

# Psycho-Social Problems among Working Women

Dr. Nimisha Beri<sup>1</sup> & Mhonbeni Murry<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Asst. Professor

Deptt of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, India  
berinimi@rediffmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar

Deptt of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, India

## ABSTRACT

*Women have been the object of suffering since time immemorial. They have always been at the receiving end as they are considered less capable than men and are seen less favorably in terms of knowledge, aptitudes, skills, motivation, interest, temperament, and work habits that are demanded in most managerial roles. In recent years the problems of women has not only become manifold but has acquired new dimensions of increasingly complicated nature. Unlike in the past, at present women has to perform dual functions of mother-wife at home and as employed at workplace. So she has to make adjustments at home and at workplace which has led to an increase in her problems. This dual task of handling home and job mixed with real or perceived threat against women overstrain them and make them feel rejected, isolated, tense and thus face psychological problems like irritation, stress, frustration, boredom, anxiety, fatigue etc. and social problems like maladjustment, role conflict, inadequate household help, inadequate parental care, sexual harassment, job strain and occupational hazards because of family, relatives, friends, society and job. Therefore the well-being of women should be considered as an essential component for awareness and an issue for social well-being and development.*

**Key-words:** Psychological problems, social problems, women.

The basic unit of society is a woman. As women makes a family, family makes a home and homes make a society. Thus a society would never come into existence without the contribution of women. The very first and best school of a child is its mother's lap. A good healthy society does not automatically emerge on its own and stands firm but needs to be emerged and for its emergence women play a pivotal role. The role of modern woman at home, in society and in the world at large is diametrically opposite from a woman's role in the yore. In the early days women were seen only as wives who were intended to work, clean, and take care of the kinds. They were not allowed to vote while men took care of having jobs and paying any bills that had to be paid. The traditional role of man was to work and make money, which would be used by all in the household. Because society always associated money with power, the person bringing home the money had the power. The man often made the final decision on all household matters because he had the money. Women are treated like they were the property of men, with no voice about their own fate. Women were seen less favorably in terms of knowledge, aptitudes, skills, motivation, interest, temperament, and work habits that are demanded in most managerial roles. Bamji (2005) found gender disparity at all levels and its impact on women partly due to biological role and responsibilities of women as mothers but mostly due to traditional mindsets, which visualize women as child bearers and homemakers and men as

bread winners. But during the last few decades' industrialization, urbanization, increasing level of education, awareness of rights, wider influence of media and westernization has changed the status and position of women. As a result, their traditional roles are deeply influenced. Now they have started taking employment outside the home. As a result their traditional roles have changed. Besides household duties they are also engaged in outward pursuits. For this they have to maintain a balance between home and career.

The status of women has changed. Unlike in the past, at present women take up profession as scientist, doctors, engineers, teachers, pilots, and artist etc. But the employment of women outside home has added to their duties and functions. They have to perform a dual function of mother-wife at home and as employed at workplace. So she has to make adjustments at home and at workplace which has led to an increase in her problems. Although she is more liberated and educated at the same her problems have become manifold. Even today, looking after the family is perceived to be primary responsibility of women. Carrying out single handedly almost all the duties and responsibilities of home overstrains a working woman. In addition the feeling of guilt when they are not able to look after the family due to official work often results in emotional disorder. This dual task of handling home and job mixed with real or perceived threat against women overstrain them and make them feel rejected, isolated, tense and thus facing psychological problems like irritation, stress, frustration, boredom, anxiety, fatigue etc. and social problems like maladjustment, role conflict, inadequate household help, inadequate parental care, sexual harassment, job strain and occupational hazards because of family, relatives, friends, society and job. It is observed that they are torn in between all these problems because they want to be efficient and successful, both as a house wife and as an employee.

The problem of a woman who combines the different role of a wife, a mother and a working woman are multiple. The occupational role accompanied by a broadened role-choice in the complete absence of supporting measures involves a whole new set of complexities and problems which the modern women have to face. Murthy (1997) found that health status, education, lifestyle, family relationships and social class were some of the major affective factors in the lives of women. The number of problems present in every sphere of life can be categorized under different heads as physiological problems, adjustment problems, social problems and economic problems. Pandey (2004) concluded that females reported significantly greater helplessness and fatalistic coping.

A common perception is that women who are earning are empowered, but it is not so. They are not free to take their own decisions, cannot spend their own money and although they are more qualified, still they are not given due importance in decision making. On the contrary, the changing situation is causing them new problems. They are now beset with new stress and strains. Capacity, capability and caliber of women are often under estimated. Lack of motivation, encouragement, recognition of their dual work and personal care by family may create frustration and depression in these working women. They struggle for their rights themselves. Chanana (2001) concluded that women often suppressed their need of autonomy, neglect their health and fail to equip with skills, competence and self-confidence.

Working women's problem at work is manifold. She is not considered equally efficient worker as men and faces discrimination at the workplace. This attitude tends to create feeling of inferiority, uselessness or inability and leads to mental fatigue, stress related illness and high degree of job dissatisfaction among working women. Hence, women face problems like job strain, role

conflict, sexual harassment, inadequate household help, financial dependence and other occupational hazards. This feeling of guilt and neglect afflict their job productivity and efficiency and earn them poor reputation as workers. Hammer and Thompson (2003) had predicted that women, because of responsibilities in home, would have greater inference from family to work than men.

Taking up a profession was assumed to harmonize with women familial roles and occupation but this has only add to their struggle instead of striking a balance between the two, hampering her physical, psychological, emotional and professional growth. Despite all her resilience, patience, fortitude and toleration, sometimes her spirits give way under the dreary and cumbersome obligation of home and official duties. A careful and sensitive peep into the mind and psyche of women reveals her fears, anxieties, stress and strains which dampen her moral courage and retard her march to excellence, progress and glory. This has led to Psycho-social problems among women.

The term psycho-social refers to one's psychological development in an interaction with a social environment. Individuals with psychosocial disorders frequently have difficulty functioning in social situations and may have problems effectively communicating with others. For a concept to be psychosocial means it relates to one's psychological development in, and interaction with, a social environment. It was first commonly used by psychologist Erik Erikson in his stages of social development. Contrasted with social psychology, which attempts to explain social patterns within the individual, it is usually used in the context of "psychosocial intervention," which is commonly used alongside psycho-educational or psycho-pharmacological interventions and points toward solutions for individual challenges in interacting with an element of the social environment. The individual is not necessarily

fully aware of this relationship with his or her environment. Psychologically it is a term that can be used to describe the unique internal processes that occur within the individual. Some types of psychosocial problems are internalizing disorders, externalizing disorders and the depression or anxiety disorders. The problems that occur at one's psychological functioning can be referred to as "psychological dysfunction" or "psychosocial morbidity". This refers to the lack of development of psychosocial self, often occurring alongside other dysfunction that may be physical, emotional and cognitive in nature.

Psycho-social problems, which greatly affect a person's life, work, family and domestic life, can be mild or severe in terms of how pervasive and to what extent a person exhibits the features of a personality disorder. While most people can live pretty normal lives with mild psycho-social problems, during times of increased stress or external pressure of work, family, relationship etc; the symptoms of psycho-social problems gain strength and begin to seriously interfere with the emotional and psychological functions.

Those with psycho-social problems possess several distinct features including disturbances in self-image; ability to have a successful interpersonal relationship; appropriate range of emotions, way of perceiving themselves, others and the world and differently possessing improper impulse control. These disturbance come together to create a pattern of behavior and inner experience that is quite different from the norms of the individuals culture and that often tend to be expressed in behavior that appear more dramatic than what the society considers usual. Therefore those with a personality disorder often experience conflicts with other people and vice-versa.

Traditionally, it has been perceived that men are more subject to psycho-socio problems because of varied responsibilities being the

provider of the family. But in recent times, this perception has changed. Women face more psycho-social problems now as a result of her changing roles and bearing dual responsibilities, one in the family and the other in the job. Various psycho-social problems like anxiety, frustration, mental illness, distress, stress, anger, phobias and other various social and emotional distresses are like to beset her. Nelson and Bruke (2000) have explored the well-being of women and stress they experienced at the work front.

Anxiety is a psychological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional and behavioural components. It also involves negative mood, worry about possible future, threat or danger and self preoccupation. Excessive frustration produces not only psychological disturbances but also harmful effects on the biological system. Person who suffers from depression has depressed mood or loss of interest in pleasurable activities, feeling of fatigue, loss of energy, insomnia, decreased appetite, psychomotor retardation, and feeling of guilt and thought of death. Leger (2004) found that most working women who experience depression and general anxiety disorder are in the age group 35-55 years. Stress over shadows almost all walks of modern life. It implies pressure and causes tension and worry resulting in various problems. Severe stress can exact a high cost in terms of lowered efficiency, depletion of adapter resources and wear and tear on the biological system and in extreme cases, effect personality and physical deterioration and even leads to death. In recent times women are now considered to lead more stressful lives as a result of responsibilities, which include keeping a job, taking care of the children and maintaining a household. Psychological problems that are experienced after stress, frustration and prolonged anxiety have been well documented and involve a range of problems including physical symptoms such as pain, nervous system, insomnia, tremors, weakness, fainting, sweating and diarrhea and

psychological symptoms such as nightmares, depression, suspiciousness, social withdrawal and alienation, irritability and aggressiveness, cognitive impairments such as troubled concentration, disorientation, confusion and memory deficits and also unacceptable behavior such as aggressiveness, impulsivity and suicidal attempts.

In recent time's women is the nucleus of our civilization. She has different roles to play in the ever changing social set up. She plays the role of a wife, a mother and a working woman so her problems stand multiple. When she cannot discharge her duties efficiently she feels tense and continuous tension creates stress which affects her mental health and status.

Women have been equally participating in socio-economic life from time immemorial. Inflation and rising prices have resulted in economic tension therefore women feel incumbent to financially contribute to the family well being and prosperity. For this they have to maintain an equilibrium and balance between home and career. Different problems such as attitude of the society members, prejudice and non recognition which the working women encounter with regard to their status and role in economic life adversely affect the utilization of their talents and work capabilities.

Moreover, gender disparity at all levels makes the working environment unfriendly and insecure for the 'Struggling Lady'. Hence, the questions of fair representation of gender and equality of opportunity have been bushed to the background under the guise of quality, merit and ability. But all this is partly due to biological role and responsibility of women as mothers but mostly due to traditional mindsets which visualize women as 'child bearers' and 'home makers' and men as 'bread winners'.

Thus all these psycho-social problems spoil her mental, moral and social well being. It impacts her outer and inner potential. With the

passage of time, the wounds may heal but the scars remain and they, with her aging process become more marked and pronounced and manifest themselves in their attitude and self-conduct. Therefore the well being of women should be considered as an essential component for awareness and an issue for social well being and development. She should not be considered as only a child-bearer and a home-maker but as an enterprising person whose shares of contribution should be recognized in all spheres of life. Therefore, for drawing out the best of creative talent and intellectual potentialities of women in workforce as well as in domestic life, there is a need to recognize such psycho-social problems and study them in depth in the changing scenario for seeking solution and give women the worthy attention, dignity and cooperation they richly deserve and help them maintain a healthy mind and a healthy body.

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