistent with institutions embedded in patriarchy, reverberated by the intellectual dominance over women.

The fundamental institutionalized nature of gender, race, socio-economics and geographic location in the academy, has collectively impacted on women as a gendered sector. This is consistent for minority groups that are similarly underrepresented in human, social and health sciences at senior academic ranks. These include but are not limited to First Nations people in Canada, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Black populations around the world who are excessively affected by socio-economic factors associated with the pandemic. Sugimoto in Zimmer (2020) articulates that academics from minority populations are likely to experience a decline in research productivity, based on increased risk exposure resulting in them becoming sick or increased familial sick care responsibilities.

However, that validity requires a protracted period of time to determine specific empirically grounded reasons for the decline in publication outputs among minority women in the academy. Frederickson in Zimmer (2020) adds *“Having a diverse community of researchers at the table during the design of drug and vaccine trials and other*

*COVID-19 research “will allow you to get better and more complete results,”* while Taylor in Zimmer (2020) states, *“How I would approach recruitment for vaccine trials might be very different from someone else.”*

Women fought unremittingly to gain access into universities as intellectual equals; substantial advances are endangered by the expeditious COVID-19 teaching responses and transformations, in socially constructed virtual universities.

Prevailing gender, race and identity paradigms traverse at a professional level in the academy. This paper underlines significant variables of gender, race and identity intersections for academics, with a focus on women. Universities must authorize rationalizations to support and recognize marginalized women that continue to experience incongruences vis-à-vis recognition, permanent appointments, and challenges in their career trajectory to a professorship. Varied consequences of exertions to survive gender.

Specific challenges: inconsistent career advancement for different sociological areas of investigation have been noted in the literature as well as frustration, stress and long-term reductions in feelings of commitment to work.

*“Interruptions in continuity of employment and fractional contracts can work to exclude or hinder research activity, an area pivotal for higher progression. The issue that many models for allocating work exclude research from their calculations exacerbates this.*

*Additionally, this feeds off the expectations that research work is conducted after hours at home, a feature woman may find more difficult” (Barrett and Barrett, 2011, p. 141).*

Women have traditionally endured unremitting inequitable circumstances in the academic space (Ramnund-Mansingh & Seedat-Khan, 2020).

The traditional dominance of the preponderant old boys’ network efficaciously sustains a gendered bias environment.

The virtual COVID-19 classroom has expedited the assimilation of gender, race and academic identity intersections into the personal spaces of women in the academy, resulting in unprecedented workloads. This contributes to the uneven impacts of academia on the mental health of women, which has already been long recognized (Asakura and Chen, 1993).

The amplified workload, increased teaching related administration, strains to procure extensive virtual teaching proficiencies; and intricate virtual assessment dexterities, coupled with amplified demands from large numbers of students; have exposed the ubiquitous and unremitting suppression of women in the academy.

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