



*Journal of Advances and
Scholarly Researches in
Allied Education*

*Vol. IX, Issue No. XVIII,
April-2015, ISSN 2230-7540*

**A STUDY OF MAJOR ISSUES AND
CHALLENGES AGAINST WORKING WOMEN IN
SOCIETY AND WORKPLACE: A SOCIOLOGICAL
EXPLANATION**

AN
INTERNATIONALLY
INDEXED PEER
REVIEWED &
REFEREED JOURNAL

A Study of Major Issues and Challenges against Working Women in Society and Workplace: A Sociological Explanation

Dr. Madhu Tyagi*

Associate Professor, Department Of Sociology, BSA College, Mathura

Abstract – *There are numerous challenges which are faced by working women at a workplace on all the positional levels. The women who are working at ministerial level, they generally face the problem of harsh treatment, extended working hours, less number of leaves/holidays, low wages and insecurity because generally at ministerial level most of the employees are men. At the middle level women faces the challenges in terms of insecurity which is generally related to kind of output required which they are not able to deliver due to diverse commitments towards family and society. At the higher level, women face the challenges related to tasks, accomplishments, greater responsibilities towards the organization and their flexible working hours.*

In all the three levels of women, there are few factors which enhance their challenges of working at a particular workplace like environmental effect, socio-cultural effect, and senior-subordinate relationship (if there is gender difference between senior and subordinate).

The main purpose of this paper is to comprehend the problems and issues faced by working women in Indian society. The aim is also includes identifying the key socio-economic and others significance aspects contributing to women's status, safety and security, and to study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for improving of family, community and society.

----- X -----

INTRODUCTION

It is very general with working women that gender biases and discrimination or some harassment (physical & mental) against them starts right from the initial stage of recruitment. Several studies showed that most of the Indian men are not ready to accept that women are capable enough to work side by side with men in all the sectors, other than in a few limited ones like teaching, nursing and in clerical sectors. Their capabilities are generally underestimated as a result of which Indian women have a tendency to opt for less demanding jobs even if they are highly qualified. Women have the responsibilities to effectively manage their multiple roles in 9 domestic as well as professional lives. Men generally do not offer any help in the households work. This makes the life of working women extremely stressful.

In the history of human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact higher status for women vis-à-vis employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. Undoubtedly, without the active participation of women

in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will deteriorate and become stagnant. But ironically and tragically, women employees in general, are not taken very seriously by their superiors, colleagues, or society at large. Having a career poses challenges for women due to their family responsibilities. Traditionally Indian women had been home makers but in the recent decades, proper education and better awareness, in addition to the ever increasing cost of living has made them to go out and choose careers. In a patriarchal society like India it is still believed that a man is the primary bread winner of his family. Although Indian women have started working outside their homes but still they have a long way to go both culturally, socially and economically, to bring in positive attitudinal changes in the mind-set of people.

Women excel in all fields including space exploration and rocket science also apart from other fields. Women play a vital role in economic development of the country and their contribution is nothing short of their male counterparts. However there are still several issues and problems that women face today. Sometimes, they are not treated equally in their workplace and are considered as inferior to their male

co-workers. In some cases they do not get the same benefits as that of a male employee. The major issues and problems that women face in their work places includes unequal pay, security, sexual harassment, lack of proper family support, deficient maternity leave, etc.

The world of business today is very different from the world of business fifty years ago. Advances in technology plus the evolving work and family roles of women in this country have contributed to the business environment of the 21st century. The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming raise day by day. The sky rocketing cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up even careers that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts in call centers or BPOs. Today women are also employed in male-dominated fields such as law, professional sports, the military, law enforcement, firefighting and top-level corporate positions. Working women today spend less time maintaining the household then they did 30 years ago.

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. It has been anticipated that to fulfill multiple roles simultaneously would result in increased stress and hence women are facing competition and challenges at workplace, home and society.

Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the more harder. They have to take up a full day job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker... If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. They have to handle harassment's at their work place, sometimes just over look things to ensure that their job is not jeopardized in anyway. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband.

The belief of male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work. Women on the way up the corporate ladder discover that they must be much better than their male colleagues to reach the top. Once at the top male colleagues and subordinates often expect much greater expertise and efficiency from a woman boss than from a male boss. Conditioned by social and psychological tradition women colleagues too don't lend support to their own sex. Working in such conditions inevitably put much greater strain on

women than what men experience. These problems tend to make women less eager to progress in their careers. It has been observed through various literature reviews that when family responsibilities expand, mothers are more likely than fathers to change jobs, to work part-time, or exit the labor force for a spell because families cannot afford to lose fathers' wages. The result is often a decrease in mothers' financial and occupational attainment. This again creates unnecessary stress for losing the job for most of the women.

Traditionally, women have generally been more hesitant when it comes to financial investments. They are more cautious when it comes to money. The new women investment clubs take the fear out of investing for women. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world is popular saying about women. Saving is a habit specially embodied to women. Even in the past, when mainly depended on their spouse's income, they used to save to meet emergencies as well as for future activities. In those days, women did not have any awareness about various investment outlets. But as time passed, the scenario had totally changed. Working women had great potential to bring a positive change in socio economic conditions of the country. Now, the present women, who is equally employed, through their education have knowledge about various aspects of investment and as a result they invest in various investment avenues such as shares, debentures, mutual funds, commodities, gold and bank deposits.

In the history of human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact higher status for women vis-à-vis employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. There are many reasons and problems that forced Indian's women to work. The financial demands on the Indian families are increasing day by day. Cost of living, expenses on education of children, and cost of housing properties in India raised and these reason force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up even careers that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts.

Working women i.e., those who are in paid employment, face problems at the workplace just by virtue of their being women. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. The attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not others, causes prejudice in those who recruit employees. Thus women find employment easily as nurses, doctors, teachers, secretaries or on the assembly line. Even when well qualified women are available, preference is given to a male candidate of equal qualifications. A gender bias creates an obstacle at the recruitment stage itself.

When it comes to remuneration, though the law proclaims equality, it is not always practiced. The inbuilt conviction that women are incapable of handling arduous jobs and are less efficient than men influences the payment of unequal salaries and wages for the same job. But in most families her salary is handed over to the father, husband or in-laws. So the basic motive for seeking employment in order to gain economic independence is nullified in many women's case. Problems of gender bias beset women in the industrial sector when technological advancement results in retrenchment of employees.

Women workers in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other countries. Besides of so many efforts from past years, female section of society is deprived in compared to male section. They are not given first priority in social and economic decisions in her own family. According to United Nations Development Programmer (UNDP) report, women are involved in doing 67% work of world; still they are socially and economically deprived. They are receiving only 10% of the universal income and have 1% part in global assets. This discrimination also persists in their work place in unorganized sector. In informal sector, women workers don't get same wages for same nature of work for same hours done by men. They are exploited at workplace.

They are some acts i.e. The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act, 2010 etc. but due to their improper implementation, women workers are forced to work and live in miserable conditions in unorganized sector.

In India mostly it is women who have to do household as cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, care of children and men do not share on most of the household works. Men do that work that is to be dealt outside the house. Now a day there is increasing need for getting some income for the family then women have to work harder. Women workers have to handle Persecution's at their work place, sometimes just over look things to ensure that their job is not jeopardized in anyway.

Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband. Listen to their complaints that they make against her and turn deaf ears towards them and so on. Overall, majority of women in India look towards or live in the hope that things will change.

PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA:

Occupational problems as stress-

In women Occupational stress is stress involving work. Work and family are the two most important aspects in women's lives. Balancing work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue for many societies. There are many facets in working mother's lives that subject to stresses. They deal with home and family issues as well as job stress on a daily basis.

World Health Organization's (WHO) definition-

Occupational or work-related stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."

Reasons of occupational stress-

Imbalance between work and family leads to occupational stress. Imbalance between work and family life arises due to a number of factors. Various factors are following.

1. **Mental harassment** - It is an age old convention that women are less capable and inefficient in working as compared to men. The attitude which considers women unfit for certain jobs holds back women. In spite of the constitutional provisions, gender bias creates obstacles in their recruitment. In addition to this, the same attitude governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job. The true equality has not been achieved even after 61 years of independence. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career.
2. **Sexual harassment** - Today, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and the types of their employment. They face sexual harassment on way on transports, at working places, educational institutions and hospitals, at home and even in police stations when they go to file complaints. It is shocking that the law protectors are violating and outraging modesty of women. Most of the women tend to be concentrated in the poor service jobs whereas men are in an immediate supervisory position, which gives them an opportunity to exploit their subordinate women.
3. **Discrimination at Workplace**-However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. They are often deprived of promotions and growth opportunities at work places but this doesn't apply to all

working women. A majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay, under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and are underpaid in comparison to their male colleagues. This is usually the case in factories and labor-oriented industries.

4. **No Safety of Working Women While Traveling** - Typically, the orthodox mindset in the Indian society makes it difficult for a working woman to balance her domestic environment with the professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to work after six o'clock. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety every day about a woman's safety while traveling. So many issues affect a working woman because she is closely protected or watched by her family and the society.
5. **Lack of Family Support** - Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion.
6. **Insufficient Maternity Leaves** - Insufficient maternity leave is another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives.
7. **Job insecurity** - Unrealistic expectations, especially in the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes puts unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employee, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload extremely long work hours and intense pressures to perform at peak levels all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stressors.
8. **Workplace Adjustment** - Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be lesson of life. Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

9. **Other reasons** - it include Personal demographics like age, level of education, marital status, number of children, personal income and number of jobs currently had where you work for pay and Work situation characteristics like job tenure, size of employing organization, hours worked per week.

GENERAL PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

Though employment has a positive effect on the minds of women and their families but still they encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace, home and society.

- i) The major problem faced by women is stress caused by role conflict or multiple roles. Women generally do multiple roles like managing work at their organization, manage family at home and fulfill other obligations towards the society. Working women face a big dilemma in managing work-family conflicts. Working women with rigid schedules report more family difficulties than working women with flexible schedules. These problems arise due to the time-constraints a working women has while fulfilling the obligations towards their family and work.
- ii) Insufficient maternity & paternity leaves are another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives.
- iii) Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion.
- iv) Poor security is another major issue that women face in the workplaces. Women working in corporate sector and other private organizations mostly fall victim of various crimes at workplace and this is due to lack of security provided to the employees.
- v) Existing studies on women's work-life balance efforts have generally excluded women in senior positions. They are not being rewarded for their endless efforts. It has been observed from various literatures that women are paying with low salaries in comparison to men. Unequal pay is another issue that women face at their workplace. Even though, women prove to be more efficient than male employees most of the time, they are not paid equally. This

creates depression and demotivation among women leads to conflict in work –family, and deterioration in their work performance. It leads to gender imbalances which are still prevailing at the workplace even though this point of discussion has been highlighted in various seminars and conferences.

- vi) The discrimination that women face in the society has its roots in homes. It's not just a few individuals who criticize women who are going out for work but the entire society, especially where a woman is a victim of social taboos like issues related to religion, status symbol, managing at home, take care for their in-laws, family enhancement, child care etc.
- vii) Despite the technological powers of India's engineers and outsourcing firms, the country's basic infrastructure isn't sophisticated enough to support telecommuting and work-from-home arrangements on a widespread basis.
- viii) Sexual harassment is a major issue that women face at their workplace and many women fall victim of sexual harassment at workplace. At times employers try to take sexual favors from women employee in return of other benefits and promotions.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data-

The questionnaire was given to 200 samples. Data was collected from 200 women working of private and public sector including schools, hospital, colleges and also other companies. Non probabilities sampling techniques was used. The various tests like percentage analysis, correlation, weighted average method. Questionnaire was used to collect the details from working women. In questionnaire question include profile details, work-family conflict details, and organizational satisfaction details.

Secondary data –

Reviews 's were collected from various journals, magazines like Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Journal of Social Psychology, European Journal of Business & Management. The model used for study is conceptual model

Findings -

1. Percentage Analysis

- Majority of working women under the age group of 25-35 years

- 83% of working women were married and remaining unmarried. Out of 83% 75.5% of them have children.
- The working women belongs to nuclear family were 67%
- 30.7% of Married Women having satisfaction to spend time to read, magazines and newspaper etc.
- Women working in public sector having more organization satisfaction than private sector.
- The leading cause of stress arises because of communication with superior.
- 18% of respondents having salary above 20000 having servant in their home.
- 60% of the respondents completed graduation
- 58% of the respondents having ability to balances work and family.
- 39% of women having working experiences of 1-3 year.
- 43.5% of women spend half an hour for travelling.
- Majority of working women having pay scale of 5000-10000.
- 57% of working women manage stress by involving in various entertainment activities.
- Only 13% of respondents highly satisfied to cancel plan with spouses or parents when they have to work late.
- Among 200 respondents only 17% having satisfaction to make spouses/parents to accept job demand.
- Only 7% of respondents strongly agree that they talk up to superior when they deserve promotion.
- 9.5% of respondents accept any type of job.

2. Weighted Average Method.

- Organization satisfaction factor provides job performance award have more priority.

- According to weighted average method the work-family conflict factor spend time dependent have more priority.

3. Correlation Analysis

- There was significant relationship between working hours and stress.
- There was no significant relationship between working hours and time spend on reading magazines and newspapers.

4. Chi-Square Analysis

- There was no association between training provided and ability to balance work and family.

CONCLUSION

It was observed that different women have different perception of their needs, fears, frustrations etc. Some are happy with their jobs; some are frustrated because of harassment, both mental and physical; some women have a good job environment; some are highly depressed because of issues with their colleagues, both male and female. One interesting fact that was revealed was that those women who are more beautiful or have enough good personality and can carry themselves in a good way; people instantly draw a particular conclusion about their character that is highly negative. They think about her in a wrong way and assume that those women having a friendly kind of nature inside workplace male member generally think that kind of objects for them they can do anything with her. Some male members who are highly qualified and holding a high position, but are highly frustrated because of job stress or for some other personal reasons for their own, sometimes they behave appropriately with junior women employees in front of others but covertly harass these women for satisfying their own anger and frustration. One type of stereotyped thinking that still persists is whether women, who are crossing the four walls of their homes for jobs, are capable enough to compete with others, and at the same time appropriately balance between family and professional life. So the question arises as to why only women have to balance both lives, and why women have all these burdens thrust on them.

The problems are faced not only by the lower level of the employees but also higher level. The research I have reviewed in this report provides an empirical justification for innovative policy development includes long work hours and work-life conflict. The overall conclusion is that long-term exposure of workers to excessive work hours and high levels of work-to-family interference elevates their risk of mental and physical health problems.

REFERENCES

- Andal N. (2002). Women and Indian society: Options and constraints. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Anderson A. K. (2005). Affective influences on the attentional dynamics supporting awareness. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 134, 258–281. doi:10.1037/0096-3445.134.2.258
- Arnove R. F., Torres C. A. & Franz S. (Eds.). (2012). *Comparative education: The dialectic of the global and the local*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Borooah V. K. & Iyer S. (2005). Vidya, Veda, and Varna: The influence of religion and caste on education in rural India. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 41(8), pp. 1369-1404.
- Chhaochharia Sweta (2006). *Targeting Women: A Financial Perspective*.
- Dashora (2013). Problems Faced by Working Women in India. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 2(8), pp. 82-94.
- Donald Copper, Pamela Schindler (2003). *Business Research Method .The M Graw-Hill Irwin Series in Operations & Decision Sciences Business Statistic*, McGraw-Hill Education, 12.
- Karl M. (2009). Inseparable: The Crucial Role of Women in Food Security Revisited. *Women in Action*. No.1, 2009, pp. 8-19.
- Kumari V. (2014). Problems and Challenges Faced by Urban Working Women in India. *A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences*, (1).
- Murthy G. K. (2012). Women and Corporate Leadership- in Indian Perspectives. *IRACST International Journal of Research in Management & Technology*. 2(4) pp. 377-382.
- Rustagi P. (2010). Employment trend for women in India. *International labor organization Asia Pacific working paper series*. (1), pp. 1-40.
- Shyamalie H. W. & Saini A. S. (2011). *Socio-economic Status and Livelihood Security of Women in the Hills of India and Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Readworthy.
- Singh S. & Hoge G. (2010). Debating Outcomes for 'Working' Women – Illustration from India, *The Journal of Poverty*, 14 (2), pp. 197-215.

Corresponding Author

Dr. Madhu Tyagi*

Associate Professor, Department Of Sociology, BSA
College, Mathura

E-Mail – tyagidra@gmail.com