

Nature and Extent of Problems Faced by Working Women in Rural and Urban Areas: A Sociological Study

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

ABSTRACT

Though a number of constitutional amendments were made for women's social, economic and political benefits but still there is no radical change in their situation. The outdated family structure, patriarchal ideology of the home being a women's 'real domain' and marriage being ultimate goal and destiny has not changed much. In India working woman faces so many problems associated with her time allocation while engaging outside in income earning activities. It may be health related or physical, psychological, economical, social and family problems etc. The present study was conducted in Hiasr-II block of Hisar district on 120 women working in government and private sectors with the aim to explore their problems. The results concluded that majority of the respondents were in 31-50 years of age belonged to general caste and nuclear families and were in government jobs. Majority of the respondents were disagreed on the statements that workplace environment was not very pleasant and safe, however majority of rural respondents also reported inappropriate work environment with lack of power-supply and heat/cold facilities.

Keywords: Working women; rural and urban areas; workplace environment; household activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women in India constitute approximately half of the total population. In July 2018 there were approximately 1,296,834,042 people who lived in India. In 2018-19 the women graduates represented Undergraduate degrees 53%, Phil. degrees: 69.6% followed by PhDs: 41.8%. But by 2050, India's population will increase by 323 million (to 1.67 billion total people), the largest population increase of any country [1]. Earlier in traditional societies, they were confined to the

four walls of houses performing household activities but in modern era they have come out of the four walls to participate in the economic activities. The women are actively participating in academics, politics and public administration etc. Working women who have children have dual responsibilities to perform and thus experience more demand on their time, energy and resources. In spite of all this they are performing very well in household activities and outside job and it makes them all the more powerful. The growing success rate of women entrepreneurs

shows that they are resourceful, and able to succeed, despite the odds. Work participation rate of female workers in rural areas was higher which stood at 20.8 percent as compared to the work participation rate of 12.1 percent in urban areas in 2011. The rate has declined significantly from 33.91 percent in 2001 for rural areas although it has increased for urban areas from 10.55 percent in the state. Even in government employment, we found are only 28 percent of the class-I officers in Haryana only 1061(22.3%) are women. Similarly women are only 28 percent of the class-II officer and 21.4 percent of class-III officers [2]. Spatially, south and southwest districts Bhiwani, Mahendergarh, Rewari, Hisar, Sirsa, Fatehabad and Jind has shown significantly higher female work participation rates whereas northern and eastern districts have low female work participation rate.

Working woman faces so many problems associated with her time allocation because of the peak of their reproductive period while engaging outside in income earning activities. Their problems may be health related or physical, psychological, economical, social and familial. Kapur [3] also mentioned in her study that in rural communities, the status of women is not effectually recognized and they experience discriminatory treatment as compared to their male counterparts. They are not only deprived of certain rights and opportunities and but are also required to wholeheartedly dedicate themselves towards the implementation of household responsibilities.

George defined family as “a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction”. Thus family constitute the most fundamental and basic unit where the seeds of love and care are sown and brought up. In every family mother’s role is so significant and [4] pointed out that mothers can more efficiently allocate resources to children than the fathers, because they are more attached to their children. Disintegration of joint families and development of nuclear families often put heavy stress on the time allocation of working women especially with preschool children .To solve this problem it again calls for shift to joint family structure where grand parents can provide some help.

Gender discrimination has been there in the society since long but the numbers of women are increasing in academics, politics, technology and business etc. Society has started seeing women

in a different outlook and is also accepting them. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, technocrats, managers and officers etc. Today there is no single profession where women are not employed. But it is also true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. There are innumerable challenges and problems faced by women both at home and workplace and they undergo physical or mental stress which makes them vulnerable and put them to risk.

Working women are essential for the development of the society, so empowerment of women is important to the process of upliftment of economic, social, political status of women.

Women have been playing vital roles in households since ages but now women are also recognized for their role in the workplace and are engaged in wide range of activities of work in addition to their routine domestic work [5]. Building a society where women can breathe freely without fear of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination is the need of the hour, to ensure a better future for the next generation.

The major problems for working women arise out of the dual responsibilities of the working woman are domestic work as well as office work. Though more and more women are coming out in search of paid employment and their families also need their income, the attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior, and second-class citizens. Even today, looking after the family and children is generally perceived to be the primary responsibility of the man. They face many problems related to health, psychology and family in association with their time allocation. It is true that with tight time schedule in between office work and domestic work, majority of working women even after realizing the significance of regular exercises can’t do it due to lack of time. Chowdhury et al. [6] also reported that some problems are definitely common, like mental and physical stress, stressful life and work place discrimination etc but some challenges are age or category specific, like prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, and problem of glass ceiling etc.

The male-dominated societies provide advantages to males and try to perpetuate the subordination of women. These kinds of issues can reduce women’s agency because the

choices available are constrained greatly by the institutions, values and practices of the societies in which they live. On the other hand, women are faced with victimization and subordination and on the other hand agency, autonomy and empowerment are being restricted by the structure of society [7]. The disconnect between research of work and in family in India is rather unfortunate as it reduces the ability to address and resolve basic dilemmas such as the perpetuation of traditional sex-role stereotypes and behavior even in the midst of modernity and change. It also limits the range of suggested interventions to the problems of balancing work and family [8,9]. For instance, women's studies have worked tirelessly at bringing about the policy change at macro socio-economic level through the instrument of the state.

Mental health is described by World Health Organization as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope up with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Good mental health is essential for the wellbeing of individuals, their families, and the community. Mental, physical and social health is interdependent [10]. The status of women is directly connected with their economic position, which in turn depends on opportunities for participation in socio-economic activities.

Stress causes many physical ailment conditions like diabetes, heart disease, nerve disorders, or hormone problems. Psychological causes may include work-related stress and anxiety. They may also include depression or concerns about marriage or relationship problems.

Women's education in India is one which attracts our attention immediately. In our country, due to conservative traditionalism, women's status has, through ages, been considered to be lower than that of men. Illiteracy and ignorance is prevalent more in women folk than in men-folk and this evil is rampant especially in rural areas and backward communities. Sexual harassment is another serious problem faced by working women. Whether in the organized or unorganized sector, whether illiterate, low paid workers or highly educated and highly paid executives, a large number of working women face sexual harassment at the workplace at one time or another. This is mostly from other male employees or their superiors. Women tend to hold lower-level positions than men even when

they have sufficient skills to perform higher-level jobs. Sexual harassment of women at work place is one of those problems which discourage women in taking active participation in economic and increasingly being recognized as a violation of human rights and human dignity, which undermines equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women. As women's participation is growing in employment sector, the problem to address to ensure safe and healthy working environment. Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination [11].

In India, now days that women are allowed to work, still they face some problems in workplace and family. They do not get respect from their male colleagues in the workplace. In case of married working women they are not allowed by family members to go for business tour. Gender discrimination is another problem faced by women in regard of wages. Men in private organizations and firms are paid more wages than women as they are considered more skilled than women. Another most difficult problem faced by working women who have small children is that they are forced to leave their children in daycare or in hands of their maid on whom they have little faith. This creates more tension and they are less able to concentrate on their work. Although working women hire maids to do their household work and consequently they have to pay more money to them. Working women are not able to attend family functions due to work overload at workplace and home, denial of leave and thus it create strain in the family.

However, the current statistics reveal that times are changing and Indian women are advancing but many barriers still remain. Creating opportunities in science, education and increasing equality of opportunity in science professions are crucial elements in the quest to empower Indian women. Though the education and employment environment in the last two decades for women in science and technology has witnessed a positive transformation, the deep rooted issues in socio culture acceptance have not been adequately addressed. As a result women are still victims of gender disparity in families and at work places. The other factors that play a significant role in women's academic careers include the constraints of dual careers; access to quality child care, individuals perception regarding professional recognition and career satisfaction and other quality of life issues. The budding career of women is often

compromised by marriage and significant social and personal adjustments are necessary to cope with maternal responsibilities. Clearly in today's organizations facilitating policies and practices for both men and working women at the work place need to be implemented in a manner that is fair and equitable but at the same time productive and efficient [12]. A successful women economic empowerment program depends on contextual realities, available opportunities, and socially accepted norms and in addition to that, the geographical location and availability of certain resources is also equally important to be considered while trying to economically empower women Abdul [13].

1.1 Significance of Study

The study on the problems of rural and urban working women will help us to identify the main constraints and challenges which working women face at home and workplace. In-depth study will also help to frame the strategies to overcome these challenges which the working women face. Policy matters can be made regarding this sensitive issue as women's share of earnings in Indian economy had increased manifolds and thus their problems need to be immediately addressed at the suitable platform.

In view of this the present study was designed with following specific objectives: To examine the nature and extent of problems faced by working women in rural and urban areas.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Haryana state was selected purposively as a locale for the present investigation. Further Hisar district was selected purposively as the study required frequent visits to selected institutions for data collection of rural and urban area. The study was conducted in rural and urban area of Hisar district. From the selected district one block i.e. Hisar II was selected randomly and from selected block, two villages namely Panihar Chak and Arya Nagar were taken randomly to have rural sample. Further to have urban sample, Hisar city was taken purposively and respondents of different professions i.e. university scientist, professors, banks employee, schools and college teachers were taken randomly. This is exploratory research and exact nature of problems is explained in this study.

Women working in both government and public sector were taken randomly from rural as well as urban area. Total sample constituted of 120 working women, 60 from rural and 60 from urban area. From both areas, women working in hospitals, educational institutions, banks, anganwadi workers and asha workers were selected randomly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the respondents according to their age groups revealed that more than half of the respondents belonged to middle age group (55%), followed by young age group (35.8%). Area wise comparative results showed that majority of the rural respondents (70%) were in middle age group, while in urban area more percentage of respondents were in young age group (46.6%).

The analysis revealed that more than half of the respondents belonged to general caste category followed by backward classes (13.3%) and schedule caste (9.1%). With regards to marital status results revealed that in urban area more than three-fourth of the respondents were married (78.3%) followed by unmarried (16.6%) and widow (3.3%). It is clearly evident from the data depicted in Table 1, that in rural area majority of respondents belonged to nuclear families (58.3%) followed by joint (41.6%). Information pertaining to the family size of the respondents under study revealed that in case of urban area more than half of the respondents had medium sized family (58.3%), followed by small (41.6%). Result pertaining to educational attainment of the rural area respondents stated that more than fifty percent were having education up to 12th standard (56.6%), then post graduates (28.3%) and graduate (13.3%). Data pertaining to the annual income (salary) of the respondents revealed that among respondents of urban area, 55.0 percent had income between 100001 to 5 lakhs and 41.6 percent respondents had income above 5 lakhs. In case of rural area 33.3 percent respondents had an annual earning between 100001 to 5 lakhs, followed by 30 percent with income between 50001 to 1 lakhs.

The work place environment puts a great impact on the employee's morale, productivity and engagement. It is the quality of employee's work place environment that's most impacts on their level of motivation and subsequent performance. The relationship between work, the work place

and the tools of work becomes integral part of work itself.

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3.1 Nature and Extent of Problems Faced by Rural Working Women

Some statements regarding the environment at work place are ranked according to the satisfaction level of the rural respondents. The statements that Workplace environment is not very pleasant or particularly safe secured the first rank followed by the statement that not be liked and accepted by people at work secured the second rank. Not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people around you got the third rank. The fourth and fifth rank was given to the statement that protection against heat/cold and power supply. Ahmad (Horizon IRD) also mentioned in her study that rural women are handicapped in so many different ways, amongst others by lack of mobility due to social and cultural restrictions as well as responsibility women bear for family survival.

3.2 Nature and Extent of Problems Faced by Urban Working Women

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that I rank was secured by the statement that workplace environment is not very pleasant or particularly safe. In this context 18 respondents disagreed that the work place environment is not safe. Ahmad [14] also reported in their study that about two thirds of the women indicated that they intended to leave their job upon having another

child, because of the rising cost of child-care services as well as they received the least social support from their supervisors compared to other sources, and tended to cope with conflict using reactive role behavior and personal role redefinition strategies.

The II rank was secured by the statement that they may not be liked or accepted by people at work. In this 15 respondents disagreed with the statement followed by 18 respondents who were neutral. The III rank was secured by the statement that they will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people around them. In this regard 19 respondents were neutral to the statement followed by 17 who agreed with the statement. The IV rank was secured by the statement that the overall infrastructure of organization is satisfying. In this regard 32 respondents agreed to the statement. The IV rank again was secured by the statement that the team meetings were conducted regularly and 27 respondents agreed to it. The V rank was secured by the statement that all the information was shared equally in their department. In this regard 16 respondents strongly agreed to it followed by 27 respondents who agreed to it. Ahmad (Horizon IRD) also reported in her study that women due to their too much of dependency on males find it impossible to organize themselves to defend their interests.

3.3 Respondents on Levels of Problems as per Nature and Extent

An analysis of the Table 3 clearly depict that the more than 50.0 percent of the respondents (51.6%) were satisfied at medium level of nature and extent of problems in total sample followed by low level of nature and extent of problems. However the percentage was slightly higher in urban respondents (53.3%) than rural respondents (50%). A good percentage of urban and rural respondents (43.3% & 31.6%) were also satisfied at low level of nature and extent of problems respectively.

Table 1. Distribution of rural respondents on problems as per working environment (n=60)

Sr. no.	Nature and extent of problems	Satisfaction					Total weighted score	Weighted mean score	Rank
		S.A	A	N	D	S.D			
1.	Workplace environment is not very pleasant or particularly safe	0	1	16	21	22	244	4.07	I
2.	You may not be liked and accepted by people at work	1	2	14	21	22	241	4.017	II
3.	You will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people around you	0	3	14	23	20	240	4	III
4.	Protection against heat/cold	7	4	10	16	23	224	3.74	IV
5.	Power-supply	11	17	15	3	14	172	2.87	V
6.	Lighting and fans	15	19	11	5	10	156	2.6	VI
7.	The overall infrastructure provided by the organization is satisfying	14	13	31	2	0	141	2.35	VII
8.	Safety at work	19	16	23	2	0	128	2.14	VIII
9.	Adequate resources are provided to get the job done	15	24	19	2	0	128	2.14	VIII
10.	I can arrange my workplace as per my comfort	14	26	19	1	0	127	2.12	IX
11.	Work-space	14	31	13	2	0	123	2.05	X
12.	Ventilation	14	32	12	2	0	122	2.03	XI
13.	My job is more challenging and exciting	21	26	6	7	0	119	1.99	XII
14.	My job/responsibility is clearly described	21	25	13	1	0	114	1.9	XIII
15.	There is possibility to perform multi-task in my department	22	28	7	3	0	111	1.85	XIV
16.	The amount of work I am expected to do is reasonable	24	23	11	2	0	111	1.85	XIV
17.	The level of work responsibility given to me is appropriate	23	30	6	1	0	105	1.75	XV
18.	Team meetings are conducted regularly	28	23	8	1	0	102	1.7	XVI
19.	I am encouraged to develop new & more efficient ways to do my work	26	29	5	0	0	99	1.65	XVII
20.	Individual differences are respected (age, gender, education)	27	28	4	1	0	99	1.65	XVII
21.	All the information is shared equally in my department	31	22	6	1	0	97	1.62	XVIII
22.	All the staff in my department is friendly and supportive	22	32	2	2	2	92	1.54	XIX
23.	I am happy to be working in team than alone	30	21	4	2	3	91	1.52	XX
24.	There is good team work & cooperation in my department	33	24	2	1	0	91	1.52	XX
25.	I am recognized & respected (in my team/ by my teammates)	30	22	1	3	4	89	1.49	XXI

Figure in the parenthesis denote percentage

Table 2. Distribution of urban respondents on problems as per working environment (n=60)

Sr. No.	Nature and extent of problems	Satisfaction					Total weighted score	Weighted mean score	Rank
		S.A	A	N	D	S.D			
1.	Do you think that workplace environment is not very pleasant or particularly safe	1	12	14	18	15	214	3.57	I
2.	Do you feel that you may not be liked and accepted by people at work	1	11	18	15	15	212	3.54	II
3.	Do you feel that you will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people around you	2	17	19	13	9	190	3.17	III
4.	The overall infrastructure provided by the organization is satisfying	11	32	11	4	2	134	2.24	IV
5.	Team meetings are conducted regularly	16	27	7	7	3	134	2.24	IV
6.	All the information is shared equally in my department	12	31	10	7	0	132	2.2	V
7.	There is possibility to perform multi-task in my department	11	33	10	6	0	131	2.19	VI
8.	Adequate resources are provided to get the job done	11	35	10	3	1	128	2.14	VII
9.	My job is more challenging and exciting	11	35	9	5	0	128	2.14	VII
10.	Individual differences are respected (age, gender, education)	16	28	11	4	1	126	2.1	VIII
11.	I can arrange my workplace as per my comfort	12	37	7	2	2	125	2.09	IX
12.	The amount of work I am expected to do is reasonable	14	34	8	3	1	123	2.05	X
13.	The level of work responsibility given to me is appropriate	11	39	6	4	0	123	2.05	X
14.	My job/responsibility is clearly described	10	41	5	4	0	123	2.05	X
15.	Protection against heat/cold	20	27	7	3	3	122	2.04	XI
16.	I am encouraged to develop new & more efficient ways to do my work	14	35	8	3	0	120	2	XII
17.	Ventilation	16	34	7	2	1	118	1.97	XIII
18.	Work-space	19	30	4	1	6	110	1.84	XIV
19.	Power-supply	21	30	8	1	0	109	1.82	XV
20.	Lighting and fans	18	34	4	2	2	108	1.8	XVI
21.	There is good team work & cooperation in my department	26	26	4	3	1	107	1.79	XVII
22.	Safety at work	20	31	4	0	5	104	1.74	XVIII
23.	All the staff in my department is friendly and supportive	29	22	6	3	0	103	1.72	XIX
24.	I am happy to be working in team than alone	25	25	4	2	4	99	1.65	XX
25.	I am recognized & respected (in my team/ by my teammates)	31	26	3	0	0	92	1.54	XXI

Figure in the parenthesis denote percentage

Table 3. Distribution of respondents on levels as per nature and extent of problems

Sr. no.	Level of nature and extent of problems	Rural (n=60)	Urban (n=60)	Total (n=120)
1	Low (35-51)	19 (31.67)	26 (43.33)	45(37.50)
2	Medium (52-68)	30 (50.0)	32 (53.34)	62(51.67)
3	High (69-85)	11 (18.33)	2 (3.33)	13(10.83)

Figure in the parenthesis denote percentage

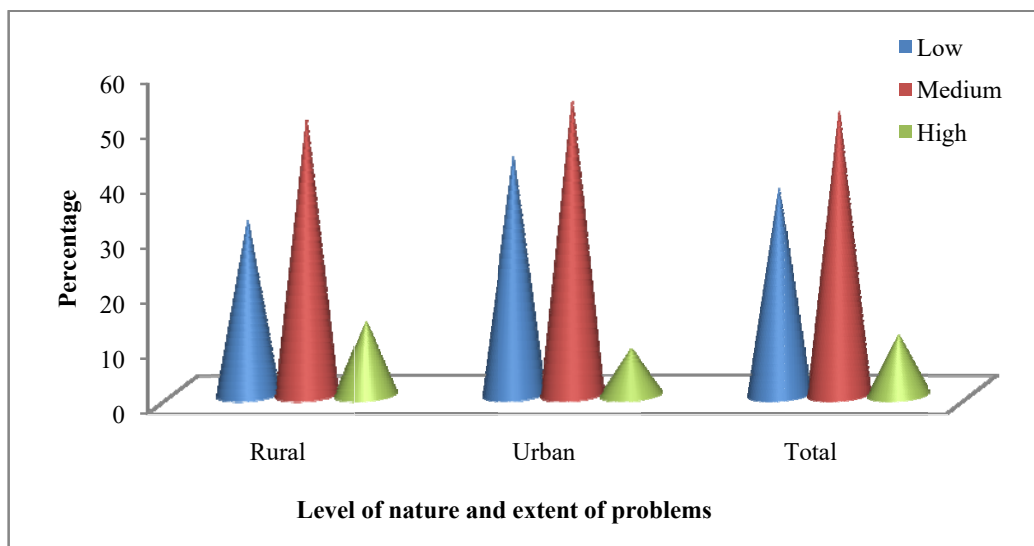


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents on levels as per nature and extent of problems

4. CONCLUSION

Regarding level of satisfaction of the rural respondents, results revealed that the statement about workplace environment was not very pleasant or particularly safe was given I rank, in which 22 respondents out of 60 were strongly disagreed and 21 were disagreed on this statement which means that majority of the respondents were satisfied with pleasant and safe workplace environment. Similar response was given by the respondents on statements that they may not be liked or accepted by the people at work and they will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people around them, where on these statements majority of the respondents were disagreed. Further similar statement results were found in urban respondents. Out of total sample results depict that majority of the respondents (51.6%) were satisfied at medium level of nature and extent of problems in total sample followed by low level. Rani (2014) mentioned in her study that the causes for work-life imbalance were classified as organizational and personal factors and the organizational factors included work related factors, time-related factors and relationship-

related factors of which the personal factors included lack of family support, marital conflicts and frequent change in sleeping patterns.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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