

EFFECTS OF EMPLOYABILITY AND LIFE OF WOMEN: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Lokeshwari

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Rajasthan)

Email: lokeshwari.uniraj@gmail.com

Abstract

The notion continues to exist that women's sphere of action is essentially limited by the horizons of the small family world and the roles of wife, mother and housewife are regarded as the central ones for the women. New era has opened many opportunities for work for women in organized and unorganized sectors, though enhanced their socio-economic status on one hand and generated various problems for them affecting their physical and social life. This article is based on the Ph.D. research of the author on the problems and challenges being experienced by female teachers in government schools in Jaipur City. The article is the outcome of content analysis of secondary data based on the effects of employability on women. The result of the study shows that opportunities for employability have though enhanced their socioeconomic status in terms of financial position, career choice, marriage, family, parenting, and overall personality but have also generated various problems for them like problems of leisure, role conflicts, parenting stress, marital adjustment, health and mental stress, etc. as traditional patriarchal expectations from them regarding their family roles have not undergone much change.

Keywords

Working Women, Work, Employability, Status, Parenting, Dual Role.

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Dr. Lokeshwari,

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Introduction

One cannot speak of women without dealing with their functional role in the family. Although women have been taking part in the economic life for a long, the notion continues to exist that women's sphere of action is essentially limited by the horizons of the small family world. A little attention has been given to the kinds of work which are performed by women in different periods. Patriarchal norms are stricter for not only housewives but also for those women who are working. The whole social and political emancipation movement of India has brought to the women their participation in public life. Besides this, the emergence of a modern industrial society under the influence of capitalism, industrialization, urbanization and globalization has affected traditional patriarchal families, the status of women of all classes, stereotyped gender roles, the conception of marriage, avenues of employment, career choices, etc. New era has opened many opportunities for employment and work for women in organized and unorganized sectors, but traditional patriarchal expectations regarding their family roles have not undergone much change. Seeking of employment outside the home in organized and unorganized sectors by women through enhanced their socio-economic status on the one hand and generated various problems for them like problems of role conflicts, parenting stress, marital adjustment, health and mental stress, leisure etc. on the other hand.

The concept of work is defined as the carrying out of tasks, which involves the expenditure of mental and physical effort, and its objective is to produce goods and services to cater to human needs. An occupation, or job, is work that is done in exchange for a regular salary or wage. To *Marx*, 'work as the production of goods and services holds the key to human happiness and fulfillment' Women's household labor is seen as non-productive labor. Market labor is said to be the only productive labor as it has exchange value. Many studies reflect on employability among women and various pros and cons emerged due to women's work culture.

Clarkberg and Moen (2001) have developed a typology of couples on the basis of their work pattern i.e. *traditional*, where wife is not in paid work and only the husband is the breadwinner; *neo-traditional*, where wife is in part-time paid work and the husband is the breadwinner; *dual-earner*, where wives and husbands are working full-time.

Talcott Parsons had argued, the 'expressive role of childcare is best and naturally suited for women', therefore women choose for a part-time job or break in career because they wish to combine work with raising a family.

The preference theory was given by *Hakim (2004)*. She believes that until recently women did not have equal opportunities but five changes have transformed

the situation for women to get better labor market opportunities. These changes are the contraceptive revolution (made it possible for them to control fertility); equal opportunities revolution (got an equal right to access all positions in the labor market); expansion of jobs for secondary earners (increase in part-time jobs and flexible-hour working); expansion of white-collar occupations (attractive job reservoir); increased personal preferences about job (rather than financial necessity as its determining factor). She further says that these changes have brought changes in the lifestyles of women in the USA and UK and resulting in the emergence of three groups of women:

1. *Home-Centered Women* represent 20 percent of women and are well qualified but do not prefer to do paid jobs unless required to by a shortage of money. They seek higher education as it opens the prospect to find better life partners. They are concerned about better childcare for their children.
2. *Adaptive Women* Combine family life and paid work without prioritizing one or the other. Balance between the two depends on the age of their children. Therefore, they are attracted to flexi-hour working and part-time jobs. According to Hakim, this group is the largest with approximately two-thirds of women, depending on the country. They are also concerned about better childcare.
3. *Work-Centered Women* focus on career development and fit their family life according to their work. They are a minority group among women (less than 20 percent), and for this reason, Hakim believes that men tend to be dominant in the workplace.

Effects of Employability on the Status of Women

The socio-economic emancipation of Indian women has itself been a product of the changes in their lives. Many changes are manifested among women due to their employability.

Women in Labour Market

*Barron and Norris (1976)*⁹⁹, a British sociologist applied the *dual labor market theory* to gender inequalities. They say that there are two labor markets: the primary and the secondary. The secondary market of labor has jobs for women who are characterized by low pay, less job security, inferior working conditions, and few promotion prospects. There are also no unions which weaken their position. In this, market, workers can be easily replaced, and no additional skills are required for them.

A study by *Burchell and Rubery (1994)* based on works in Northampton in the Mid-1980s, reflects that the labor market is not dual but instead, there are found five clusters or groups in a labor market. These are:

- The *primary segment* is in the most secure and advantaged jobs.
- *Stickers*, who were relatively satisfied with their work and donot wish to change it for gaining promotions.
- *Female descendrs*, which comprise 96 percent of women workers are those who have lost ground in the labor market after giving up full-time work to after their children.
- The *young and mobile*.
- *Labor market descendrs*, who had lost position due to unemployment

Marxist feminist approaches analyze women's work and connect gender inequality in the labor market to the capitalism. *Walby (1986)*¹⁰¹ She also believes that work also shapes their domestic relationships. Women suffer disadvantages in the labor market that they become only too willing to accept the main responsibility for domestic tasks.

According to *Walter (1998)* , a Post- Modernist there are five main areas that are necessary to be tackled are inequality in the workplace, lack of high-quality affordable childcare, higher rate of poverty among females than males, higher rate of domestic and sexual violence among females and women's continued domestic work and childcare responsibility.

Objectification of women leads to the sexualization of women's work. Like in television and in the cinema to be successful physical good looks, sexually appealing and youth seem to be necessary attributes for women (*Mulvey, 1975*). Objectification and sextualization of women's work have not only social-economic but also has psychological repercussions on women. They get subject to catcalls, harassment, wolf-whistles, rape, attacks, sexual violence and occupational stress as well. They have to work in odd hours like in hotels, pubs, and bars to be presentable and appealing to customers and never to complain about sexual harassment by their customers to their bosses. With the sprawling service sector, the gendering and sextualization of work are also increasing.

A study by *Zeytinoglu, Seaton, Lillevik and Moruz (2005)*⁷⁹ reveals such trends in Canada and other industrialized countries, particularly in the retail trade and consumer service sectors. Their study results suggest that part-time and casual job contributes to stress and health problems for women. For this purpose, they conducted interviews and focus groups with union members and female workers in retail and consumer services. Results show that stress is the main occupational problem along with low wages for these women which are the outcome of the working conditions in part-time and casual jobs. The work-related stress affects the physical and emotional health of the women labor.

They feel work-life imbalance both at the workplace and home because of many factors like the performance of multiple roles and domestic responsibilities, employment pressures, role conflicts, attitude of family members and superiors, competition, working conditions etc.

Working women in the menopausal stage try to maintain their work performance but it cannot be denied that their physical efficiency is affected by menopausal symptoms, which in turn affects their work outcomes. Menopause transition adversely affects the occupational health of the working women. Another study by *Hardy, Thorne, Griffiths and Hunter (2018)*⁸² examines ‘the effect of menopause and its symptoms, work stress and work environment association with work outcomes.’

Thus, the job has no doubt emancipated the status of women but they also suffer many challenges in the labor market regarding status and opportunities as compared to men.

Change in Status

A deep and vital change has taken place in the economic condition and personal status of women. The change in their attitude toward various issues of life had, in its turn, affected their behavior patterns in various spheres of life. According to *Neera Desai (1957)*, “The real advance which has been made during this period is actually in the revolution that has been brought about in the outlook with regard to the conception of the status of women and her role in society. Now woman is no longer looked upon as a childbearing machine and a helot in the home”.⁴⁹

Dual Role

The married working women are required to perform dual roles; one as wives, mothers, and housewives, and the other, as employees. In addition to the biological functions that they have to perform the culturally defined women’s roles because of their sex and at the same time, they are confronted with the responsibilities and duties connected with their employment. The pattern of families of working wives and the functions of their different members are liable to be greatly affected by the fact of the wife’s gainful employment outside the periphery of the home.

In a country like India, where the coexistence of tradition and modernity is a common phenomenon, studies on dual-earner families have emphasized that such a co-existence also creates antagonistic demands as well as conflicting norms and expectations with regard to working women. Her adopting paid work outside the home leads to changes in gendered work division, marital relationships, relations with in-laws and authority patterns within the family.

Desai and Anantram (1985) observe that middle-class women's outside work participation is not merely an economic activity, but it affects norms regarding the proper sphere of women, their status vis-a-vis their husbands, values underlying patriarchal family structure, redefinition of the roles of family members, care of children, mixing with other men and remaining outside the house for long periods.⁵⁰

In her performance of dual roles, she makes utmost efforts to achieve marital adjustment in a background where man finds it much more difficult to adapt to the changing functions of the family. *Ross (1961)*, while discussing the difficulty of adjustment by men in the 'working-wife Hindu family' in its urban setting, writes:

"Strain can occur when an adult must take over a new work role for which he has not been prepared as a child ... The new division of labor in the nuclear urban family is, therefore, probably harder for the men of the family to adjust to than it is for the women, as women's tasks in all societies have less prestige than those of men, women taking over 'male' business or professional roles are moving to a higher level of job prestige, whereas men are moving to lower levels of work".⁵¹

Thus, women's employment has brought two things to the forefront: her reduced availability to others, and increased demands placed upon by others for successfully performing of her two roles.

Change in Personality and Ideology

Work gives personal status and an independent social identity to women. Women are gradually realizing that they have personalities of their own as human beings and that their mission in life does not end with becoming good wives and wise mothers but also in realizing that they are all members of the civic community and of the body politic (*Rajagopal, 1936*).⁵²

According to *Neera Desai*, "The supreme goal of women's life is not circumscribed to merely love making, dutifulness to husband, child-bearing and domestic work. They have begun to realize that woman's life has a higher and a more serious objective" (*Kapur, 1970*).⁵³ So, different jobs give birth to different personality traits. Overall, higher objectives and greater responsibility carve the personality of women at work.

Choice of Career

Choices of career opportunities have been increasing for women with the expansion of industrial and service sectors in the globalized era but careers in arts, education, call centers and medical fields are mostly preferred by women.

According to *Chanana (2007)*, after liberalizing the Indian economy in the 1990s, women's enrollment has increased in the fields of study which were traditionally dominated by men like engineering, commerce, pharmacy, law etc. There also exists a preference for traditionally considered female occupations/professions such as medicine, nursing and teaching among women and their parents.⁵⁴

Changing Attitude towards Marriage

The social processes like industrialization, urbanization, modernization, globalization and secularization have brought socio-psychological changes in the attitude and values of people. Besides this greater geographical and occupational mobility, education, and socio-economic emancipation is also the outcomes of these processes. The attitudes of educated women have considerably changed, particularly with regard to marriage and their own status.

According to *Neera Desai (1957)*, "More and more women consider self-respect and the development of personality as necessary goals of life. The two old pillars of the Hindu society viz. sacramental marriage and joint family are weakening as revealed in the studies."

According to New York Times report⁵⁵, the tendency to opt for singlehood is increasing among Japanese women for they have fed up with the drudgery of the double standard and focusing on their work and newfound liberation. In the mid-1990s, the number of the Japanese women who never married was one in twenty which has increased to one out of every seven in 2015. This drastic change is leading to a serious issue of a faster decline in Japan's population and childbirth rate. According to *Kumiko Nemoto*, a professor of sociology at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, 'Japan's consumption-oriented culture also means that single women with careers and money have a wide range of activities and emotional outlets that their previous generation females did not. They no longer need husbands for their economic security.'

Changes in Family

Scholars have tried to establish nexus between industrialization and family change. As per *E. Durkheim (1921)*, under the influence of capitalism, industrialization and urbanization, there takes place 'contraction' of the traditional patriarchal family and the rise of the 'modern conjugal family' consisting of husband, wife and their children.⁵⁶

In the 21st century, emerging families are 'diverse'. Some families enjoy double or triple privileges while others must struggle with multiple disadvantages. Families can be two-parent families, single-parent families, blended families, extended families, couples (married or cohabiting) and people living alone (after

networking with other households through kinship). In a 24/7 economy, with the expansion in a non-standard employment contract, there is seen the emergence of dual-earner married couples, 'split-shift' couples and DINK (double income and no kid) families. Therefore, change in family structure gives many opportunities to women to work and groom their personalities.

Socialization and Parenting

There is a link between the educational level, nature of the job, earnings of women and mothers and their influence on the family. *Kohn (1969)*⁵⁷ in his pioneering work focused on how different jobs generate the personality tendencies that are required to perform them. In turn, job-driven personality tendencies then get transmitted to one's children via parenting 'values'.

Similarly, *Parcel and Monaghan (1994)*⁵⁸ found in their study a positive association between the complexity of employed mothers' work and the quality of their home environments, the latter measured by such variables as intellectual stimulation and material warmth and responsiveness. The greater the job complexity and the opportunities for self-direction, the higher will be the quality of home.

In addition, *Votruba-Drzal (2003)*⁵⁹ found that the additional increments of income have the biggest impact on cognitive stimulation within families that are at the lowest level of income-obviously the most vulnerable of all families. Because the additional income may make it possible for a mother to purchase additional education for herself which leads to still greater cognitive stimulation for her children. So, a mother's employability positively affects and influences childrearing and parenting.

Marital Adjustment

The changing conception of marriage on the one hand and keeping many expectations (personal gratification, self-actualization, emotional, physiological, social and economic needs) and demands by husbands and wives from each other are the leading factors for the problem of adjustment in marriage.

Happiness or unhappiness in a marital life centers primarily around the husband-wife relationship and emotional security among the spouses. This holds true in respect of urban nuclear families and educated working-wife couples. Much is expected and demanded out of marriage, the disappointment of its falling short of that may cause greater frustration and makes for deeper basis for friction.

Thus, the ambiguity and uncertainty of the roles of the spouses in this newly emerging 'working-wife family' together with the complexities of modern life and exaggerated emphasis on individuality and individual gratification make it more difficult for both the spouses to adjust to their marital obligations. It is on account

of all this that the problem of adjustment in marriage has acquired greater importance today (Kapur, 1970).

Conclusion

The result of the study shows that opportunities for employability have though enhanced their socioeconomic status in terms of financial position, career choice, marriage, family, parenting, and overall personality but have also confronted working women with various problems like problems of leisure, role conflicts, parenting stress, marital adjustment, health and mental stress, their secondary position in the labor market, etc. as traditional patriarchal expectations from them regarding their family roles have not undergone much change.

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