



Social challenges faced by working women in service sector

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Abstract

Working women in the service sector are facing common challenges around the world. These challenges are significantly different on the basis of family size, marital status, work environment etc. The present paper tries to find out the social and psychological challenges faced by married working women in Education and Health sector of Mansa district of Indian Punjab. The study utilizes the sample of 64 respondents from public as well as private sectors (education and health) of urban Mansa. By using structured interview schedule data has been collected from the working women of education and health sectors. Results reveals that married working women are facing continue social challenges at work and home sphere.

Keywords: working women, service sector, challenges, psychological pressure and stress

Introduction

Today women are enough empowered to prove their efficiency inside or outside the home. They are getting higher and technical knowledge and are actively participating in income generated activities thereby making essential contributions to the economy of the country. Although they have dual roles: inside the home (household chores, take care of children and elders), outside the home (offices roles and responsibilities), yet, they have proven themselves capable enough to manage the household chores and the office domain, and, are seen continuously juggling between home, work, family, children, elders, relatives, guests and neighbors. Women who are working outside the home and economically contributing for their families are known as working women. They are gaining economic profit by working outside the home.

Work is an essential part of human life; it creates profitable living standards, pleasure, and satisfaction. It is vital for the physical, mental, economic and moral development of an individual either a man or a woman. In the changing scenario, women are contributing in the workforce in all spheres, whether it is primary sector, secondary or service sector. They are capable enough of maintaining a stability of both household life as well as in work life. Working women, who are married, have more roles and responsibilities as compared to unmarried working women. They are facing various challenges these days. Married working women have to play the role of wives, mothers, daughter-in-laws on one side and part of the efficient worker in another front. These functions are creating an environment of social, mental pressure and work-family conflict for married working women ^[1].

The present paper is a part of doctoral research and has attempted to streamline the challenges that married working women are facing in service sectors. The study mainly

involves three areas: education and health sectors and primarily focuses on the family and work sphere challenges. It aims to put forward a theoretical framework that attempts to prop up research towards social problems faced by married working women in the service sector. The study is a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Objectives

1. To highlight the social challenges faced by married working women in the service sector.
2. To find out the psychological issues of married working women in the service sector.

Methodology

The present study was carried out among married working women in education and health sectors of Mansa district of Punjab. The sample size of the present study consists of 32 urban married working women from the education sector and 32 from the health sector and total in 64 respondents in number. The sample was collected from the public as well as private sector from both departments (education and health). Data were collected from urban married working women from Mansa districts which included teachers, lecturer, assistant professors, associate professors, professors, nurses, medical officers, doctors, specialists, etc. Data collected by the medium of interview schedule and purposive sampling method.

Literature review

There is no dearth of studies on the challenges, issues, and problems of working women. As evident from the present literature although working women are economically efficient, there is lack of social and family support, they have psychological issues due to dual expectations. They have to balance both spheres, and this creates challenges for working women at every step of their life.

¹ <http://www.healthofchildren.com/U-Z/Working-Mothers.html>

Gobalakrishnan and Gandhi (2013) ^[13] in their study “Working Women and their problems in daily life: A Sociological Analysis” conducted a survey on the women who are working in the colleges in Tiruvannamalai District to find out their daily life’s problems. The study was conducted on 50 respondents selected by using purposive sampling methods, and their responses were collected with the help of interview schedule. Even though most (72%) of the respondent is living in the joint family which is usually expected to extend its support but they admitted to behavioral problems like anxiety, depression and inferiority complex in their daily life. The economic condition of the family compels them to seek employment, but they hardly get support from its members. So the study suggested that when the married women go for work, then the family members including the husband should support them in various household activities so that they could be relieved of multiple problems and pressure of both families as well as work environment.

Dashora (2013) ^[10] in her study “Problems faced by Working Women in India” explains the various problems faced by working women in India. Working women are subjected to mental and sexual harassment at the workplace and met biases in salary, skills and technical efficiency. The inadequate public transport system, unwanted attention of the colleagues and superiors attribute to sexual favors’. The psychological pressure of all this can quickly lead to a woman quitting her job. The gender orientation of men as primary breadwinners and women as housekeepers inhibits the men to contribute substantially to the household chores. This stereotype role model continues to put obstacles before the working women. The study suggested a fundamental change is required in the attitudes of the employers, policymakers, family members and other relatives and the public at large.

Avais, Wassen and Shah (2014) ^[3] in their study “A case study on problems of Working Women in city Sukkar” find out the various types of problems that working women face such as domestic problems as well as official matters. The study was explorative in nature to investigate the issues of working women in Sukkar. The working women have to do all the household chores without any internal and external support while outside at employment they face numerous other problems which include sexual harassment. In addition to it, they are compelled to forego their salaries to their respective in-laws and/ or spouse. They have less access to join social gathering because it may hamper their work and they have less number of leaves. The study concluded that sexual harassment is a ground reality in working women of Sukkar and there is a need for implementation of the legislation passed by the government.

Nawaz, Afzal & Shehzadi (2013) ^[34] in their study “Problems of formally employed women: a case study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan” highlights the problems faced by working women informal sector in Bahawalnagar. The study mainly examines the social and domestic issues of formally employed women as well as verifies the behavior of family members and social circle of officially employed women towards their job in focused area. Data was collected from four public sectors departments of police, nursing, teaching and college lecturers, and, methodology of stratified random sampling was used. By using the descriptive analysis method, the result of the study

revealed that women who were working in the department of police faced low social status and non-recognition of their jobs; nurses faced unscheduled working hours and low wages while on the other hand, school teachers wanted higher wages for their work. The study concluded that the working women of Bahawalnagar faced various social and work place problems like as; long working hours, unavailability of transportation, and absence of job security apart from the impending issues such as low allowances, gender discrimination and low wages in the context of school teachers and nurses. The problem which is related to police women included long and unscheduled working hours, low social status and non-recognition of their work. The study was limited to 100 sample size and formal sector only.

Rani (2013) ^[42] in her study titled “Marital Adjustment Problems of Working and Non-Working Women in contrast to their Husband” aimed at finding out marital adjustment problems faced by non-working women and working women teachers of Bahadurgarh city. A sample of 80 women (40 working and 40 non-working women) was collected for this purpose through randomly selection. The study concluded that non-working women face more marital adjustment problems in comparison to their spouses. Simultaneously, women who are working as teachers in the said district faced more marital adjustment problems as compared to non-working women. Working women because of added responsibilities of job suffer from more severe causes of maladjustment at home or in the office. They cannot give proper attention to their marital lives and this cause marital mal-adjustment.

Goyal and Parkash (2011) ^[14] examined the problems of women entrepreneurship in their study “Women Entrepreneurship in India- Problems and prospects”. The study highlights that the educated women of India have more miles to go in order to achieve equality with respect to their social status. The study evaluates the factors that are contributing positively towards the encouragement of women for become entrepreneurs. Major reasons like as male-chauvinism, patriarchal thinking and lack of confidence are the main obstacles in the path of women. The out dated thinking and social pressure discourage women to go forward in the field of entrepreneurship. Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and responsibilities. Although the Indian Constitution provides equal rights to women, the governmental sponsored activities have only benefited to just a small section of educated women. Thus, the need of the hour is to bring an awareness among all the other sections too. Highly educated, professionally qualified and technically sound should be encouraged for managing their own business. Kumar (2016) in his study carried a primary survey of 600-700 working women of organized sector and 600-700 working women of unorganized sector of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The primary objectives of the study were to highlight the conditions of working women that contributes to their ill-health and the awareness among working women for regular medical check-up, to find out the particular psychological and physical health problems of working women. The study concludes that even though working women have financial security but they neglect their own health due to lack of time for self at different ages.

Suman and Chatterjee (2015) in their research article titled as

“psychological and physical well-being in working women” compared the health status of working and non-working women by using standard short form (SF)-36 questionnaires². The study highlights that if the work pressure on working women reduces then it will be automatically good for psychological well-being of working women. The study compared the house wives with working women and revealed that because of less physical functioning and role limitations, housewives had less problems.

Sadiq and Ali (2014)^[43] examine the psychological ill-being of married working women as a consequence of the dual responsibilities they pay at home and workplace in their study titled as “Dual Responsibility: A Contributing factor to contributing Psychological ill-being in married working women”. The study has been conducted in Pakistan; sample of fifty married working women and fifty married non-working women in Karachi, Pakistan was compared for this purpose. Finding of the study reveals that owing to dual responsibility married working women significantly reported more somatic complaints, social dysfunction, anger and hostility than married non-working women because of over-burden of dual responsibilities. Managing workplace and family problems, taking care of children, husbands and in-laws in the absence of insufficient time for taking rest are major issues of married working women with middle class socio-economic status. All these factors are playing distal role in making them psychologically ill. Besides, psychological issues of married non-working women must be addressed in the context of household responsibilities they pay from dawn to dusk.

Krishnan (2014) analyzed the various factors that have contributed to the increased stress level of working women. The study was conducted among 100 working women from different sectors in Bangalore city on the basis of stratified random sampling methods. The study concluded that multiple role demands and conflicting expectations creates an environment of work pressure. Multitasking creates an environment of stress for women where they have to perform extra economic roles as well as the same household roles and responsibilities.

Mankani and Yenagi (2012) in their work “comparative study of mental health of working and non-working women” conducted a primary survey to access the mental health of working women. The study consisted of 90 working and 90 non-working women from Dharwad district of Karnataka. The researchers had used mental health inventory prepared by Jagdish and Srivastav (1983) and socio-economic status scale by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005). The results discovered that the working women had better mental health as compared to non-working women. The demographic factors have a positive and significant relationship with the mental health of working women. Age, education level, type and size of family, income, number of children, living standards had direct and significant relationship with the mental health of working and non-working women.

Dudhatra and Jogsan (2012)^[11] in their work “Mental Health and Depression among Working and Non-Working Women” found out the mean differences between working and non-

working women in mental health and depression. For this purpose data had been collected from 80 women (40 Working and 40 Non-Working). The study concluded that there is a significant difference between the mental health and depression among working and non-working women. The study indicates that working women are more depressed and mentally disturbed as compare to non-working women. They have more work pressure and more responsibilities as compared to non-working women.

Kwatra, Kaur, & Raghubansi (2012)^[26] in their study titled as “Psycho-Physiological Problems among dual career women: A cause of stress” examined the physical and psychological stress among the working women. The study brought to the surface that working women have to bear double pressure created by multiple roles, which may badly affects their job performance too. The study focuses upon the role stress created by conflict between work and non-work activities. The study examined parameters like as blood pressure, pulse pressure, heart rate, respiration rate and temperature to measure the psychological and physical condition of the population. The study concluded that stress depends a lot upon the perception of a situation. There is need to create a sense of confidence and awareness among the people so that they improve their work efficiency.

Tripathi and Bhattacharjee (2012) in their study titled as “A Study on Psychological Stress of Working Women” examined the root causes of the existing problems faced by the working women. It also aimed at finding feasible solutions that have been practiced elsewhere and needs to be adopted at other forms. The study was exploratory in nature as sought to uncover the stress level conditions of women. The importance of this research can be highlighted from the fact that this study brought to the surface the linkages between the working women and their children’s education. It concluded that the due to the unavailability of the working women at the crucial phase of their child’s education such as exams had similar affect to that of a single parent. The findings of the study are Working Women feel more stress than working men.

Harshpinder & Aujla (2006)^[17] in the study titled as “Physiological and Psychological Stressors among Working and NonWorking Women” examined the problems of working women in Ludhiana city of Punjab. For this purpose had been data collected from 75 working and 75 non-working women. Results indicated that common factors of stress both in categories were unfinished tasks, compulsion of doing disliked activities, death of close relative, insomnia. In working women, stressors were pleasing others and over burden of work, wheres in non-working women stressors were wrong working posture and non-involvement in decision making by family. The study indicates that working women were more stressed as compared to non-working women in Ludhiana city.

Results

The present study is based upon the primary data collection with the help of fully structured interview schedule that prepared and personally served to the 64 married working women in Mansa district of Punjab. During the interview and group discussion process the respondents participated enthusiastically in the interview and an overwhelming

² Sf-36 is a short form survey instrument that contains 36 questions related to health issues.

response was received.

1. Personal background of the respondents

Majority of the respondents (56.25%) were from the public sector educational institutes. Their average age was from 30-40 years. On the other hand, those working in the private educational institutes constituted 50% of the respondents and were in the age group of age-group of 20-30 years. In health sector, majority of the respondents are from 30-40 age group - 43.75% in public sector and 56.25% in private health sector. In education and health sector, maximum numbers of married working women were from nuclear families. In both sectors (education and health), maximum number of respondents had graduation and upper graduation degrees. In education sector, maximum number of respondents had 5-6 work hours in the office, on the other hand, in the health sector maximum respondents had 9-10 working hours. Thus, the average numbers of working hours were more in the case of respondents from the health sector. This was primarily because of the fact that the nature of work of medicos involves

intricacies related to human physiology as well handling emergencies.

The present research reveals the primary facts related to the problems of working women in service sector. Data indicated that women who are economically contributing to their respective families are facing continuous challenges in their daily life. By using socio-economic and psychological indicators data collected from working women who are working in education and health sectors.. The social economic contribution of the working women in their social and work life determines their relation with family members, neighbors, friends, relatives, colleagues and other office workers. The social and economic contribution of the working women creates an environment where they are dual responsibilities and overburdened work roles. The study utilizes variables such as age, type of family, workplace distance, relationship with in-laws and relatives. On the basis of these independent variables data collected from married working women of education and health sector.

2. Socio-economic challenges

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents according to Socio-economic factors

Socio-economic factors	Education		Health	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
No co-operation from in-laws	0	3 (18.75)	3 (18.75)	1 (6.25)
No support from neighbors and relatives	9 (56.25)	14 (87.5)	13 (81.25)	13 (81.25)
No appreciation by in-laws/partner	2 (12.5)	12 (75)	3 (18.75)	1 (6.25)
Freely discuss job-issues with partner	3 (18.75)	7 (43.75)	8 (50)	10 (62.5)
Unable to attend social functions/festivals	7 (43.75)	13 (81.25)	11 (68.75)	10 (62.5)
Able to attend guests at home	5 (31.25)	10 (62.5)	5 (31.25)	4 (25)
Free to go anywhere for office work	4 (25)	11 (68.75)	10 (62.5)	6 (37.5)
Free to spend income	13 (81.25)	7 (43.75)	8 (50)	7 (43.75)
Unwanted behavior of male colleagues	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	4 (25)	3 (18.75)
Travelling issues	8 (50)	6 (37.5)	6 (37.5)	6 (37.5)
Satisfied from partners contribution to the household chores	5 (31.25)	7 (43.75)	9 (56.25)	7 (43.75)

Source: Primary survey 2016-17

The data mentioned above in the table indicated the socio-economic factors that resulted in additional challenges which the women had to face in the education and health sector. The table covered various important factors which have been mentioned above and requires no further detailed clarification. The major findings are as follows:

- Maximum number of married working women from both sectors were not getting any support from their relatives and neighbors. They were 56.25% in public and 87.5 % in private education sector. On the other side in health sector the percentage were 81.25 in both public and private domain.
- 75% of the respondents in private education sector were not getting any appreciation from their in-laws.
- In education sector less than 50% respondents were freely discuss their job issues with their respective spouses as compared to more than 50% in health sector.
- Maximum number of the respondents from the both sectors were not able to attend social functions, marriages and festivals etc.
- In public education and health sectors just 31.25% of

respondents were able to attend guests at home as compared to 62.5 percentage in private education sector and 25 % private health sector.

- In public education sector 25% of respondents were free to go anywhere for office work as compared to 62.5% public health sector respondents.
- More than 80% respondents were free to spend their income in public education sector as compared to 50 % in public health sector; on the other hand in private education and health sector less than 50% respondents were free to spend their income as they wish to spend.
- In public health sectors 56.25% respondents were satisfied from their partner’s contribution towards household chores. In education public and private domain and in private health sectors less than 50% respondents were satisfied from their partner’s contribution.

The above discussion indicated that married working women from education and health sectors are facing continue challenges as in social sphere they did not have enough time for social functions, festivals and guests at home. They were

not getting proper support from their neighbors and relatives. On one hand they were not getting appreciation from in-law on the other hand they were not satisfied from their partner's contribution towards household chores. The working women have number of issues at work sphere too. They were not free to spend income. They had not any freedom to go anywhere

for office work without any permission. They faced travelling issues, unwanted behavior of male colleagues. These challenges had created a situation where working women were trapped and tortured socially, mentally, psychologically as well as physically. Below mentioned table pictured the psychological issues of married working women.

3. Psychological issues

Table 2: Percentage distribution of respondents according to Psychological factors

Psychological factors	Education		Health	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Mental stress due to work pressure	6 (37.5)	14 (87.5)	9 (56.25)	11 (68.75)
Health issues	12 (75)	16 (100)	6 (37.5)	11 (68.75)
Irritation	10 (62.5)	15 (93.75)	6 (37.5)	10 (62.5)
Exhaustion	11 (68.75)	13 (81.25)	8 (50)	11 (68.75)
Child care issues	13 (81.25)	14 (87.5)	16 (100)	14 (87.5)
No time to relax	7 (43.75)	8 (50)	11 (68.75)	14 (87.5)
Less time for spouse	5 (31.25)	4 (25)	8 (50)	10 (62.5)
Less personal care	4 (25)	4 (25)	8 (50)	13 (81.25)
Pressure of household chores	6 (37.5)	8 (50)	6 (37.5)	11 (68.75)
Taking care of the old	4 (25)	2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	0

Source: Primary survey 2016-17

In education and health sector majority of the respondents were facing mental stress due to lack of time for personal care and relaxation. They had lot of pressure of household chores as well as office responsibilities. Majority of the women were from education sector had more pressure as compared to the health sector. In health sector, medical officers and doctors had less mental and psychological pressure as compared to the nurses and assistant women workers. Child care and development issues, household chores, take care of aged and less cooperation from the partners were the main issues faced by working women in both sectors, and these issues created an environment of continue mental pressure among married working women.

Findings

As women increasingly play dual role, yet, the society's very fabric i.e. patriarchal setup and male dominance is yet to be completely changed. Consequently, it creates an environment where women are facing continuous social issues, biasness, inequality and discrimination. On the other hand, they are mentally stressed due to the professional requirements and a simultaneous long list of responsibilities. The kind of cooperation that is expected from their immediate and extended family members is not fulfilled which is a significant contributor to their psychological issues.

Limitations

1. The study focused only upon the social and psychological challenges of married working women,
2. It has been covered only Mansa district of Punjab state,
3. It has been based upon the sample of 60 married working women only,
4. It has been collected only the issues of education and health sector women.

Conclusion

Problems of the working women are manifold and multidimensional. Married working women have the dual responsibilities of concentrating on the family as well as at work. By getting proper co-operation from their families and society they can easily perform their dual task. If their partners help them in their family and social sphere they can easily find out the solution to handle out any challenge. It is not wrong to say that women are also economically empowered if they have equal opportunities and contribution towards family and society. The society can enable its women socially and economically empowered by treating them equally, behaving equally. The torch bearer should spread the message to ensure equality by providing our children equal nurturing and caring facilities at the earlier stages of their life.

The subservient behavior of the respondents inside the house with regard to the basic decisions such as the spending of income on issues such as schooling, health etc. is also reflected in the inter-personal relations between the respondents with their respective spouses. As a result of the social upbringing that the important decisions have to be taken by the head of the family, in almost all cases where it is the male, their own wishes aspirations becomes sidelined. The problem lies in the social upbringing where their decision making is not taken in a proper stride. Thus, there has to be a bottom up approach wherein the girls are given freedom of speech and expression which can later translate into decision making for important issues.

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