

## WOMEN, WORK AND CHALLENGES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*As an important part of the family and social setup of every country, women are contributing in each and every sphere of society. With the passage of time, in the new arena of the modern world, women are facing challenges in the competitive world. They are participating equally in every sector in developed countries and prove themselves. On the other hand in developing countries, although women are playing traditional roles and dependent upon their spouses for their economic necessity, yet by getting the formal education they are also coming out of seclusion of men. The present paper tries to highlight the economic empowerment of women by reviewing their contribution in the world of paid work. The paper is a division of two sections: the first section throws light on the importance of women's economic contribution and the second section analyses the challenges faced by them in work and family sphere. The paper is totally based on the secondary sources, including books, articles, published and unpublished thesis & dissertations.*

**KEYWORDS:** Working Women, Economic Participation, and Empowerment

### INTRODUCTION

Women are the backbone of every family. As a daughter, wife, and mother they are sincere towards their roles and responsibilities. They are a social and emotional supporter. They are a caretaker. When there is a time of crisis and misshapen for the family, then women come out from the seclusion of men. At times, there are unforeseen circumstances such as critical illness or death. In such cases, the wages of a working woman provide the much-needed support and financial stability. And, in the process, she proves her merit in a traditionally patriarchal society. Why women entered into the world of work? Is there any necessity? These two questions can end up by the increasing importance of formal education and materialization in the modern arena. An increasing number of girls in professional educational institutes determine their entry into the formal work sector. Now they have entered into the world of paid economy. They have one more role that demands more responsibilities. Working women have a dual role, dual burden, and dual responsibilities. They are enough capable to prove their efficiency.

### Importance of Work of Women

Work is an essential part of human life; it creates profitable living standards, pleasure, and satisfaction. It is important for the physical, mental, economic and moral development of an individual or a woman. An educated woman

wants to develop her capabilities and wants to prove herself through her working efficiencies outside her home. In the changing scenario, women are contributing to the workforce in all spheres, whether it is primary sector, secondary sector or service sector. Now they are working from 9 to 5 in the service sector and from morning to till evening in other sectors. They are enough capable to maintain a stability among both household life as well as in work life.

There are two main reasons behind the entry of women in the world of paid work: firstly, it may be the economic crisis when women feel the burden of family expenditure and then, therefore they share this responsibility with their spouse or family. Secondly, many women work just because of the changes in the economy have made it necessary for them to work. Living costs such as housing, eatables, and luxury items prices have risen. The income from one person is not enough to support the family.

Women have qualities of adjustment, compromise, faith, sincerity, nobility. By going into the world of work they can easily prove their qualities to the outside world. Teaching, nursing, and banking are the main professions where women are placed more in number. Their economic contributions make them self-reliant and self-dependent. By getting a job or going into any profession, they can show their inner capacity and skill to the world. Their paid job contributes to the betterment of their family and children. **We cannot stop women from gaining three S's – Self-confidence, Self-dependency, and Self-respect.** Work outside the home enables them to gain self-confidence and respect. By getting equal opportunities, equal employment, equal wages and equal promotion, a woman can easily achieve these three S's.

### **Challenges Faced by Working Women**

There are various types of issues that woman have to face throughout her work life and home life. These issues create an environment of pressure for working women. They have to take care of their children and older in their homes, Role of a care provider to the children and the aged, which predominantly requires physical labor. Balancing acts as a working woman and a wife, means they have to perform a dual responsibility. For balancing this type of dual pressure women are affected by various types of psychological, social and physical problems.

They are being challenged by the demands of their institutions versus the commitment of their home (Lakshmi & Gopinath, 2013). Family and work conflicts are more likely to apply negative influences in the family domain, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family. Work and family have increasingly become adversary spheres; both are equally demanding energy and time; both are equally responsible for work-life and family life conflicts (Balaji, 2014).

Gobalakrishnan and Gandhi (2013) 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 the Tiruvannamalai District to find out their daily life's problems. Even though most (72%) of the respondent is living in the joint family, but they are expressing the problems like anxiety, depression and inferiority complex in their daily life. The economic condition of the family pushes them to go to work, but nobody supports them in the family matters. 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 and that they relieve them from various problems and the pressure of both families as well as work environment.

"Problems faced by Working Women in India" a study conducted by Dashora (2013) explains the various problems faced by working women in India. Working women are subject to mental and sexual harassment at the

workplace, working women faced biases in salary, skills and technical efficiency. The public transport system, unwanted attention of the colleagues and boss attribute to sexual favors. The psychological pressure created from all this leads a situation where a woman is no more able to pursue her job. The traditional way of thinking men as the bread-winner and women as exclusively meant for household tasks continuously creates hurdles for the working women.

A report published by ILO titled as “Women and the future of Work- Beijing +20 beyond” has been emphasizing upon the negative repercussions of violence in the world of work. The report explained that in some cultures threat of violence has been the reason for limiting women in the home sphere. Violence in some service sector like as health, education, and tourism have been a cause for concern in protecting these workers.

Avais, Wassen and Shah (2014) 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 like as domestic problems as well as official matters. The study was explorative in nature to investigate the problems of working women in Sukkar. They identified a maximum number of problems of working women they face from morning to evening. The working women have dual work roles in one front they have roles related to caring and rearing, in another front, they have to handle out the issues of sexual, emotional, and financial abuse outside and inside the home. The study mainly focused on that sexual harassment is a ground reality in working women of Sukkar and there is a need for the implementation of the legislation passed by the government.

Nawaz, Afzal & Shehzadi (2013) 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. By using a stratified random sampling method, data collected from four public sectors departments like as police, nursing, teaching and college lecturers. By using the descriptive analysis method, the result of the study revealed that policewomen faced low social status and non-recognition of their jobs, nurses faced unscheduled working hours and low wages and school teachers want higher wages for their work. The study mainly examines the social and domestic problems of formally employed women as well as verifies the behavior of family members and social circle of formally employed women towards their job in the focused area. The study concluded that the working women of Bahawalnagar faced various social and workplace problems like as; their working hours are too long, most of the respondents face unavailability of transportation, most of the respondents have no job security, they have very low allowance, they are facing gender discrimination and the problem that is especially related to school teachers and nurses is of low wages. The problems of policewomen in the present study are related to their long and spontaneous work hours. They are ranked low in social as well as professional hierarchy. The study is limited to 100 sample size and formal sector only.

Rani (2013) in her study titled “Marital Adjustment Problems of Working and Non-Working Women, in contrast to their Husband” tries to find out the marital adjustment issues of working women teachers. A sample of 80 women (40 working and 40 non-working women) collected for this purpose through random selection. The result revealed that non-working wives are facing more marital adjustment problems in comparisons to their partners. Working women, who are married, have dual responsibilities at home and work spheres. They need more co-operation and adjustment to manage both spheres. The dual roles expectations promote overstrain among married working women. These dual role expectations lead to the situations where married working women have not the proper time for their spouses. This causes marital maladjustment. The study concludes that working women are facing maladjustment at both fronts-home and office.

Goyal and Parkash (2011) 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

to go to a long run for achieving their equality in Indian society. The study evaluates the factors that are responsible for the encouragement of women for becoming entrepreneurs. Major reasons like as Male-Chauvinism, patriarchal thinking and lack of confidence are the main obstacles in the path of women. The outdated thinking and social pressure discourage women to go forward in the field of entrepreneurship. Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and responsibilities. Besides this Indian Constitution provides the equal rights to women, the government-sponsored activities have only benefited to just a small section of educated women, the need of the hour is to awareness among all the other sections too. Highly educated, professionally qualified and technically sound should be encouraged for managing their own business.

In another study Nisa (2013) highlighted the triple role of working women, as housewives, mothers, and workers. This study titled as “Time constraint of Working Mothers- a Sociological study” attempts to examine the relationship between working mothers work status and family environment and its consequential effects on the adjustment of their children. A majority of the respondents (96%) confessed that they did not get sufficient time to spend with their children, even when they returned from their office majority of respondents (94%) were not in a position to attend their children. The analysis revealed that mother’s presence is necessary for the child’s physical as well as mental development and in her absence the problems are inevitable.

“Work stress of women employee: a literature review” titled as a study of **Kundaragi and Kadakol**. In their study, they revealed the theoretical form of stress. Eustress and distress are the two types of stress. If someone views a situation positively he or she can cope with any situation. Stress in a negative sense becomes the reason for the distress. The environment, social, physiological stressors, and thoughts are the main sources of stress. Women employee can do the work enthusiastically when they get the stress positively. The unreasonable demands of others can create a situation where women employee takes stress in negative manners, and the distress among them affects their mood, activity and daily routine.

**Maurya and Agarwal** in their study “factors affecting stress and well-being of women employee” proposed a theoretical formation that encourages towards the well-being of women employees. The research explored the literature and pointed out that the well-being of female workers at workers should not be neglected. The work conditions should be according to the wellness of female employers. The overall performance and quality of the work of the employee demonstrate the well-being of the employee. The good well-being of female employees increased the turnover and performance of the institutions.

**Raghunath** in his work titled as “Mental health of middle-aged working women” assessed the mental health of middle-aged working women. In the middle age, social, psychological and biological changes affect the dual roles of working women. The middle age brings fear, tension, anxiety, menopause, loss of memory with it. The study consisted sample size of 60 women with the help of quota sampling method. Results revealed that 92% of middle-aged working women are facing mental health-related issues. The study suggested that coping strategies should be modified for the welfare of the middle-aged working women.

**Babu & Vembu** in their work “occupational stress experienced by women employees in the banking sector” explained the effect of stress on the experience of working women in the banking sector in the Thiruvavur district of Tamilnadu. The physical and psychological stress among the workers not only affects their health in one hand, but also affects the performance and financial growth of the institutions in another hand. Stress among the employees creates an

environment where their progress stunted by absenteeism and they lost their focus on work. Employees under stress faced immediate challenges in their psychological health as irritation, bad mood, less interest in work, tension, troublesome relationship with colleagues, etc. The study highlighted the three-level workplace stress as the individual level, group level, and organizational level. The researchers concluded that in the public sector for the bank employees the main stressors are poor work conditions, work overload, lack of social support, poor work relationship and less participation in decision making and technological changes in the organization.

**Priya (2013)** in “a study on job stress of women employees in IT and ITeS industries, Tamilnadu” utilized the sample of 384 respondents to analyze the impact of job stress on the physical and psychological well-being of women employees. Job insecurity, unreasonable demands, less inter-personal communication between employer and employees, long work hours, not adequate time for family, role demands at home and work sphere are the causes behind workplace stress among working women. The study revealed that a meeting deadlines and job insecurity are the main reason for stress among working women. Working women in IT and ITeS industries are facing more psychological stress than physiological stress. By getting support from management working women can reduce their job stress.

**Nagaraju and Nandini (2013)** in their study analyses the occupational stress among women employees of the insurance industry. The study tries to measure the influence of age factor in occupational stress. With the use of random sampling method, data has been collected from 100 respondents who are working in the insurance sector. The questionnaire prepared for measuring the stress and satisfaction level of working women in the insurance industry. Results discovered that role isolation, some demographic variables influence the level of stress among working women. In the insurance industry targets are unrealistic and unattainable, and demands long hours. The long hours of field work pressurized the employees to do over time that affects their family life, mental health, and work capacity. By the use of meditation, physical work, exercise and morning walk employees can manage their mental health status.

**Joshi et al. (2014)** examine the stress of working women in the education field. The study utilizes the sample of 50 Assistant Professors of different streams of Bhilai Mahila Mahavidyalaya Hospital Sector, Bhilai. By using self-designed questionnaire the study revealed that excessive work was the main reason the increasing rate of stress among working women. Over expectations and overburden of responsibilities made them anxious and depressed. They have to act, react and perform according to the role demands, they cannot say no to their families and office authorities.

**Kumar (2016)** in his study carried a primary survey of 600-700 working women of organized sector and 600-700 working women of an unorganized sector of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The primary objectives of the study were to highlight the working conditions of working women that may create the ill-health of working women. The awareness among working women for a regular medical check-up, to find out the particular psychological and physical health problems of working women is lacking. The study finds out that even though working women are economically secured, but they are negligence towards 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 questionnaire. The study highlights that if the work pressure on working women reduces, then it will be automatically good for the psychological well-being of working women. The study compared the housewives with working women and revealed that because of less physical functioning and role limitations, housewives faced less number of problems as compared to working women.

**Sadiq and Ali** (2014) examine the psychological ill-being in 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”. 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 a 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) tries to analyze the mental and physical stress among working women, the various factors that contribute to stress. The study was conducted among 100 working women from different sectors in Bangalore city on the basis of stratified random sampling methods. The study reveals that multiple role demands and conflicting expectations create 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 & Yenagi** (2012) in their work “comparative study of mental health of working and non-working women” conducted a primary survey to assess the mental health of working women. The study consisted of 90 working and 90 non-working women from the 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 revealed that the working women had better mental health as compared to non-working women. Housewives in rural areas had better mental health as compared to farm 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 a direct relationship with the mental health of working and non-working women.

**Dudhatra and Jogsan** (2012) 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 compared to non-working women. They have more work pressure and more responsibilities as compared to non-working women.

**Kwatra, Kaur, & Raghubansi** (2012) 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. Working women have to bear double pressure created by multiple roles, which may badly affect their job performance too. The study focuses on the role stress created by the conflict between work and non-work activities. The study had been 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 the stress depends a lot upon the perception of a situation. There is need for 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 in other forms. The study is based upon the explorative research on the concerned areas related to working women and the stress levels that are constantly being felt by them. The research reveals that the impact of full time working mothers on children’s education are similar to the growing up in a single parent family. The findings of the study are Working Women feel more stress than working men.

**Harshpinder & Aujla** (2006) 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, the compulsion of doing disliked activities, the death of the close relative, improper sleep. In working women, “stressors were pleasing others and overburden of work, whereas in non-working women stressors were wrong working posture and no-involvement in decision making by family”. The study indicates that working women were more stressed as compared to non-working women in Ludhiana city.

**Kaur et al.** (1997) in their study “Psycho-Social Problems of Women Teachers in Schools and Colleges of Punjab” find out the psychological and social problems with the help of variables named the institution, age, and area in the state of Punjab. Out of the sample of 1000 respondents, results revealed that there is a significant difference between the psycho-social problems of school and college women teachers in Punjab, but there is not any significant difference between rural and urban college teachers. By the passage of time women have a better understanding of one’s family life career and aging parents. This is because the more one stays at a position, the more one grows older, and the better one learns to cope up with the psycho-social problems.

Several studies have shown that work and family work-load impose a negative effect on individual mentality and physiology. Studies have shown that women report a higher level of stress as compare to their counterparts. **Zhang** (2010) studied the sources of work stress among women academics in research universities of China. She examined that women academician faced more difficulties in fulfilling both academic work and family role. Another study conducted by **Zarra et al.** (2010) 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. The imbalance between work and family life arises due to a number of factors. Various factors appear to strengthen the brunt of pressure on women. Using correlation and regression analysis, results suggested that there was a significant positive relationship between levels of occupational stress and family difficulties in working women.

### Major Findings& Recommendations

- **Sexual Harassment at the Workplace:** It can easily discontinue only by providing our women legal mechanism and power to tackle the issue.
- **Mental Pressure due to Dual Roles:** every member of a family have an equal share towards family, why we expect too much from our women if every person performs his/her roles sincerely then women can get some relaxation.
- **Physical and Psychological Issues:** these issues can also solve by sharing responsibilities at home and workplace.

- **Childcare and Development:** Mothers are caretaker and nurturer for their respected kids but fathers can also share the responsibilities of look after of children. When a woman is sharing economic burdens of the family the whole family should share her roles within the family.
- **Over Expectation by Family:** Women are enough capable to perform dual tasks but lack of appreciation and over expectations of family and society hinders their mental level.

## CONCLUSIONS

Married women have the dual responsibilities of concentrating on the family as well as at work, balancing between home and workplace. So the problems of the working women are manifold and multidimensional. By getting proper co-operation from their families and society they can easily perform their dual task. If men help them in their family and social sphere they can easily prove their efficiency. It is not wrong to say that women are also economically empowered if they have equal opportunities and contribution towards family and society. We can enable our women economically empowered by providing them equal sphere. Then we can easily say, **“Gone are the days when we said our mothers are merely housewives, now we have economically and socially empowered and efficient mothers”**.

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