



WOMEN, PAID WORK AND WORK LIFE BALANCE – A STUDY IN MANGALORE CITY

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Abstract:

In the last two decades women's access to paid work has increased in most countries particularly in the unregulated sector. This has been a result of globalization which has opened up many opportunities for women to work. This has meant that more and more women are working in the informal economy which provides little financial security. Informalisation of work has definitively led to an increasingly precariousness of jobs and greater insecurity of livelihood for ordinary men and women. At the same time deterioration has also occurred in terms and conditions of work. Although rapid economic growth has led to improvement in the condition of women in many ways, women are still isolated, unorganized and constrained by socio-cultural and legal structures that restrict their access to resources and their control over their own lives. So with more women entering the labour market, there seems to be new challenges that need to be addressed. In the changing scenario of globalization and privatization, it becomes imperative that a study to understand the problems working women face with reference to their working conditions, social security measures, harassment, wages to be undertaken. Forced commercialization and compulsive market involvement through inflation, technological change and other factors lead to an intensification of work, and casualisation of labour. How the women members of a household are affected by such work intensification and casualisation of labour is a matter of empirical enquiry. The present study hopes to understand the extent of empowerment of working women in the context of globalization. The data indicates that women's employment has had certain major socio-economic consequences like balanced work life, economic independence, better status both in family and society, self-gratification, better living standards and along with it also role conflict.

Index Terms: Work Life Balance, Decision Making, Empowerment, Paid Work, Role Conflict, Decision Making, Empowerment, Paid Work & Role Conflict

Introduction:

In the last two decades women's access to paid work has increased in most countries particularly in the unregulated sector. This has been a result of globalization which has opened up many opportunities for women to work. This has meant that more and more women are working in the informal economy which provides little financial security. Informalisation of work has definitively led to an increasingly precariousness of jobs and greater insecurity of livelihood for ordinary men and women (Patel, 2005). At the same time deterioration has also occurred in terms and conditions of work. Although rapid economic growth has led to improvement in the condition of women in many ways, women are still isolated, unorganized and constrained by socio-cultural and legal structures that restrict their access to resources and their control over their own lives. So with more women entering the labour market, there seems to be new challenges that need to be addressed.

Methodology:

The methodology of present study has been mainly divided into two stages, the first stage has involved the collection of secondary materials through census data and

through review of concerned literature. The second stage has involved the collection of primary data through a structured interview schedule and open ended questionnaire. The area of study has been Mangalore which is the centre for academic, administrative, commercial and cultural activities and therefore a study on paid work and women's empowerment would be significant. The study covers the women working in private firms as clerks, office assistants, stenographers and sales girls and were in the age group of 20-50 yrs. On a random sampling basis 200 respondents were selected for the survey.

Literature Review:

Neetha (2004) in her study of female domestic workers in Delhi states that the contribution of these domestics to the total family income was substantial. Further the occupational pattern of husbands of female domestics further substantiates the prime breadwinner status of women. Women here had some control over household expenses especially when her contribution to family income was higher compared with the male members. But despite women's considerable contribution to family income and survival, social control is largely found to rest with males. Patriarchal relations were visible in terms of violence against women. The study further indicates that women had some decision making power because of the economic dependence of the family on the women workers. Sundar (2005) in his study of migrant workers in Coimbatore and Chennai stated that the causes of migration for women workers were economic that is a need for better income and opportunities. Here poverty has been one of the causes for women to migrate. The earning level of these women were not only important to the total household income but also in determining her status and role in the household economy. Ratna. M. Sudarshan, Shrayana Bhattacharya (2009) conducted a study in urban Delhi through a household survey between September and November 2006 estimates a greater female workforce participation rate than recorded in the National Sample Survey. It indicates undercounting and reflects the informality that surrounds women's work. This paper explores the nature of women's workforce participation and identifies key factors influencing women's decision to work, the type of work they do, the constraints they face, and the perceived benefits and costs of engaging in paid work outside the home Sunny Jose (2012) carried out a survey on the outskirts of Jaipur in Rajasthan and his study stated that participation of women in paid work is likely to bring some benefits to women but beyond a point the benefits are context-specific – whether women enter the labour force out of sheer survival necessity or due to other reasons. The findings call for considering a context-specific view of the potential of paid work for women's well-being and underlines the significance of public policy in enhancing the well-being of poor women in India.

The Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To analyse whether paid work employment has really empowered women
- ✓ To analyse whether the positive benefits gained through employment of women are neutralized by adverse impacts she faces at home and in the workplace.
- ✓ To know whether paid work has come in the way of discharging family responsibility

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empowerment would be significant. The study covers the women working in private firms as clerks, office assistants, stenographers and sales girls and were in the age group of 20-50 yrs. On a random sampling basis 200 respondents were selected for the survey.

Women's Paid Work and Indicators of Empowerment:

In the 20th century the term 'Women Empowerment' has been used in the social, economic and political development analysis of both developed and developing nations. Empowerment means giving legal and moral power to an individual in all spheres of life- social, economic, political, psychological, religious and spiritual-which are essential for the survival and overall development of mankind. In a broad sense, empowerment is a religious, cultural, economic and legal struggle against oppression, injustice and discrimination. Empowerment expresses the bold idea that all people have claims to social arrangements that protect them from the worst abuses and deprivations and secure the freedom for life of dignity. It is also a process of enhancing human capabilities to expand choices and opportunities, so that each person can lead a life of respect and value (Chauhan and Bansal, 2002). For about two decades now, the concept of empowerment has been in vogue and has been widely employed in the press, television, academic, legal and in government circles. Although globalization has provided women with economic opportunities. This has also meant that these women are more found as marginalized workers and as a part of a large casual and sub-contracted labour with no security. Indian society is hierarchical with people based on different castes, sub-castes, class and gender. This stratification has also meant, inequalities and marginalization which has been built into the structure of traditional Indian society. Thus empowering the marginalized has been very critical for the development of any society, as it enhances both the quality and quantity of human resources available for development.

In our study evidence of empowerment has been sort in terms of indicators that measure women's control over various aspects of their lives.

Women's Financial Autonomy:

An important aspect of women's empowerment as a potential source of employment is the extent to which the households depend on women's earnings. Women's whose earnings are critical to the sustainability of households are likely to have greater access and control over resources. Although certain of our respondents have not been in a position to use their financial independence to become empowered, accesses to these resources remain an intrinsic component of empowerment. In the present study it was found that among the unmarried and married respondents a large majority kept their cash earnings with themselves. Among the unmarried respondents majority of them gave their salary to their parents and a small number (5%) shared it with their siblings. Though women had control over their earnings, yet majority of the respondents used their income for purchase of household gadgets, on children's expenditure etc. By giving their earnings to their family members, they did not feel that they were losing control over salary, instead their salary was of great use to their family members. As women's contribution to the total family income was substantial even though her earning are less, her participation in labour force was encouraged by the family members.

Women's Participation in Household Decisions:

Decision making in the family is a critical element in the status of family members, because it involves the allocation of resources and the distribution of roles within the family. An empowerment perspective does not imply women take decisions alone. It minimally requires that women participate in making the decisions that affect

their lives and that the final decision reflects their strategic life choices. We should also remember that participation of women in decision making in the household does not really ensure whether they are able to influence the outcome. Nonetheless it can be argued that in our study women's participation in decision making pertaining to her reproductive health is important because this decision is particular to her own specific needs. In our study particularly amongst married respondents, there is a trend towards joint decision making. This could be because both couples are working. The respondents took only decisions concerning households, while decisions relating to the purchase of land/finance was taken only after consultation with the husbands, where the husbands had a major say. As women make a substantial contribution to her family income, it gives her greater power in decision making.

Economic independence presumably increases the ability of women to participate in decision making process. In the present study it is found that 56.7% of the respondents stated that they took decisions only after consulting their husband, while 6.6% did not have any right to take decisions. The respondents who had the right to take decision stated that the major decision like purchasing land, taking loan, is done only in consultation with the husbands. In such instances the husbands had major say. However amongst the respondents who are married there was a trend towards joint decision making.

The hierarchical structure that exists in families makes it inevitable that women consult the other members whether it is their parents or husbands before taking a decision. However amongst the respondents who are married there is a trend towards joint decision making. This could be because of the fact that both the couples are working. Even when women take decisions, these decisions are associated with private domain and mostly concerns the household. Men who are associated with the public domain take crucial and important decisions concerning property and finance. This has been found true in a study done by Karlekar (1980) of Balmiki women. Dharmalingam and Murgan (1980) have come to the conclusion that if salary income of working women makes a substantial contribution to the family income, then it gives her greater power in decision making. Thus economic income increases the decision making roles of working women. Jaiswal's (1993) study states that patriarchal power structure of especially dual earner families is changing towards joint decision making. Therefore a woman's economic status was an important factor in decision making.

Support Structures Given by the Family to Help in Domestic Chores of Women:

Women's life situation can also be a source of empowerment for her. Residence in non-nuclear family, which in the Indian context implies, residence with in-laws is likely to be a less empowering setting than residence in a nuclear family. In our study, majority of the respondents resided in nuclear family while 21.5% of the respondents resided in a joint family. A small number that is 7.5% were from extended family. The respondents who resided in nuclear families stated that there was more freedom for them and there were no restrictions. But they faced one problem that is of child care. Here the respondents either depended on a maid to take care of children, and if the children were grown up they were left to themselves. The respondents who stayed in joint families stated that when they go out to work, the children are taken care by the family members but in the evening they had to do their share of domestic work. But still they felt happy that there was someone to take care of the children.

Many women today are working outside the household. But this does not mean that there is any reduction in the burden of women's work in maintaining the household. As Bhatia (2002) points out, women still have to invariably take the

responsibility of home and family care, consequently sacrificing their leisure and personal care time. In the present study too housework and child care was the major responsibilities of married women. Though few of them stayed in joint families, in the evening after returning from work she had to do her share of domestic work. It seems that there still exists a patriarchal ideology with regard to domestic work because there seems to be no role change that has taken place. Women still have to come back and do household chores or depend on maid for domestic work

In the study it was found that 86% of the respondents got help for doing domestic work. Amongst these the married respondents got help from the maid, mother-in-law and from husband while among the unmarried respondents got help from their mother and their siblings. A small number did not get any help for doing their domestic work. They were the married respondents. Amongst the married respondents who got help from their relatives and maid, 16% of the respondents stated that their husbands too helped them in domestic work. There has been seen a clear gender division of labour with women performing domestic chores and receiving little help for doing them. At the same time, their employment outside home has resulted in decrease in differentiation of such roles and there seems to be redistribution of work within the family and where husbands participate in household tasks to a certain extent.

Acceptances of normatively prescribed power of men over women reflect an acceptance of unequal gender roles on one hand and lack of awareness entitlements and rights on the other. To understand this measure of empowerment, this study asked the spouse's perception towards their wives paid work. It is heartening to note that almost 76.7% of the respondents stated that they perceived their wives to be equal to them which is an indicator that men have not accepted the cultural norms that sustained power inequality in a conjugal relationship. It should also be remembered that this opinion might be representative only of Dakshina Kannada as this district tops in literacy, life expectancy and better quality of life. Opportunities for women to work are bringing about changes in attitudes towards their employment. In the present study, it is found that majority of respondents husbands were happy with their wives work as they contributed to the family income. This helped the respondents to have less role strain as well do their work efficiently.

Paid Work and Role Conflict:

Few studies have brought the fact that working women often face role conflict and found it difficult to manage the roles at home. An attempt was made to know whether paid work has come in the way of discharging family responsibility. In the study it is clear that only 16% of the respondents stated that paid work came in the way of their family responsibilities. The nature of job demand that they work in shifts; this meant sometimes they have to work in nights too. Therefore they felt that they did not have enough time for their family. The majority of the respondents that is 84% of them stated that their paid work did not come in the way of discharging their domestic chores. But from their response the researcher was able to make out that these respondents were determined that their work outside the office did not come in the way of their domestic chores as their paid work was extremely important for them. In the study it also found that only 29% of the respondents felt some negative effect as result of working outside the home. Amongst the respondents who faced negative effect, 31% stated that they used to get angry with their children quite often, while 5.1% felt irritation. So the respondents underwent one or the other type of negative effect. All these were married women. Thus anger and irritation could also be the result of pressure of coping up with marital roles and responsibilities and problem of adjusting

to two roles-that of a worker and a mother-wife. As Kapoor (1970) rightly puts it, tension is felt mainly because working women feels burdened between her loyalty towards her husband and children. She wants to devote equal time seriously to both and in trying to be efficient in both these spheres finds herself overburdened. she suffers from the guilt sense when owing to her job, she neglects her child, husband or home but she equally suffers if she neglects her office work too(Manimekalai, 2002).

In the last few decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of research devoted to understanding the linkages between work and family and/or personal life.. A balanced life is one where we spread our energy and effort - emotional, intellectual, imaginative, spiritual and physical – between key areas of importance. Work-life balance remains an issue that requires considerable attention from society. The changing nature of the global economy, where organizations expects the employees to operate on a 24/7 schedule and technological advances have made it possible for an employee to be connected at all times, has ushered the work-life balance issue into the forefront of the minds of many, In the present study too we find that working women have well balanced their work and personal life as they got the needed support from their family members. The increasing prevalence of work-life conflicts and increasing concern about work-life issues in the corporate arena present both a challenge and opportunity for Human Resource (HR) professionals. Work-life conflicts affect employee well-being in a myriad ways. Work-life balance initiatives designed to help employees balance their work and personal lives are not only an option, but also a necessity for many employers today. There is a need for organizations to adopt human resource strategies and policies that accommodate the work-life needs of a diverse workforce in the current business environment.

Conclusion:

Both as a theory and a process, the term empowerment has been accepted particularly in policies related to development. Today, development is seen as a process which could empower marginalized communities. One of the approaches to women's empowerment is through economic development because making women economically self-sufficient is a means for better bargaining power in other institutions. In other words, most of the economic approaches to women's empowerment are political in nature and necessitates the changes in power relationship in the economic as well as social and political spheres. Economic empowerment could be seen as a logical beginning to attaining gender equality because economic dependency of women is a reason for many disadvantages and oppressions they face. Economic self reliance is assumed to add to the self confidence and autonomy of women and act as a scaffold to build empowerment in other areas of their life. From our study it is seen that women's entry into labour has put money into their hands, have made them important contributors to the household income and increased confidence levels. However such type of entry into the labour force does not address power relationships and the structural discrimination of women. For many women, the issue of material poverty has been addressed but the fact remains that the nature of informal economy by itself along with low skills and low pay does not give the women much bargaining power. It is important to recognize that empowerment involves structural changes which may not be achieved by merely tinkering with structural employment. But never the less, entering into paid work is a useful beginning. This needs to be supported by other means to affect structural changes, to enable a realization at full potential of women. It is also necessary to keep in mind that empowerment may not necessarily happen within

a single generation and access to resources by itself can not eradicate centuries of cultural conditioning.

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