

# Challenges and Issues of Working Women in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract -

*India is a traditional country and there is diversity in religions, culture and customs. Role of the women in India mostly is household and limited to domestic issues. In some cases women can find employment as nurses, doctors, teachers the caring and nurturing sectors. But even if well qualified women engineers or managers or geologists are available, preference will be given to a male of equal qualification.*

*The present study investigated to identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher post and challenges & problems faced by women workers. Further the study try to explain the real condition of Indian working women and also make an effort to clear main problems of working women.*

**Key words** - challenges, problems, traditional, women workers

## Introduction -

Scenario of Working Women: Women are the backbone of the society. She plays a vital role in the economic development of the country and her contribution is as equal as their male counterparts. Without active participation of women in various national, social, economic and political activities, the progress of the country will be stagnant. Traditionally, Indian women had been Home makers but in 21st Century, due to higher education, better awareness and increasing financial demands of family, women also go out and choose careers. Although Indian women have started working outside their homes, but still there are several issues and challenges that working women face today. Sometimes they are not treated equally in their workplace. They do not get the same

benefits as that of male employees too. Gender bias, unequal pay, security, mental and physical harassment, lack of proper family support, insufficient maternity leave are considered as major issues and challenges that working woman faces nowadays.

The working and social scenario in today's era is far different than that of twenty-thirty years ago. Advances in technology plus evolving work and the role of family for women in India have changed the contribution to the business environment of 21st century. The financial demands for Indian families are rising day by day. Higher cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing household income. As a result, women in India, who were mostly known as homemakers, are forced to go for jobs and take the challenges that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts in call centres or BPOs. Today women are giving their best and active contribution in all the male-dominated fields such as sports, medical, law, military, academics, politics, bank, top level corporate positions etc. In recent era working women can spend less time in household works than they did thirty years ago.

Moreover, Indian working women are facing lot more challenges than their counterparts in other parts of the world. In India, still men are considered as the primary winner and boss of the family. Although working women handle their professional life in facing competition and challenges at work place and personal life in managing household work, handle children, family, cooking, social responsibilities are still considered as the duty of women only. They have to take up a full day job plus handle all household activities that they handled as homemaker. Due to such multitasking efforts of woman increased stress becomes by-product for her. Sometimes, the relationship with her Saul mate becomes unbalanced, if proper balancing act is not delivered in both personal and professional life. If we consider women's role in corporate environment, then sometimes they have to bring their work at home also and it cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but this type of lifestyle creates stress in working women and it directly affects her family.

Waking up early, ignoring her health issues and get all the stuffs ready for children and her husband is big practical challenge. So on an average, women have lost 2 hours

of sleep per day and up to 14 hours sleep per day. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with their in-laws and parents. This adds more stress to women because they have to handle them and please all the family members of her husband. The belief of male superiority in the society creates several hurdles for women at their workplace. Women discover that they must be much better than their male colleague to reach at the top. When she achieves that top position in the company, again it is much difficult for women to work with male employees. Also because of social and psychological tradition in the society, the women colleagues too don't lend support to their own woman boss. Working in such conditions inevitably put much greater strain on women than man. These types of problems make women less eager to progress in their career. It has been observed that the family responsibility expands the working women have to change their job, select part time job or leave the job. This situation creates unnecessary stress for losing their job.

Generally women are more hesitant in financial investments. They are more cautious about money. There is a saying for women: "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". Saving is the habit of women. In earlier days also, when women were only homemakers, they were used to save money for emergencies as well as for future planning. In those days, women did not have knowledge of various investment outlets. But in 21st Century, the working women have become more aware about the financial investments and they have the great potential to bring a positive change in socio economic conditions of the country. Today's working women invest in various investment avenues like shares, debentures, funds, commodities etc.

#### **Objective of the Study -**

1. To identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher post and challenges & problems faced by women workers.
2. To clear main problems of working women.

#### **Problems Faced by Working Women in India -**

**Occupational problems as stress :** In women Occupational stress is stress involving work. Work and family are the two most important aspects in women's lives.

Balancing work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue for many societies. 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.

**Reasons of occupational stress:** Imbalance between work and family leads to occupational stress. Imbalance between work and family life arises due to a number of factors. Various factors are following:

**1. Balancing Personnel and Professional life**

It is a very big challenge for Indian working women to maintain a balance between their work and family. She has the responsibility to fulfil all the expectations of family members and particularly from kids. In India, the career and professional aspirations are still considered as secondary for women.

In majority of the families, there is a lack of emotional and moral support given to the working women. And at the same time, there are many official expectations and deadlines that women have to fulfil to continue their job. In this type of dual roles to become perfect in all tasks, the working women feel very much stressed in her day to day life.

**2. No Safety of Working Women While Traveling**

Typically, the orthodox mindset in the Indian society makes it difficult for a working woman to balance her domestic environment with the professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to work after six o'clock. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety every day about a woman's safety while traveling. So many issues affect a working woman because she is closely protected or watched by her family and the society.

**3. Mental harassment**

It is an age old convention that women are less capable and inefficient in working as compared to men. The attitude which considers women unfit for certain jobs holds back women. In spite of the constitutional provisions, gender bias creates obstacles in their recruitment. In addition to this, the same attitude governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job. The true equality has not been achieved even after 61 years of

independence. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career.

#### **4. Lack of Family Support**

Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion.

#### **5. Insufficient Maternity Leaves**

Insufficient maternity leave is another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives.

#### **6. Job insecurity**

Unrealistic expectations, especially in the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes puts unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employee, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload extremely long work hours and intense pressures to perform at peak levels all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stressors.

#### **7. Psychological Aspects of the Problem**

It has been observed from the analysis that majority of working women are suffering from stress caused by role conflict or multiple roles. They have to perform multiple roles like managing work at their workplace, manage family and children demands, fulfil social responsibilities etc. Working women face a big dilemma in managing work-family conflicts. Working women with rigid schedules report more family difficulties than working women with flexible schedules. This can cause many health issues such as frequent headache, hypertension, obesity etc.

By analytical study, it is found that the stress level in working women increase in direct proportionally to their age. This may be because of the additional responsibilities imposed on elder women both in family as well as at workplace. Also the number of

working hours affects the stress level of working women. This may be due to the nature of work they undergo which leads to physical and mental tiredness. The childcare arrangement is also another aspect of creating stress in working women. Working mothers have to make proper arrangements for the care of their children and their daily activities which again create stress in them.

These all types of stress creating problems can be managed if the institution provides a helping hand for working women in the form of superior's support, subordinate's support and proper number of paid or unpaid leaves. Also some stress relief strategies like spending time with family, yoga and meditation, entertainment and music etc. can help working women to reduce their stress level.

#### **8. Workplace Adjustment**

Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be lesson of life. Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

#### **9. Other reasons**

It include Personal demographics like age, level of education, marital status, number of children, personal income and number of jobs currently had where you work for pay and Work situation characteristics like job tenure, size of employing organization, hours worked per week.

#### **Conclusion -**

The paper discussed the issues and challenges of working women in the current era of 21st century. The problems of personal and professional life are highlighted in the paper and described in detail. To apply the balancing act between personal and professional life and keep her-self fit and fine women has to undergo many situations and challenges. Finally, the paper is concluded with tips on balancing act in which focus is given to the three major components like knowledge, skills and behaviour. Hence, in

21<sup>st</sup> century, woman needs more psychological and social support from the society as well as governing body.

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