

Burden on Working Women

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ABSTRACT: With the advent of ‘developmental’ measures in the form of various constitutional and legal provisions, the women in India are now working in various sectors of the economy. But this has not been a smooth sail for these working women. There are lots of intricacies involved in this story. Therefore, to have an understanding of these nuisances; this paper focuses on the life of working women from the teaching class, who are caught between the onus of household responsibilities on one side and official liabilities on the other side. The research aims to understand the problem faced by the working women in the context of this ‘double burden’. It further studies about the availability of helping hands in their life to ease down the projected duties. Their expectations from the people around them, is another important aspect which is explored in this study. Moreover, women’s satisfaction out of their work and home management skills is also studied under this research.

KEYWORDS: Working Women, Constitutional Provisions, Menaces, Right to Education.

INTRODUCTION: Women have marked their presence in various sectors of the economy. They are serving at different crucial positions for different firms, organizations and even in the Indian Government as well as opposition. Thanks to various constitutional and legal provisions in our country, from right to equality to right to education, women command the respect and a firm place for themselves in the Indian society. However, changes have come in the role of women from being ‘just serving’ the

family, to be its ‘breadwinner’. Though in India, female labour participation rate is 35%, but it is still counted among the lowest in the world. At one hand their participation is low and on the other hand, women who are already the part of workforce have their own challenges to ensure their participation. What are the problems faced by these women? Are they able to fulfill their responsibilities in a satisfactorily manner? How is the ‘double burden’ of home as well

as work affecting them? Is there any helping hand to ease down their burden?

This research paper aims at knowing the answers for above questions by focusing on the working women, particularly from the teaching class in the Rohtak district. The teachers belong to government as well as the public schools. Their age varies from 28 years to 56 years. For the collection of data, 50 female respondents were interviewed by asking open ended questions to fulfill the

objective of the study. Thus, this paper is exploratory cum descriptive in nature. In this study, after collection of data, it was first tabulated and then analysed. After preparation of frequency tables, the data was analyzed in the form of percentage. Out of 50, 25 respondents belong to nuclear families and the rest 25 respondents belong to joint families. Here, nuclear family includes husband, wife and their children while joint family includes husband, wife, children and the in laws.

Table No. 1: Reason for pursuing job for women

To provide financial support to their families	4
Self satisfaction	2
Financial support + self satisfaction	44
Total	50

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- i) According to Table No. 1, 8% women wanted to financially support their family. Out of them, one of was a widow, so except working there was no other option available to her to run her household. For other 3, their family income was not enough to support the increasing demands of the family members.
- ii) Only 4% were doing the job for their self satisfaction; money was not the

consideration for them to work outside home.

- iii) The rest 88% respondents told that though their priority was self satisfaction, but providing financial support to their families was an equally important reason for doing the job. They wanted to keep themselves busy and wanted to use the degrees that they have earned after so much hard work. Some of them said that they did not want to keep asking money from their husband for their daily needs. They wanted to be financially independent.

Table No. 2: Adjustments made by women keeping in mind their children

Took 1-2 years break when children were very young	30
Started working when their children were school going	10
Resumed working after completion of maternity leave	10
Total	50

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- (i) 60% respondents took the one to two years break to take care of their babies. They were most from the private schools, so there was no job compulsion to continue the job. In nuclear families crèche was the option while in joint family help of in laws was taken to take care of the child.
- (ii) 20% respondents started working only after their children started going to schools. In case of nuclear families there was no body to take care of the children at home, so this choice was preferred by their family.
- (iii) The rest 20% respondents who resumed working after their completion of maternity leave were mainly the government employees.

Economic studies show that the stage in the family's life cycle, as determined by the presence, number and ages of children, is by far the most important determinant of the need for housework. Here, the family lifecycle created the demand for more housework by the advent of children. Moreover, sociological approach attempts to explain family structures in terms of their contribution to the life of the family unit itself. As a result, women attended to this demand by taking care of their children and taking a break from their job. So, family commitment was the primary reason for discontinuation of the job or starting the work at a later age. Or we can say 'Optimization of the family's utility' was the driving force behind such choices.

Table No. 3: Unfulfilled wishes of working women regarding their children

Wanted to give more time to their children in their studies	30
Missed the growing up moments of their children	8

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- (i) This study further throws light on other important aspects concerning the working women regarding their children. 60% respondents told that they wanted to give their children more time in their studies. But since they were caught up with their work commitments, they were unable to do so. Especially during the month of March, when exams are going on, these mothers wanted to

spend more time with their children by helping them in their studies but could not do as they are already burdened with exam duty and answer sheet checking responsibilities.

16% of them told that because of their work they missed the special moments with their children when they were growing up. They wanted to be more involved in the early growing years and learning period of their child.

Table No. 4: Parent teaching their children

Father	3
Mother	47

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- (i) As low as in 6% cases only, fathers were teaching their children and getting the follow up from their school teachers. Some fathers were very busy with their own work

while others consider it the sole responsibility of their wife.

- (ii) In all other cases i.e. 94%, mothers were responsible for the studies of their children.

So, mothers were playing a crucial role in the academics of their children.

Table No. 5: Family members help to working women

No one Helping (Nuclear family)	15
Husband (Nuclear family)	10
No one Helping (Joint family)	8
Husband (Joint family)	2
In laws (Joint family)	11
Husband + In laws (Joint family)	4
Total	50

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following(v) facts:

- (i) In 46% cases, working women were not getting any help. In nuclear family this percentage was 60% while in joint family this percentage was 32%.
- (ii) Husbands were more helpful in nuclear families as compared to joint families. On the other hand working women were able to get more help in case of joint family rather than nuclear family.
- (iii) 40% respondents of nuclear families told that their husbands provided them the required support on time in the house work while this percentage was 8% for joint families.
- (iv) 16% respondents of joint families told that their husbands as well as their in laws were all helpful in her household work as well as taking care of the children.

44% respondents of joint families were getting help from in laws only, not from their husband.

The point here to be noted is that help from the husband as well as from the in laws; was more of moral support to work outside and to being sensitive to the fact that she has a lot of work to do rather than actually sharing the responsibility of the household work. Secondly, where children were taken care by the in laws in their mother's absence; as and when mother reached home, they become her responsibility and her 'second shift' starts at home with the children and the awaiting household chores. She hardly gets anytime to take rest in between and the resume the work.

Table No. 6: Reason of husband for not helping their working wife

Very busy with their own work	4
Don't intend to help	19
Total (Cases where women were not getting any help)	23

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following(i) facts:

In 83% of cases where working women were not getting any help in household or

child care, husbands had time and occasion to help but they did not prefer to do it.

One of the respondent told that her husband is also in the teaching field so both husband and wife reached home around the same time. One day she said to her husband that they both enter together but she entered the kitchen and he took rest. At that her husband replied “I am lucky, I am man. You are unlucky, you are women. Kitchen is the responsibility of women.”

Other respondent told that in the morning she prepared all the breakfast for her husband, since she was getting late, she asked her husband to prepare tea for himself. Her husband told her that she was working, it was her decision but it doesn't mean he would enter into the kitchen and do her part of job. It's her responsibility, so she should manage it accordingly.

Another respondent told that because of loads of work and the stress in maintaining the balance between home and school responsibilities, their health also suffers.

Many respondents told that whenever they go to any marriage or family function, taking care of children remain the responsibility of the wives only. Their husband chat with others, eat comfortably,

roam here and there easily but its not the same case with their wives especially when they have quite younger children. Wives remain busy in first feeding their children, and then get the chance to eat by herself. Their husbands should share the responsibility in taking care of their children with their wives.

Its true women are working; they are self dependent and also marching side by side with their husband in financial management of their homes. But still, allocation of housework and childcare falls primarily on the wife. Its cause lies in the sexual division of labour based on the patriarchal society which defines the housework as women's work only. Traditionally the women was the housewife, performing an expressive role oriented to the emotional needs of the family members, while husband was the 'breadwinner' who was to see the 'instrumental' needs of the family such as food and shelter.

As a result, women are ignoring their own needs and are making such choices which are profitable for the family. The 'uncompensated' household burden as well as the burden of paid job is on the shoulders of the women only. Therefore, it is apt to call it the 'double burden of working

women’. They are called the ‘multitaskers’ but it is not an easy exercise. They have to

pay the cost for it in terms of their affecting health.

Table No. 7: Availability of personal time for working women

Yes	4
No	46

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- (i) Only 8% respondents were able to get the personal time for them. They owe it to their time management skills concerning their work.

92% said that they hardly get such time or with great difficulty. Some of them even said that it is not on their priority list. However if they can get such time for themselves, they want to read their favorite stuff, go for walks or even use beauty parlour services.

Table No. 8: Working woman’s expectations from her husband

Fully satisfied with husband’s role	6
Expect more understanding and help from husband	38
No expectation	6
Total	50

Source: Opinion Survey

The above data reveals the following facts:

- (i) Women had expectations from their in laws also in case of joint family but they had more hope from their husbands.
- (ii) 76% respondents have expectations from their husbands to be more understanding and helpful in their household and child care responsibilities. These respondents said that

husbands don’t bother to help their wives but if they can take care of their own tasks and things; it would also be a great help to their wives. Husbands get totally dependent on their wives, consequently children observe this and they tend to also get dependent on their mothers and in this way it adds up to the women’s list of responsibilities.

- (iii) 12% respondents told that taking caring of household is the responsibility of women only. She should manage her home and work without many expectations from any other individual, whether husband or in laws. So, women themselves want to pursue the established 'marital roles' for themselves and their husbands – which are the product of their own childhoods, habits and acquired values.
- (iv) Other 12% respondents said that they were totally satisfied with their husbands' role. Husband's perception of wife's work has played an important role for the women. Due to positive attitude towards wife's work and timely support, the women were able to work comfortably and without any stress. In these cases respondents told that their husbands were, all caring and ever-ready for them in sharing their household responsibilities. Their children observed this and today not just their daughters but even their sons are in the habit of taking care of different household tasks. It includes the work such as putting things at their right place, making tea when some guest arrives, going for grocery shopping, paying bills etc.

Further, other important point to be observed under this study was that children of all the respondents have been supportive and understanding of the fact that their

mothers were working women. Children were pitching in to provide a helping hand to their mothers by taking care of their own work as well as in household activities.

Moreover, nearly all respondents of the opinion that the teaching profession was best suited for them as they reach home by the afternoon and have time for their family also. Any other 9 to 5 job, in some other sector would not have served their purpose. In such scenario they would have less of time for their family and there would be more of discontent among them and their family members, no matter if they would have earned more.

This study put forth that though women are working but they are caught between their home and their work. If we carry out the cost-benefit analysis of the working women, we find that woman is helping in improving the standard of living for her family by her income or in receiving the self satisfaction by working but she also has more work to do. She might worry about her children's proper care.

Meanwhile, it's true that husbands are more sensitive towards their wives in comparison to previous generations but it's not enough, especially in the wake of increased responsibilities of their working

wives. The expectations from a husband particularly in a nuclear family are more unlike in the case of joint family where other relatives offer the help to her.

Women have grabbed the opportunity to learn with both their hands, so that they can be the part of working force. They have struggled in maintaining the balance of their home and their career. But it is also true that for the sake of their families they have taken the backseat. They have made such choices where their careers have turned into mere jobs.

CONCLUSION: One can observe a transition period where a percentage of husbands (though small) from being just the ‘breadwinner’ are taking the stride for the comfort of their wife in her career and simultaneously in household responsibilities. But there is a long way to go to establish the true spirit of ‘partners’ in allocation of household responsibilities, from the traditional basis of ‘appropriate roles’ to rational basis of ‘egalitarianism’.

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