

Being Working Women in India: Problems and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

India is a traditional country that collectively represents a mix of religions, cultures, customs and people. It is perceived that role of women in India is primarily household and limited to domestic chores. But over time, the requirement and needs of a family are changed. Increasing women's literacy, growing economic pressure, desires to gain economic and social independence, high cost of living and expenses on children's education are among few of the reasons that force a woman to step out from their home and take up a career or livelihood.

Present study revolves around the urban women working across various sectors in twin cities i.e. Secunderabad and Hyderabad. The study also attempts to identify the numerous factors which creates hurdles for a female employee in climbing the ladder of success in their career path. This study's main objective is to understand the problems and challenges faced by working women in twin cities. The study is based on primary as well as secondary data collected from various sources. The study's findings conclude that most of the female employees agreed that they face lots of problems in balancing their personal and professional lives. However, they can balance work and family life with the help and support received from their organization and the family members. With this study an effort is made to throw some light on the real problems and challenges faced by the working women in twin cities.

Keywords: Challenges, Organizational support, Women, Working life.

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INTRODUCTION

The status of Indian women has undergone significant changes. Modern Indian women have shown themselves in making a separate identity for themselves. A woman plays a very vital role in a society in terms of career and empowerment. Today, women have become the prominent earning source in their families and become more centric in families by covering and undertaking the family responsibilities, family management, and a contributor on economic sources. A woman also plays a very important role in the country's economic development and her contribution and efforts is nothing less than their male counterparts.

The scenario of Indian culture with regards to the career of female workforce is undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization, education, modernization, globalization and expansion. There are numerous reasons for a female to step out of her home, work, and earn. Reasons like to be financially independent, prove herself and mark her identity, earn a living for her family, or support her husband to run their families are few of the factors pushing Indian women to look beyond the boundaries. Breaking off her old traditional image of home maker and to prove herself to the world, today's women are taking up new roles and challenges related to work and career.

While pursuing career opportunities, female employees in India face many challenges and problems at the workplace and outside. Despite many efforts from government and

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organizations, the female section of society is still deprived in many ways compared to the male section of society. We talk about gender equality, woman empowerment, and freedom to work, but how far it has been achieved in reality is a big question. Coming this far, we could only say that still there is a very long and hard path to go. For a woman, there are still certain kinds of jobs and roles that require approval from society or family to work and earn.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to address the following research objectives:

1. To gain knowledge about the problems and challenges faced by women working in different private organizations.
2. To find out the possible suggestions that could help them overcome the problems they face at their workplace.
3. To find out the kind of support they are getting from their organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study's research design is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify the problems and challenges faced by working women in the twin city-Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Data collection tools: Both primary and secondary are used to achieve the desired objective of the study.

Primary data: A structured questionnaire was distributed to female employees of different organizations in twin city. A sample size of 38 questionnaires was collected and analyzed carefully.

Secondary data: Collected from various journals, research

papers, books, documents on websites and articles.

Data analysis: Collected data was analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages, and the analyzed data is shown using a pie diagram.

Findings: Most of women employees agreed that they face lots of problems and challenges in balancing work and family life. But they can handle the burden of dual responsibility because of the support of their family members and the organization in which they work.

Notes: Explanation of Research Methodology in detail is mentioned below.

Literature Review

S. No.	Author	Year	Findings and conclusion
1.	Wentling	2003	She showed that women's twin roles cause tension and conflicts due to her social structure, which is still more dominant. In her study on working women in Delhi, she has shown that "traditional authoritarian set up of Hindu social structure continues to be the same basically and hence women face the problem of role conflict change in attitudes of men and women according to the situation can help to overcome their problem."
2.	Seto,Morimoto and Maruyama	2004	The study finds that work-related factors except job pressure were significantly correlated with depressive symptoms. Multiple regression analyses revealed that women who had more frequent work-family conflict and more work-related stressors such as bad relationships in the workplace, job insecurity, and skills underutilization were likely to have more depressive symptoms. The study also concludes that work-family conflict among women workers with young children and various work-related factors such as perceived bad relationships at work, job insecurity, and underutilization of skills had a significant relationship with depressive symptoms.
3.	Seto,Morimoto and Maruyama	2006	The study aims to assess the working and family life characteristics and the degree of domestic and work strain of female workers with different employment statuses and weekly working hours who are rearing children. Participants were the mothers of preschoolers in a large Japanese city. Women are classified into three various groups. According to hours they worked and their employment conditions, they were compared on the factor like work, financial difficulties, childcare, household burden, psychological effects and strains. The study concluded that regular employees were more likely to report job pressure and inflexible work schedules and experience more strain related to work and family than non-regular employees. Non-regular employees were more likely to be facing financial difficulties and long working hours, tended to encounter socio-economic difficulties, and often lacked support from family and friends. A female worker also has different stressors according to their working hours and work status.
4.	Aminah Ahmad	2007	Examined the work-family conflict experienced by 239 married female production operators in dual career families, their social support, and the coping strategies used to manage the conflict. The women experienced more work interference with family than family interference with work. Work interference with family was significantly higher in the earlier life cycle stage than in the later stage. About two-thirds of the women indicated that they intended to leave their job upon having another child, mainly due to the rising childcare services cost. 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.
5.	M Rajgopal	2007	His research on "work to live, don't live to work: A cross-sectional study of the work-life balance of higher managers" finds that work-life balance is currently in vogue among governments, organizations as well as researchers. Managers in organizations worldwide are exposed to significant pressures in their jobs, which further influence the balance between their work and private lives, job satisfaction and overall well-being. The key findings in terms of the factors influencing higher managers are reported. They suggest that individuals are influenced by several aspects. The responsibility for personal work-life balance not only lies on individuals themselves, but the organizations and governments play an important role in treating this issue.
6.	R Sujatha	2008	The study aims to investigate the various factors that thwart the career growth of women managers in private organizations. The study follows an exploratory-cum-analytical research design, with a questionnaire administered to 440 men and women managers. The data analyzed using Factor analysis, discriminant analysis and factor mapping revealed that work – family pressures, structural barriers and managerial stereotypes are the major factors that thwart women manager's career opportunities.

S. No.	Author	Year	Findings and conclusion
7.	Sujatha Mellacheruv	2008	States that women as a part of the workforce and gaining recognition and choosing challenging careers .As a result, they face a variety of pressures at home as well as at work place. Home related pressures are high in case of women who needed to take care of either younger children or elderly family members back home. On the other hand, women with grown up children and who enjoy support from the family members have less pressures. To deal with home related pressures these women adapt a variety of coping strategies.
8.	Sanghamitra Buddhapriya	2009	The study's primary objective was to understand the impact of family responsibility on the career decisions of women professionals and find the type of work-life support they would require from their employers to balance their work and life. The study is conducted with 121 women professionals working in government services, the public and private sectors, and NGOs across different levels. The study's findings reveal that work-life imbalance usually arises out of a lack of adequate time and support to manage the work commitments both personal and family responsibilities. Meeting competing demands of work and family is not tiring but can be stressful and can lead to sickness and absenteeism. It inevitably affects productivity. Balancing both career and family is an arduous task for working women especially when they have small children and there is no well-equipped day-care / crèche facilities where they can leave their kids without any tension while they are at work. Women often suffer from the guilt-complex of not spending enough time during the tender age of their children and being forced to leave their children in the hands of the maids on whom they have little faith. Women employees thus face a dual burden-work and family-which creates a lot of stress and strain and role conflict.
9.	Sophia J. Ali	2011	The main objectives of the study conducted by her was to assess women's career development practices, find out if gender balance was given a chance, and also to examine the challenges facing women in career development and establish the best practices on gender equality. The study is conducted with 78 respondents from Kapsabet Municipality. She found that most of the women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmers and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities. The study recommended that organizations strive to ensure that career development programmers were set to enhance women employees' career development. Top management should also be committed to women's career development, and organizations should also introduce affirmative action to address women's career development urgently.
10.	Reimara Valk and Vasanthi Srinivasan	2011	The study was conducted with 13 women IT professionals in the software sector in Bangalore, India. The narratives reveal six major themes: familial influences on life choices; multi-role responsibilities and attempts to negotiate them; self and professional identity; work-life challenges and coping strategies; organizational policies and practices; and social support. The findings of the study point to the uniqueness of women software professionals' position in India Firstly, women continue to be the primary providers for domestic and childcare responsibilities. Even among dual-earner career couples, women spend more time on both housework. Secondly, the nature of the IT industry causes some unique challenges such as project work with peak load, working at odd hours and extensive travel that makes the work life balance difficult to manage for women and childcare than their partners. But the majority of women in study were able to 'have it all' because of family support.
11.	Kumar and Sunder	2012	States that the role of women was confined to household chores and limited to domestic issues. In the male-dominated Indian society, women suffered to extreme levels of exploitation. The study seeks to identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher posts and problems faced by women executives in public sector banks related to work performance. The data was collected from 104 women executives working in public sector commercial banks in Puducherry.
12.	Vijaya Mani	2013	The study's general objective was to explore attitudes and belief of women in formal work organizations the WLB challenges faced by women professionals in Tamil Nadu,India. The study is conducted with 500 women respondents working in the government sector and private sector organizations. The findings revealed that role conflict, lack of recognition, organizational politics, gender discrimination, elderly and child care issues, quality in health, time management problems, and lack of proper social support are the major factors influencing the WLB of women professionals in Tamil Nadu.

S. No.	Author	Year	Findings and conclusion
13.	Varsha Kumari	2014	The study found that India probably still has a long way to go to make our workplaces free from any prejudices, abuses and harassments. The study's findings state that working women feel that financial independence gives them more respect in society but are facing more mental pressure and depression than non-working women. Health problems, child care issues, burden of domestic work etc., are the major problems faced by working women. Lastly, the study concludes that professional women feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life. The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed. The study also recommended some solutions like organizations should ensure women employees' security, child care facilities, flexible timing, and the possibility to work from home are required for working women.
14.	Kajal D. Bhojwani	2014	the study throws light on the following findings. (a) Stress resulting from dual responsibility of women has been identified as a prime factor of problems to women executives in public sector commercial banks, (b) factor namely exploitation due to submissive nature of women executives has been discriminated as second important factor, (c) factor dealing with ignorant customers confronting women executives, (d) factor was the rigid policies of the banks and lack of flexible working hours and other such policies supporting women employees. All four factors are highly responsible for the women executive's problems in public sector commercial banks. All the four major contributory variables are titled as staff management stressors. Besides this, fear of transfer which disturbs family life and domestic peace followed by the factor Combining domestic work and office work leaves no time for making us fit for higher posts occupying second rank. Lacks of support from family and at work add to the woes. Since the environment in public sector banks is more or less similar, these factors may prove to be great hindrance to women executives working in public sector commercial banks.
15.	Kumaraswamy M., Ashwini S.	2015	Their study's objective was to analyze the challenges linked with balancing professional and personal life and analyze the work-life balance of women employees working in the banking industry. 150 respondents were chosen from private and public sector bank to conduct this study. The study's findings reveal that it is important for employees to maintain a healthy balance between work and their private lives. Generally those employees who have better work-life balance contribute more towards the success of the organization. The organization can render better service to the customers by having productive and efficient employees. Family sphere changes that have impacted individuals' work-life balance in today's context include nuclear families, single parent households, dual earning parents, parents working at different locations, and increasing household work.
16.	Ramya K. R. and A. Raghurama	2016	the study tries to focus on some issues and challenges faced by women participants in the Indian banking sector. Researcher finds out that the banking and insurance sectors today offer more prospects for jobs for women - both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, there are some common problems faced by women managers, officers, and clerical groups in the banking and insurance sector in their careers. These include the dual role's burden, sexual harassment in the workplace, the refusal of men to accept women as colleagues or seniors, and the lack of solidarity among women. Many women play both primary breadwinner and primary care-taker role, which creates tension most men do not experience when juggling work and personal responsibilities.
17.	Sunita Bishnoi & Gurjeet Kaur	2017	Their research's primary objective was to study the various family and social life stressors faced by women executives working in private sector banks. The data was collected from 500 women executives. Results indicated that women executives perceived 'dual responsibility', 'lack of family support and high expectations' and 'overburdened and health issues' as the challenging family and social stressors.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

After so many years of independence, still working women faces a lot of challenges and problems. Let's look at some of the basic problems faced by working women in modern-day India.

1. *Balancing between Personal and Professional Life:* In our society, a woman is supposed to be an ace while performing her duties. For a woman balancing between personal and professional life is really a difficult task as far as Indian society is concerned. No matter how elite their designation is at office or at what peak they have

reached in their careers, women in India are still viewed as family managers back home. They are expected to return home at a certain time, cook, clean, and take care of the family affairs.

2. *Working Hours:* Long working hours could be one of the most important factors which affect work-family balance. As we can see major part of the day, she is busy in job-related work and after coming back from the workplace again, she gets busy with the household work. This leaves very little time for her own personal things, care, and relaxation. Experts also say that long working

hours have long been seen as the major cause affecting work-family equilibrium, and it also has an adverse effect on women's health.

3. *Responsibilities towards the children:* Balancing a smooth career with family could be challenging job for any working woman, and with kids it is more challenging. Woman gives birth to children, and still do most of the work of bringing them up. Even sometimes soon to-be mothers or new mothers quit their jobs or modify their career plan like work from home, part-time jobs or even change their jobs just to cope up with the current situation. Balancing both career and family is a tough task for a working woman, especially when she has small kids and there is no well-equipped day-care/crèche facility where she could leave her kids without any tension while they are at work. In these situations, she has no option but to leave the child with other family members like mother-in-law or with other young children or with a paid care-taker. Woman often suffers from the guilt-complex of not spending enough time with her children during the formative years.
4. *Health Related Issues:* Most of the problems related to health start with long working hours in office and household work back at home. While performing different personal life roles and managing professional life, leaves very little stamina and time for self-care and rest. In some families, males refuse to take responsibilities for home and child care, so in these situations, more burden of stress and strain falls on women's shoulders, which cause mental as well as physical health problems.
5. *Promotion and Transfers:* One more problem keeping Indian women away from reaching the top in their careers is mobility limitations. Unlike males, the mobility of females in India is highly limited due to various reasons like safety and security, transportation and lodging issues. Issues arise in case of transfer are children's education and safety, staying away from family, personal security, shifting and other emotional values. Sometimes under the pressure of financial burden, a woman takes up the transfer or just to secure the job she takes up the job, which requires different skill sets. Due to this she faces a lot of hardships in managing both personal as well as professional lives. Despite being capable enough many women refuse promotions and elevations as it requires them to shift to another city or includes frequent official visits to various cities in a year. Sometimes it also involves leaving their families for long duration for trainings and other official schedules.
6. *Safety issues:* Long working hours pose various safety-related issues not only for a female employee but also for their kids and their families. It is really difficult to manage long working hours when you stay in a nuclear family, and no one is at home to take care of the children. Physical

abuse, snatching and robbing are the issues that always bother a female employee working for long hours.

7. *Sexual Harassment:* Harassment of women is a global and complex social problem. It is not a new phenomenon but are centuries old. Sexual harassment, molestation, or any unpleasant acts or behavior like physical contacts and advances are some of the forms of evil problems that working women face to their safety and pride. Often, women who are the victims of harassment, out of shame and distress, solve the problems by quitting their jobs. It is a problem that women face every day, everywhere and in every walk of life whether it's a public place, public transportations or workplace.
8. *Time Management & Many More:* As we have already discussed that a working woman needs to play multiple roles. So the time management can be big problem for her. As time spent in one role may leave little time for other roles. So how to manage her time wisely could be a big challenge for her.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the objectives, both primary and secondary data is used in this study.

Primary data: The study is carried out among women employees working in different organizations in twin cities. A convenient sampling technique is adopted for the purpose of data collection. Appropriately structured questionnaires were distributed among them for collection of required data. The finding of this study will help us to understand the objective of the study.

Sample Size: Responses have been collected from the sample size of 38 women employees working in different colleges, banks and other private organizations.

Collected data was analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages and the analyzed data is shown using pie diagram.

Secondary data: Secondary data is sourced from the journals, books, newspapers, and other websites.

Data analysis

The study is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify the problems and challenges faced by working women in different private organizations of twin cities. Further, the study also aims in finding out whether employees are getting support from their organization or not. The present study surveyed only urban women employees. The study was conducted in twin cities, capital of Telangana.

Data collection process

The methodology followed was a questionnaire-based survey among the urban working women of the selected organizations. The questionnaire was designed to address the objective of the study in addition to the demographic

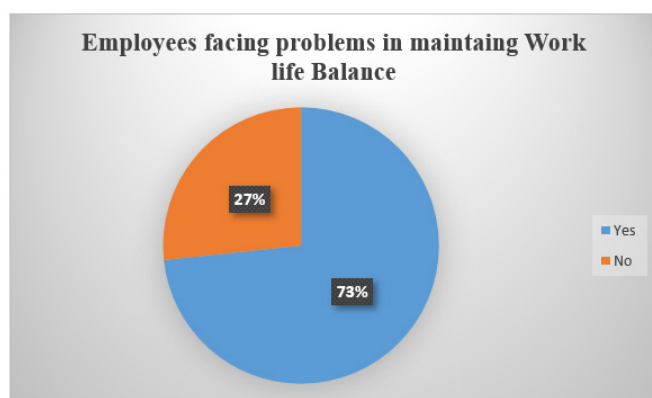


Figure 1. Source: Primary data

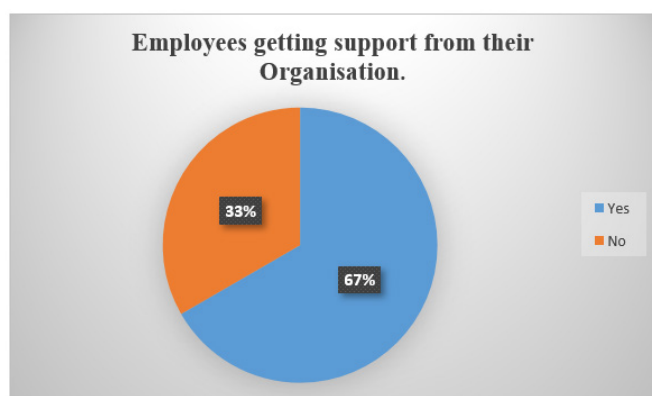


Figure 2. Source: Primary data

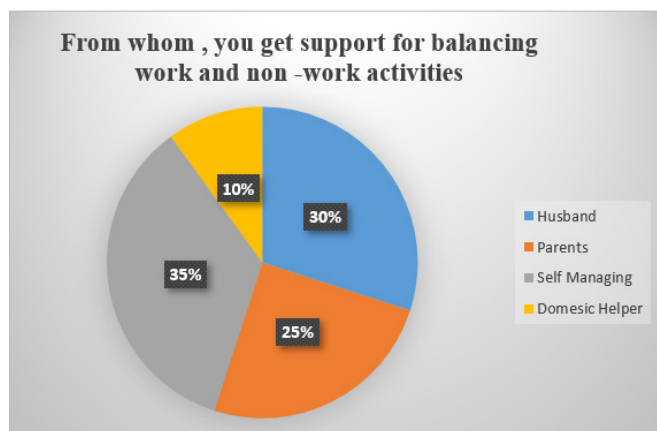


Figure 3. Source: Primary data

details of the respondents. Data were collected using the personal contact approach.

Inference: According to the above information 73% female employees agreed that they face lots of problems in balancing their home and work, while 27% of female employees says that they do not face any problem while balancing their home and work. The reasons for such a high percentage of females face problems are long working hour, burden of domestic work, child care problems etc. The image above clearly shows the opinion of the respondents.

Inference: According to the above information 67% of female employees agreed that they get support from their

organization, support are like flexible working hours, half-day leaves etc. while 33% say that they do not get any kind of support from their organization. The image above clearly shows the opinion of the respondents.

Inference: According to the above information, 35% of women employees are self-managing, while 30% get support by husband, 25% get parents support and 10% hired a domestic helper for balancing both activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The general recommendations and suggestions are as follows:

1. Support from family members and husband works as a motivational force and makes her able to work with full zeal and confidence.
2. A helping hand from husband in daily tasks and in the upbringing of children can reduce her tension a lot.
3. Increasing the participation of women in workforce will not only help a women to be financial independent and confident, but it will also help the nation to grow and prosper.
4. Creating comfortable and healthy work environment to ensure that there is no hostile and adverse situations towards women. This will encourage more and more women to come and pursue their dream of being a successful career women.
5. Providing transportation facility i.e. safe pick up and drops.
6. Adequate maternity & paternity leaves should be provided by every organizations.
7. Providing day care facilities and child care leaves for working mothers, especially to mothers of infants and toddlers.
8. One major issue which bothers her a lot while she is out for work is her security, so the employer should make sure that a women should not work till late hour.
9. With the passage time and trend, working pattern of organizations also change, women should try to upgrade and update their knowledge and skill sets by adapting the latest technology and regularly updating their know-how. This can makes them to get excel in every work and in every field.
10. Flexible (work) timing and work from home facility should be given to working women mainly mothers of small kids.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally men are seen as the breadwinner and women as the house-keepers and child bearers. But with the passage of time, needs and financial demands of families are also changed. The economic condition of the family pushes them to go for work. Women are proving themselves in every field whether it is home or workplace. But at the same time, we cannot deny that working women face many problems

related to health, safety and family responsibility. She has to cross many hurdles and barrier to earn happiness for her family and children. Indian women have to play all the roles properly whether it is in home as wife and mother or at work place, but portraying all the roles makes her feel stressed, strained and ill (both mentally and physically). Similarly, they accept that due to these problems their family atmosphere also gets affected. After analyzing the collected data, it can be concluded that majority of women face lot of problems in balancing their day to day life. It is impossible for a woman to work without the support of family member and organization, as it relieves them from various problems. With this study, we can only say that India probably has a long way to go to make our workplaces free from discrimination, prejudice, and problems. And, therefore, revolutionary and vital changes are required in the attitude of employers, employees, family members and society. Last but not the least it could be concluded that if a woman gets support and opportunity, she could create wonders and sky is the limit for her.

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