

Gender, Work and Life: Analysing the Dual Roles of Working Women in Higher Education, Lucknow

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Abstract

India is a developing country where women are also excelling in various fields in the modern era. Women are supposed to perform dual roles which require equilibrium between her career as well as family, but the women didn't get the motivational environment and support to do so. This paper attempts to analyse the multiple dimensions such as traditional gender roles, promotion, job satisfaction and health, affecting the lives of working women in academia. The paper studies the working women in colleges of Lucknow. The aim of the study is to identify the factors affecting work- life balance and to know the strategies employed by women to navigate the barriers.

In this context, the study also analyses the societal implications confronted by working women. Case study and in depth interviews have been used to investigate the barriers and facilitators in work - life balance among working women. Secondary data have been also used to explore the various aspects of the dual role of working women. The paper concludes that there is a need for institutional reforms, coping strategies and support systems which can create a suitable environment for women where they can fulfil the dual roles & excel in her professional as well as personal life.

Keywords: Work - Life Balance, Barriers, Equilibrium.

Introduction

India is a developing country , along with this it is a traditional society where women didn't have the freedom to fulfil their dreams . In contemporary society, the role of women is significantly transformed & increasing in the economy of the country. Now women have the access to get higher education & chose her profession as well which was very difficult in earlier times . Here the role of gender plays an important part in everyone's life. However with the change in time , there is rapid growth in enrollment of women in higher education &

they pursue her profession in higher education as well. In India , the female labor force participation rate (LFPR) in urban areas increased from 22.7% in January. - March 2023 to 25.6% in January - March 2024, which contribute the major part of the society.

As a patriarchal society, women's primary priority is to manage domestic work like cooking, cleaning, work of other dependents & so on. Although it is difficult to manage the household responsibilities with outside work, women have the potential to manage both. Perhaps this dual role consists of some barriers in fulfilling both the roles successfully. The dual complex responsibilities interplay between workforce, household duties, and societal expectations, leading to stress, anxiety and also it affects the mental health of a working woman . “Despite

having similar qualifications as their male counterparts, women are underrepresented in higher academic ranks & leadership positions. Organizational practices and social norms create barriers for women, limiting their visibility and networking opportunities which are crucial for career advancement. Men are often more visible in power structures while women face challenges” (Chanana, K. 2003).

Business Standard articulated that “ Nearly three-quarters (72.2 per cent) of female respondents reported experiencing high levels of stress, a stark contrast to the 53.64 percent of men who felt the same. Women also face greater challenges in achieving work-life balance, with 18 per cent struggling to juggle personal and professional responsibilities, compared to 12 percent of men.”

Indian working women confront various challenges in balancing between professional and personal life in the 21st century. Although women are excelling in various professional fields, they have to bear the brunt of household responsibility which results in stress, anxiety & impacts their career advancement. The large size of the family & long working hours adversely affects the mental health of working women (Panchal. P et.al., 2016). Due to socio-economic & demographic factors, women's personal & professional life are adversely affected. ‘ Work-Life Balance is making a profitable work culture to decrease the irregularity caused between the work & different parts of individuals' lives’ (Noronha & Aithal ,2020). The growth of women's enrollment in higher education as well as in teaching staff is increasing. Despite these growth, there is a feeling of inadequacy & guilt among women in fulfilling dual roles as working women. As the working women is always in dilemma, prioritising work duties and home responsibilities at the same time. Due to these decisions sometimes they have to become stigmatised and confront the stereotypes. The way in which Working women are treated in the workplace as well as at home is totally opposite to the treatment their male counterparts received (Venkat & Sekaran et al., 2022).

Review of literature

Motherhood is a concept which shows the household's works & the responsibility of a mother is properly fulfilled. However it is believed by society that a woman is not able to handle both the household & her career as they are not fully committed towards their work or job outside the home. This belief presents the gender discrimination prevalent in society regarding gender roles. This cultural belief also creates guilt, stress & pressure among working women. It delves into the slow career progression & the academic productivity of working women in comparison to their male colleagues. Due to dual roles working women are not able to focus on their health as a consequence of which anxiety, blood pressure, stress can be seen among them (Poduval. Jayita & M. Poduval. 2009).

Mostly male are not in favour of women becoming manager or head within the institution due to patriarchal society. The male of this society are not ready to obey the orders of female employees. This is also the reason when females do not reach higher positions. Nevertheless there are also some male who cooperate with the female manager. ‘Due to social & cultural factors it is difficult for women to work with men because they consider the working women first the women then the professional employee’ (Batool, S. Q., & Raza, H. 2012).

It is essential for women to manage the family alongside her job. Work - family balance depends upon the culture of a particular area because different regions have different cultures. Every culture has one common thing that a home or family is managed by a woman. Most women always prioritise her family due to socio - cultural norms prevalent in the society. One culture is not universal while the gendered roles assumed by the society is almost found in every culture . As a highly educated woman is doing a job on a high post but it is only her responsibility to take good care of her family. There are some factors that help women in balancing work & family that is flexibility in timing or working hours & so on (P. Gayatri. 2016).

There is underrepresentation of women in the higher position in academia. However the rate of doctoral recipients in higher education is growing at approximately 42%. Despite this growth in numbers of women in higher education, there is paucity of women in senior positions. “ Only 6.67% of women hold senior leadership roles such as Vice - Chancellor, Director or Dean. When including positions like Principal & Associate Professor the figure rises to 15.64% , but still reflects a significant gap between educational attainment & leadership representation” (Mayya, S., Martis, M. et.al. 2021).

Working women face the role conflicts while fulfilling the dual roles as the role of a working women & role of household women. Both the roles are significant for women but sometimes these roles create chaos , resulting in poor psychological health & deteriorated physical & mental health also. “ To cope up with the demands of these dual roles , many women isolate themselves from social gatherings and sacrifice personal relationships, which can lead to a sense of loneliness & disconnection” . Isolation is a strategy for women to disconnect from society & focus on their own work. But sometimes it is not good for the overall well being of a women (Tyagi, N., Jha, R. S., Chaudhary, A., & Batar, S. 2021).

Objectives

- To identify the factors affecting work- life balance .
- To know the strategies employed by women to navigate the barriers.

Methodology

The present study is conducted in Lucknow, consisting of the respondents from the degree colleges. Lucknow is a place which is rich in cultural heritage. The study employs both qualitative as well as quantitative methods . The proposed study used case study & in depth interviews to investigate the barriers and facilitators in work - life balance among working women in academia. Female respondents are taken from the degree colleges. Secondary data have been also used to explore the various aspects of the dual role of working women consisting of scholarly articles.

Case studies

Case 1

A 40-50 year old assistant professor lives in a joint family who have 18 years of teaching experience and work on contractual basis in a degree college. She has seven members in her family & has an annual income of two lakhs. Along with teaching she is also a counsellor in an NGO. However sometimes she also faces a generation gap in the family but she maintains the balanced dual roles in her workplace and outside work through avoiding the negativity. She gets all the leaves in her institution. Their institutions also have a particular women's cell named - Missionshakti . During their teaching years she saw many changes in their institutions such as due to increased use of technology she gets salary through online mode instead of cash in hand. She has also opined that today's education is for service not for life . Their institution also provides support for women . Above all I felt that she faces gender disparity, although she gets support from her husband and in-laws. India is a developing country still women faces this type of disparity, discrimination & exploitation.

Case 2

A female professor aged between 50 - 60 years, has teaching experience of 33 years. She lives in a nuclear family & has four members in a family consisting of two children . She does her job on a permanent basis & has an annual income of approximately thirty lakhs. She has a love for literature which is the motivation behind this profession. She is currently on post of Head of the Department of English , coordinator of IQAC cell and also a incharge of admission in a degree college of Lucknow. Along with her job as a professor , she also does all household responsibilities. She also faces imbalance in managing dual roles as she said sometimes there is too much pressure on personal & work fronts to do better . And the expectation of the family or society increases when she tries to do her best in her workplace as well as family. She tries to make balance between the dual roles with a lot of time management yet sometimes it's difficult to manage. In her long duration of teaching she has seen many improvements in her institution such as infrastructural changes, basically smart rooms,etc, lots of job opportunities for girls & providing free skill development courses. She also suggests that institutions need to have freedom to create policies of their own which will suit their employees, but lack of finances or reluctance to use them for betterment of employees make any changes difficult. Better infrastructural facilities will go a long way in getting a better output from employees. In all these discussions I felt that she perceives gender disparity by the subordinates in her workplace & she also believes that career growth or opportunities are influenced by gender. In India the growth of women in higher education increases yet the role of a domestic women is prioritized by the Indian family.

Case 3

An assistant professor, aged between 30 - 40 years , lives in a joint family, having 6 members in her family & having 1 child. She is on a permanent post of assistant professor and has 2.5 years of teaching experience. She has an annual income of 11 lakhs . She is very much passionate about teaching & research . The role & responsibilities of her towards her profession is the holistic and sustainable development of students & help in bringing the institution to a new height . She always tries to make prosperous in terms of academics. The primary challenge

she confronts is imbalanced workload. Sometimes she faces difficulty in managing the dual roles in her workplace as well as in family due to workload while her family is very supportive & due to this support she tries to manage the both & get success in

it . As she is also a homemaker & manager in her family. So she makes decisions mutually with her husband. She also felt that gender in terms of women influenced her career opportunities or growth . Her institution doesn't provide any policy regarding balance between work & family. She herself tries to make balance between the dual roles as she does family and work separately. She doesn't take official work at home & family issues on work . She prioritises work in the workplace & family at home . She never intermingled things. She has also seen improvement in her institution as there is much use of ICT. She also recommends that attendance should be mandatory for women because they are enrolled just for the sake of a degree which will never fulfil the actual purpose of higher studies. Above all I felt that she perceived the gender disparity in the workplace by the subordinates. Although women play different major roles in her lives, one problem is always the same that is role conflict. There is no such policy which can help women to manage dual roles.

Case 4

A 50 - 60 aged women is working on a permanent post of professor in the degree college . She has 29 years of teaching experience & earns 3 lakhs per annum. She lives in a nuclear family consisting of 4 family members & has 2 children. She joins this profession because she wants to become a significant member of society. As a professor she tries to impart knowledge to her scholars academically as well as for their individual growth. Along with this she also has other responsibilities like proctor, NSS program Officer, IQAC member, Vice Principal & also a member of Board of Studies in the administrative area. She faces less challenges in her profession as everyone is cooperative with her . She also plays all roles & responsibilities in her family as a wife, mother & home maker. She is not affected by family or societal expectations as she is a social person . There is no such policy in her institution providing balancing between work life & family. She has decision making power in her family as she & her husband takes mutual decisions. She has now experience in balancing dual roles between workplace & household duties. She has a support system in her family for managing childcare & other dependents. She didn't see much improvement in her college as the number of staff is reducing. She also suggests to the institution there should be a little bit of flexible rules for career advancement for women in higher education managing dual roles . Above all the discussions I really felt that she confronts gender disparity through her colleagues in the workplace & she feels that career opportunities are influenced by gender. Indian society has a high level of expectations from women which is the main reason when women do not start her research work properly along with all the responsibilities. I also feel that sometimes she confronts role conflicts .

Conclusion

“The pen is mightier than the sword. Education is the greatest weapon to eradicate social evils”. Although this thought is prevalent in our society, still women faces discrimination & disparity. Only imparting education is not sufficient for women & becoming financially independent isn't

enough. However people should respect her dual roles. If women have achieved even a higher degree & higher post yet her role towards family as a homemaker & major responsibilities of rearing her child, still remains the same. This mentality of our society should be changed.

We always say that we have freedom but actually feel we as women don't have freedom in real terms. The growth of working women in higher education is increasing but most women in academia do not reach higher positions within the institution. This is so because the women in academia do not get so much time for personal development or research writing along with her job & family. Sometimes the demand of dual roles contradict each other & role conflicts emerge. However some working women can manage the dual role by avoiding the contradict but mostly not. There are some factors which affect working women such as flexible working hours, lack of time for personal development, pressure & stress faced by working women when the demand of any one role is not fulfilled. Gender discrimination also confronted by women in the institution and society at ground level despite being highly educated & financially independent but they call this generation gap. Working women tries to manage both roles by taking help of a maid & other family members in the household while in the institution she takes the help of colleagues if needed , otherwise they try to manage on their own. However the institution should provide policies regarding work life balance of their own which will be a great favour for working women in managing dual roles.

Under this backdrop there is growth in the rate of working women in higher education but they do not reach to higher level positions or leadership positions. Working women also use strategies mentioned above to navigate the barriers and in maintaining equilibrium between professional and personal life.

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