

An Analytical study of the Plight of working Women in Bengaluru

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Abstract: The entry of women into labour markets has been a significant change in the Indian context. The individual and collective productivity has risen because of the same. The employment of women has been a panacea for the various economic, social, individual and psychological problems. As the women take on the role of working professional in addition to their traditional role of the homemaker, they are under great pressure to balance their work and personal lives. This study attempts to introspect as to how the work and family related factors impact the women health in case of employed women in Bengaluru.

Keywords: Rights, Empowerment, Education

Introduction

Work and family are the two most important domains in a study for researchers world-wide. There is a felt need to balance and integrate family needs and career requirements and research in the field of work family interface has increased dramatically in the past two decades. The changing social structures arising out of dual career couples, single parent families, an increasing number of parents with dependent care responsibilities for children, and ageing parents have all contributed to increasing research in the area of work life balance. There is a glaring under representation of samples from developing economies in the research literature on work and family.

Indian families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization and modernization. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. At the present time, Indian women's exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago, especially in the urban setting. This has opened new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth. This, along with economic pressure, has been instrumental in influencing women's decision to enter the work force. Most studies of employed married women in India have reported economic need as being the primary reason given for working.¹²

Women's employment outside the home generally has a positive rather than negative effect on marriage. Campbell *et al.*³ studied the effects of family life on women's job performance and work attitudes. The result revealed that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children; contrary to expectation, women with younger children outperformed women with older children. Makowska⁴ studied psychosocial determinants of stress and well-being among working women. The significance of the work-related stressors was evidently greater than that of the stressors associated with the family function, although the relationship between family functioning, stress and well-being was also significant.

The concept of work-life balance has gained increasing attention over the 20th century, largely due to shifts in perspective on societal gender roles and a subsequent increase in the number of women who have entered the workforce. In a transitioning society like India, where the traditional roles of women as homemakers and caretakers are deeply entrenched,

¹Srivastava V. New Delhi: National Publishing House; 1978. Employment of educated women in India; its causes and consequences.

²Ramanna A, Bombawale U. Transitory status images of working women in modern India. *Indian J Soc Work.* 1984;45:189–202.

³Campbell DJ, Campbell KM, Kennard D. The effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of non professional women. *J Occupa Organ Psych.* 1994;67:283–96.

⁴Maskowska Z. Psychosocial characteristics of work and family as a determinant of stress and well-being of women: A preliminary study. *Int J Occup Med Environ Health.* 1995;8:215–22

the work family balance becomes a challenge for women and their employers. Over the last decade, Indian society has witnessed a surge in the participation of women in the workforce.

Table 1 Themes, Categories and Dimensions Concerning Workfamily Balance of Women IT Professionals in India

Theme	Category	
Familial influences on life choices	Role models Life decisions	Father and brother Education Career Marriage Children
Multi-role responsibilities and negotiating them	Role conflict	Taking care of the children Taking care of dependent parents orparents-in-lawBeing a homemaker
Self-identity	Work-identity Hierarchy of role identities Family identity	Hierarchy of role identities
Work life challenges and coping strategies	Nature of the industry Working hours Prioritising commitments Tight deadlines Personal self-management	Working hours Tight deadlines Setting priorities in work and family Pursuing life interests
Organisational policies and practices	Workfamily programmes Flexible working hours Women friendliness	Flexible working hours Child-care facilities Working from home
Social support	Family/spouse support Instrumental Domestic help Emotional Supervisor/co-worker support	Instrumental Emotional

(Source: Srinivasan, R. V. (2011). *Workfamily balance of Indian women software professionals: A qualitative study*. IIMB Management Review, 39-50).

Significance Of The Study

In the modern period, gender equality is highlighted in society and many of the government schemes are also formed to achieve gender equality at the national level. Globalization and liberalization increased the opportunities for education and employment for Indian women. As such, there is increase in status for working women. Even due to their earnings, they have higher standard of living and economic security. Socially the working women are recognized. But on the other hand, they have working roles both in family as well as in office or workplace. As such, the work burden of working women compared to housewives is increased and there is lack of availability of sufficient time for working women to look after both office as well as family. Hence, working women are increasingly facing the problems of health. In this way, their health is neglected, even though socio-economic status and equality is achieved in the society. Hence, the present study is proved significant to assess the health status and well-being of working women in the city of Bangalore.

Review Of Literature

Srinivasan (2011) attempts to understand how work and family related factors influence the workfamily balance of Indian women IT professionals. The study is based on an exploratory qualitative study of 13 women IT professionals in the software sector in Bangalore, India. The narratives reveal six major themes: familial influences on life choices; multi-role responsibilities and attempts to negotiate them; self and professional identity; worklife challenges and coping strategies; organizational policies and practices; and social support(**Srinivasan, 2011**).

Problems Faced By Working Women In India

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. In order to achieve success in corporate sector, women feel that they must do better than their male colleagues. This leads to higher expectations and efficiency by their bosses and subordinates. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career.

No one thinks of upgrading their skills with technological advancement which makes it easy to terminate woman's employment and hire other persons. Maternity leave is seldom given. Women's issues do not occur on the priority list of

most of the trade unions. Traditionally women are seen as the house-keepers and child bearers. A woman could still bear up with these problems if she controls over money that she earns but in most cases, their salary is handed over to father, husband or in laws. Therefore, main purpose for seeking employment to get independence is nullified in many cases. The story doesn't end here. Sexual harassment, which was an invisible problem until quite recently, has now become a major social problem with the widespread entry of women in to the labor force.

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, 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. Public transport system is overcrowded and women become easy targets for physical harassment. 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. It is a difficult situation for woman if the higher officer demands sexual favours.

If refused the boss takes out other means to make her life miserable. There have been several cases of sexual harassment recently involving even the senior women officials. If a woman is praised for her work or promoted on merit, her colleagues do not hesitate to attribute it to sexual favours. This psychological pressure can easily lead to a woman resigning from her job. In our society, most cases of sexual abuse go unreported because of the trauma and the social stigma attached to it. In the recent past, various guidelines, resolutions have been made to broaden the definition of sexual exploitation.

There must be gender equality which includes protection from harassment and right to work with dignity. Sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is incompatible with her dignity and needs to be eliminated. Appropriate steps must be taken by employers or persons in charge of workplaces, public or private sector, to ensure safe working atmosphere for women. Appropriate work conditions must be provided in respect of work, health and hygiene to further ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women at workplaces. If we want to see a society free of sexual harassment, there is need of changing the mindset of the society. Simply enacting laws is not sufficient. So, the political structure should be altered to achieve the goal.

3. Discrimination at Workplace

However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. A major problem faced by the working women is sexual harassment at the work place. Further, women employees working in night shift are more vulnerable to such incidents. Nurses, for example, face this problem nearly every day. There is nothing that is done in hospitals to tackle and address the danger they face. Such blatant disregard of current Indian laws is one reason why sexual harassment at the workplace continues to increase.

Also, Indian women 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. 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. According to survey conducted by ASSOCHAM, on 1000 women professionals, around 80 per cent of the households expect their daughters-in-law to prioritize household requirements over the official work. Further, many of them are physically and psychologically abused, by their in-laws and husband but they do not complain or let others know about it, particularly if they have children.

Methodology

a. Research Methods used

The study used Descriptive, analytical and survey methods.

b. Sampling

i. Universe/ Population/ Sampling Frame

All the working women in the city of Bengaluru

ii. Category of Respondents

1. Random samples selected from among the working women in the city of Bengaluru

c. Data collection

i. Primary interactions

The primary data have been collected with the help of posing questions.

ii. Secondary information sources

The secondary data have been collected with the help of books, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, reports and internet information.

d. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed with the help of graphs and tables for the responses given by the respondents.

Analysis And Interpretation Of Data

Table 1 Basic Information about the Respondents

(N=60)

Sl. No	Characteristics	Variations	Number	Percentage
1	Age	21-30 years	19	31.67
		31-40years	16	26.67
		41-50years	13	21.67
		51-60years	12	20.00
2	Family Life Cycle Stages	Full Nest I(child<10yrs)	13	21.67
		Full Nest II(child >10 &<18yrs)	15	25.00
		Full Nest III(child >18yrs)	17	28.33
		Empty Nest	10	16.67
		Others	5	8.33
3	Family Type size	Nuclear- 1 to 4 members	26	43.33
		Joint – 5 to 9 members	19	31.67
		Joint-10 to 14 members	15	25.00
4	Educational qualifications	SSLC/School	23	38.33
		Graduation	17	28.33
		Post- Graduation	11	18.33
		Professional & higher	9	15.00
5	Employment	Private firms employment/Schools/ Colleges/Clinics	19	31.67
		Business/Law/Medical/Accountancy	17	28.33
		Others self-employed/Agency/Broker.	14	23.33
6	Disposable Income per month(Rs.)	More than Rs.50,000	11	18.33
		Rs.25,000/- to 50,000/-	14	23.33
		Rs.15,000/- to 25,000/-	16	26.67
		Rs.5,000/- to 15,000/-	19	31.67
7	Residence	Self- owned house	21	35.00
		Rented house	16	26.67
		Self - owned Apartment/Villa	11	18.33
		Rented Apartment/Villa	12	20.00
8	Religion	Hinduism	20	33.33
		Christianity	17	28.33
		Muslim/Islam	12	20.00
		Other religious beliefs	11	18.33

The basic information about the sample respondents is collected regarding the socio-economic details . The data collected indicates that 31.67% of the respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years. The demographic dividend in the age group of

25-35 is the ones constituting the majority of the total. The family life cycle stage indicates that 21.67% of the respondents have child below 10 years indicating the necessity of the baby sitting to the respondents. 16.67% of the respondents still do not have children. About four-tenth of the respondents have nuclear families. One-fourth of the respondents have joint families in the range of 10-14 members. The Educational qualification indicates that 38.33% of the respondents are less qualified indicating the employment in the unorganized and informal sectors. 15% of the respondents are professionally qualified. About three-tenth of the respondents are working in the private sector firms.

31.67% of the respondents have the disposable income in the range of Rs.5,000- to Rs.15,000.18.33% of the respondents have disposable income in the range of Rs.25,000 to Rs. 50,000. About one-third of the respondents are in the self –owned house. The representation from across all the religion is found.

Table 2 Points of Difference between men and Women

Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SD
Communicate	21(35.00)	17(28.33)	16(26.67)	4(6.67)	2(3.33)
Deal in relationships	24(40.00)	19(31.67)	10(16.67)	6(10.00)	1(1.67)
Express their feelings	23(38.33)	16(26.67)	12(20.00)	5(8.33)	4(6.67)
React to stress	19(31.67)	18(30.00)	13(21.67)	7(11.67)	3(5.00)

The gender differences between men and women are very common and evident. The data was collected from the respondents regarding the four items including the communication, dealing with the relationships, expressing their feelings and the way they react to the stress. Majority contend that there exists the difference among the identified variables.

Table 3 Attributes of Gender differences

Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Physical	21(35.00)	19(31.67)	13(21.67)	5(8.33)	2(3.33)
Physiological	22(36.67)	17(28.33)	11(18.33)	6(10.00)	4(6.67)
Psychological attribute	24(40.00)	19(31.67)	10(16.67)	4(6.67)	3(5.00)

The attributes of gender differences indicates that majority of the respondents have agreed upon the physical, physiological and psychological attributes among the men and women.

Table 4 Experience of the disorders experienced

Statement	To Full Extent	To Great Extent	To Moderate Extent	To Small Extent	Not At All
Symptoms of depression	19(31.67)	18(30)	12(20.00)	7(11.67)	4(6.67)
Anxiety	25(41.67)	17(28.33)	11(18.33)	5(8.33)	2(3.33)
Unspecified Psychological distress	27(45.00)	19(31.67)	10(16.67)	3(5.00)	1(1.67)
Common Mental Disorders (CMDs)	19(31.67)	17(28.33)	12(20.00)	8(13.33)	4(6.67)
Somatic complaints	22(36.67)	18(30.00)	14(23.33)	4(6.67)	2(3.33)

The question regarding the experience of the disorder experienced by the sample respondents are recorded. Depression is contended to have been experienced by about 61.67% of the respondents. 20% of the respondents have indicated to the moderate extent. Anxiety and Psychological distress is turned down by the respondents in the range of 1.67% -3.33%.

Table 5 Life stressors

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Childbirth	23(38.33)	16(26.67)	13(21.67)	5(8.33)	2(5.00)
Maternal Roles	24(40.00)	18(30.00)	12(20.00)	4(6.67)	2(3.33)
Caring and Nurturing The Old	20(33.33)	17(28.33)	13(21.67)	6(10)	4(6.67)
Looking After the sick in the family	19(31.67)	18(30.00)	14(23.33)	8(13.33)	1(1.67)

The life stressors are identified for collecting the information from the sample respondents. Childbirth brings with it the physical, psychological and personal attention of the women. The same is strongly agreed upon by 38.33% of the respondents. The maternal roles causing stress is contended by 30% of the respondents. Taking care of the old as a stressor is turned down by 16.67% of the respondents.

Table 6 Woman-A Life Cycle of Vulnerabilities

Statement	TFE	TGE	TME	TSE	NTL
Feelings of Disruption	23(38.33)	19(31.67)	12(20.00)	4(6.67)	2(3.33)
Loss	22(36.67)	18(30.00)	14(23.33)	5(8.33)	1(1.67)
Guilt	21(35.00)	16(26.67)	13(21.67)	7(11.67)	3(5.00)
Frustration	22(36.67)	17(28.33)	15(25.00)	4(6.67)	2(3.33)
Grief	20(33.33)	16(26.67)	14(23.33)	6(10.00)	4(6.67)
Fear about the Future	19(31.67)	18(30.00)	15(25.00)	5(8.33)	3(5.00)

Women tend to exhibit the disturbances more than the men. The disruption as a vulnerability is agreed upon to impact to a full extent by 38.33% of the respondents. Feeling of loss is opined to impact to a moderate extent by 23.33% of the respondents. Over six-tenth of the respondents, find that guilt impact is considerable in the case of the women. Grief is opined by the ten percent of the respondents to impacting to a small extent. Only five percent express that fear about the future as non-impacting.

Table 7 Strategies to improve the social status of women

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Remove gender disparities	23(38.33)	17(28.33)	11(18.33)	6(10.00)	3(5.00)
Provide economic and political power	23(38.33)	19(31.67)	12(20.00)	5(8.33)	1(1.67)
Increase awareness of their rights	22(36.67)	17(28.33)	13(21.67)	6(10.00)	2(3.33)
Movements to curb prostitution, sexual abuse and domestic violence	25(41.67)	16(26.67)	11(18.33)	5(8.33)	3(5.00)

The social status of women in India needs a facelift. 38.33% of the respondents contend strongly on the removal of Gender disparities. Seventy percent have expressed the need for the economic and political power. The awareness about the rights to the women can bring down the undue pressure that they undergo in certain circumstances.

Recommendations Conclusions

Related to the challenges and problems faced by working women drawn from the analysis of responses

1. Professional women feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life on the other.
2. Women are discriminated against in all walks of life.
3. Women are subjugated, dominated and exploited both at work places and home.
4. Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to households, kids and family.
5. Working women generally face workplace sexual harassment, mental pressure, and safety issues.
6. Females are also highly judgmental about other female colleagues and try to put one at any given opportunity.
7. Women face problems leaving kids at home and going to office early in the morning.
8. Child rearing problems are always faced by working women.
9. People make particular perception or draw conclusion about characters of working women.
10. The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed

The Way Forward

While the Constitution guarantees equality for women, legal protection has little effect in the face of the prevailing culture. Many researchers and activists are no longer convinced that we can succeed in improving women's health or status unless society attempts to confront its gender bias openly. For too long we have been refusing to discuss women's issues explicitly with society. It would appear that nothing short of a social revolution would bring about an improvement in the health of Indian women.

Many approaches have been suggested. They will all need to include approaches which examine, understand and confront gender discrimination in social, cultural and religious spheres. Legal solutions enforcing gender justice are equally necessary, and monitoring the implementation of legislation is mandatory.

The right to health is a fundamental right and the poorer health indices of half the population is a cause for concern. There is an urgent need for a detailed re-examination of public health statistics for India, disaggregated by gender and region. There is an equally vital need to set up policies and programmes to counter adverse trends. The evidence from such disaggregated data should be used to set targets for action. Progress has to be visible and benchmarks have to be set high.

The magnitude of the inequality related to health is often downplayed even within medical circles. The second-class status of women in Indian society persists and women's perspectives continue to be missing, marginalised or ignored. There is a definite need to engage communities and the population as a whole in a debate to challenge traditional stereotypes and accepted social norms. Programmes to achieve gender equality should not only focus on the provision of equal or greater opportunities for women. They should also concentrate on achieving equality in gender outcomes within a reasonable time frame. Outcomes in general, and health outcomes in particular, are measurable with a much greater degree of accuracy than opportunities.

All plans and projects within community programmes should be assessed using the "gender lens" in order to achieve gender justice for women. These programmes will have to cover the social context of home, school, workplace, law and politics in order to improve women's health. There is a need to challenge the normalisation of gender discrimination in India. The focus should be on public health approaches to change social and cultural perspectives with the aim of primary prevention of discrimination while continuing medical interventions for early diagnosis and management of the medical consequences. There is a need for aggressive gender justice in order that women in India achieve equal health and social status in the foreseeable future.

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