

A Study on Family Life of Working Women in Rural Areas of Ludhiana District in Punjab

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Abstract

Life for middle class working women is not easy in Indian patriarchy. Dual role of women, working outside and fulfilling the responsibilities of housewife leaves a working woman stressed and anxious; more so if the family is not supportive. Hence, the present study had undertaken to find out the physical, economic and social condition of working women and compared them with the condition of homemakers. Study was conducted on middle class married women in the rural areas of Ludhiana. Eight villages were randomly selected from two randomly selected blocks of Ludhiana district. Out of the total sample of 120 respondents, 10 working women and 5 home-maker were interviewed through self-structured interview schedule. The study inferred that it did not matter what was the status of women (house makers and working women) and how much they contributed to the family income, being women they had to full fill all the familial responsibilities which were expected to be essentially done by them. Majority of the working women (82%) did moping and cleaning of floors, washing of utensils and clothes on their own. 67.50 per cent working women were not involved in decision making regarding sale or purchase of property. However, children's education and rendering gifts in social functions were the activities for which decision making was the prerogative of working women. More than half of the working women respondents contributed their full pay in household expenditure. Whenever they needed money, they had to ask their husband or mother in-law. More than 90 per cent working women said that even if given choice, they would not leave their jobs. The reason for continuation of the job as quoted by 90 percent of them was walking away from family conflicts. The study suggested that the families of working women should shed their patriarchal mind set and realize the difficulties faced by women in their dual role. For it, governmental and non- governmental organizations should organize awareness and counseling programs at community level.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although originally a matriarchal system, where the family was identified with the mother's name, Indian society began to see a shift towards patriarchal tendencies by the later Mauryan age. The concentration of political power in the hands of men, along with the composition of texts like Manu-smriti, which formed the basis of how Hindu society functioned, heavily tipped the scales in the favour of men. It continues till today and affects specifically the lives of middle class women in the form of low financial independence, non participation in decision making process, expectations of dual responsibilities, depressed status in family and sexual harassment at workplace. Women working outside their homes, as such, are not altogether new in rural India. They have always been working for long time in factories as workers and construction labour, but working outside home for employment reasons by middle and upper caste/class women is a recent phenomenon.

During the last few decades, industrialization, urbanization, increasing levels of education, awareness of rights and wider influence of media changed the status of women in society which has influenced not only their role in society but also their quality of life. According to census reports, today, women constitute nearly half of the population in India and their participation in workforce has increased overtime from 19.67 percent in 1981 to 22.7 percent in 1991, 25 percent in 2001 and further 27 percent in 2011. In Punjab, too, the number of women workforce has increased from 4.4 percent to 18.68 percent within the period of just ten years from 1991 to 2001 (Sivaprakasam and Suriakala, 2003). As per census 2011, women constitute only 11.99 per cent of main workers in the Punjab and 18.53 per cent in India. The workforce participation rate of females in Punjab is 13.90 per cent and 25.5 per cent at national level.

Though more and more women are entering in workforce but the life for middle class working women in Indian patriarchy is not easy. On one hand working women, being more emotionally attached with their

families are committed to do all the household work and have more family responsibilities in relation to husband, children and old in laws than anyone in the family which take away a lot of their time and energy. On the other hand, at work front, women have to perform better than their counterparts just to stay in the job market. Ironically, for the same task, in spite of having similar and sometimes with better capabilities, they are paid less than men. They are stressed to make a respectable balance between home and earning activity.

In such situations, it is very challenging task for women to successfully perform the role of home maker along with the role of an earner. They have to face many difficulties in their day to day lives, including commuting to work, long working hours, lack of modern household gadgets, absence of paid help for domestic work and worry about children left at home during their absence. Dual role leaves a working woman more stressed and anxious; more so if the family is not supportive. In spite of such difficulties, every year more and more women specifically middle class women join the workforce irrespective of their rural or urban regionality. Present study was undertaken with the objective of studying family life of middle class working women by comparing it with that of middle class home makers and to find out the areas which need special attention for providing them with better quality of life.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in rural areas of Ludhiana district in Punjab. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select eight villages from two blocks of Ludhiana district i.e. Ludhiana-I and Ludhiana II. Finally from each village, 10 working women and 5 home makers (for the purpose of comparison) with the condition of less than 45 years of age, married and belonged to the middle class households (with annual income of Rs. 2,50,000-10,000,00) were selected. Sample size was 120 women respondents. Self-structured interview schedule was used to collect data. Selected variables to find out physical condition were sleeping and wake up time, household facilities, paid help and leisure time. Variables for economic condition were personal income, household expenditure and savings. And variables for social condition were role in family decisions, conflict with family members. The data

were analyzed by using simple percentages and arithmetic mean.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before the starting of discussion on the major findings of the study it is always better to understand the nature of selected population i.e. respondents. Here is a brief introduction to respondents in terms of their age, education, occupation, caste and class etc. Majority of the selected middle class working women (more than 80%) belonged to the age group of 25 to 40 years, had education up to graduation level, belonged to either general caste or backward caste and were living in joint families. The middle class working women were either engaged in service or were entrepreneurs. Some of them were school teachers, nurses or engaged in self-employed occupations like that of tailor, beauty parlor agents or having their own grocery shop/milk shop. Almost all of the working women had to stay out of the house for 5-8 hours a day. On the basis of responses of above mentioned population, the major findings of the study are discussed as under.

A. Physical Condition

Physical condition of the respondents included sleeping and wake up time, household facilities, performance of household work and leisure time.

B. Wake-up and sleeping time

Women after joining the work started sleeping lesser than before, because only if they woke up early, they could cook for the family, get themselves ready for the job and get their children ready for the school. So, on an average, women lost sleep for two hours per day and up to 14 hours per week as compared to their counterparts. If they happened to work in highly pressurized environment, then they had to bring home the work and that cut few more hours of sleep. It is not all about the reduced sleep only, but such a lifestyle builds stress (Neetu 2008). Same trend was observed in this study. The results presented in Table1 show that more than half of the respondents get up early in the morning before 5:00 am in summers and 6.00 am in winters. As many as 37.50 per cent of home makers as against 42.50 per cent of working women were wake up early in the morning between 5:00 to 6:00 am in summers.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to wake up and sleeping time (Percentages)

Particulars	Wake up time			Sleeping time		
	Before 5:00 am	5:00 to 6:00 am	After 6:00 am	Before 9:00 pm	9:00-10:00 pm	After 10:00 pm

Summer						
Working Women (n=80)	52.50	42.50	5.00	7.50	52.50	40.00
Home Maker (n=40)	52.50	37.50	10.00	10.00	75.00	15.00
Winter						
Working Women (n=80)	22.50	72.50	5.00	7.50	70.00	22.50
Home Maker (n=40)	25.00	67.50	7.50	30.00	50.00	20.00

With regard of sleeping time, it was found that above half of working women and three fourth of homemakers were going to bed between 9:00 to 10:00 pm. Only 15 per cent of home makers used to go to bed for sleep after 10:00 pm in summers as compared to 40 percent of working women who had to complete their daily chores and had to make preparations for the next day too. Sleeping time had changed a little bit in winters as shown in Table1, 30 per cent of homemakers used to sleep before 9.00 pm as against only 7.5 percent of working women were going to sleep between 9:00 to 10:00 pm. Though not much difference was found in wake up timings of working women and home makers, the difference was quite evident regarding sleeping timings where home-makers had an edge over working women.

C. Extent of Household facilities

Generally the women are facilitating by the time saving devices like gas burner, washing machine, grinder etc. In the study, an attempt had been made to know that which types of facilities were available in the households of the respondents and weather they used them or not. The results in Table 2 revealed that majority of the working women (82-97 %) had tap water, modern toilets, standup kitchen, mixer \ grinder, refrigerator while some of them had semi-automatic washing machine (55%), and a few had microwave (32%) and vacuum cleaner(20%) too. Those respondents who had the above mentioned facilities/ equipment but did not use them were very less in number (5-11.25%). Comparison of data related to working women and home maker do not show much difference regarding possession of household work facilitators and their use.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the availability of household facilities/ equipment (Multiple Response in percentages)

Facility/Equipment	Working Women (N=80)			Home Maker (N=40)		
	Available and use	Available but not use	Not Available	Available and use	Available but not use	Not Available
Tap Waters	92.50	6.25	1.25	90.00	10.00	-
Modern toilets	85.00	-	15.0	87.50	12.50	-
Standup Kitchen	88.75	8.75	2.50	77.50	20.00	2.50
Gas burner	91.25	5.00	3.75	95.00	2.50	2.50
Mixer/ grinder	76.25	11.25	12.50	82.50	15.00	2.50
Refrigerator	81.25	6.25	12.50	97.50	2.50	-
Semi-automatic Washing machine	55.00	8.75	36.25	67.50	2.50	30.00
Microwave	32.50	5.00	62.50	40.00	2.50	57.50
Vacuum Cleaner	20.00	6.25	73.75	17.50	5.00	77.50

Table 3: Distribution of respondents' according to performance of household activities (Percentages)

Household Activities	Working Women (N=80)			Home Maker (N=40)		
	Paid Help	Help from Other member	Self	Paid Help	Help from Other member	Self
Cooking	-	17.50	82.50	2.50	37.50	60.0
Cleaning floor	20.00	-	80.00	20.00	-	80.00
Dusting	20.00	-	80.00	17.50	-	82.50

Cleaning utensils	17.50	9.50	82.50	15.00	-	85.00
Washing clothes	5.00	-	95.00	7.50	-	92.50

D. Performance of Household Activities

Perusal of table 3 indicated that out of the total respondents, only 20 per cent were having paid help for various household activities. Among the working women, 20 percent had paid help for cleaning floor and 17.50 per cent of them had paid help for cleaning utensil. The status of homemakers in this respect was not very different. About 20 and 15 per cent of homemakers had paid help for cleaning the floor and cleaning the utensils respectively. There were only 7.50 per cent homemakers and five per cent of working women who had paid help for washing clothes. Majority of working women respondents used to do all the household work from mopping floor (80%), cleaning utensils (82.50%) to washing clothes (92.50%) on their own. It was found that the respondents who belonged to joint family get some help from other female family members, otherwise they had to do all the housework on their own. Due to the cultural reason (household work expected to be performed by the females only), not a single respondent said that her husband helped her in kitchen or other household tasks. On the basis of comparison of working women and home-makers, it can be inferred that the status of working women, in terms of income earning and staying outside home for 5-8 hours, did not affect their nature and amount of household work to be done. In addition to their work at work place, they had to do all the household tasks at home as the homemakers do which left them physically and mentally drained out at the end of the day.

E. Leisure time

Leisure time is an important indicator of wellbeing of an individual for it is the time which an individual spends according to his/her will. The respondents explained their leisure time in terms of gossiping with neighbours, taking rest in the afternoon, playing with children and watching television serials.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to the leisure time (Percentages)

Leisure time (hours)	Working Women (N=80)	Home Maker (N=40)
Less than one	18.75	-
1-3	68.75	30.00
3-5	11.25	40.00
Above 5	1.25	30.00

The perusal of Table 4 shows that 68.75 percent of working women and 30 percent of homemakers had 1

to 3 hours of leisure time. About 18.75 per cent of working women had even less than an hour for leisure. By comparing the homemakers with working women it was found that on an average three fourth of working women had one to three hours of leisure time at their disposal whereas majority of the homemakers either had three to five hours (40%) or above five hours (30.0%) as leisure time.

F. Economic Condition

Economic condition of the respondents included personal income, household expenditure and savings.

1. The extent of role in economic affairs

Working women do not always get the feeling of freedom to access and control over money, even the money which they earn. This was due to the reason that in most cases the women had to give their salaries to their spouse in nuclear families, or to her mother-in-law in the extended household's income. Though women's salaries played an important role in raising the income of the household, their personal use of enhanced resources did not increase considerably. It was influenced by the cultural and families' perceptions of the importance of the women's/wife's salary. Although working women contribute in the family expenditure, much of their work is not documented or accounted. Moreover, woman's earnings always considered as subsidiary income and man is considered as the bread-winner of the family (Bhandari 2004). In Table 5 the economic condition of working women has been observed.

The data show the distribution of working women with regard to handling of economic affairs of the family. It was found that three fourth of working women had freedom of handling their own income, while 10 percent of them had no right to handle their income. As many as 45 per cent working women said that they had full hold on husband's income as compared to 52.50 per cent of homemakers. On the other hand, more than one fourth of the respondents (30 per cent of working women and 27.50 per cent of homemakers) reported that they had no hold on their husband's income. They were not even know that how much was their husbands' income. So far as family income was concerned, the data revealed that 37.50 per cent of working women had no right on family income and half of them had full right on family income. In the case of homemakers 42.50 per cent were not having right on family income and 47.50 per cent were having full right on family income. It was found that working women enjoyed the highest freedom to handle the family income than the homemakers.

The purpose of observing the financial contribution of the working women in household expenditure was that whether they were left with some amount of their income to spend on themselves or to spend according to their will or not. It was found that 56.25 per cent of working women contributed their whole income in household expenditure. While one fourth of working women did not contribute their income in household expenditure and treated it as their pocket money. About 60 per cent working women did not able to save even a small amount of their income due to financial problems where as one fifth of them, specifically service women, saved their whole income. According to them their husbands had directed them not to make any transection from their personal bank accounts. In case they ever needed money for personal use they could ask them for it any time.

G. Social Condition

Social condition of the respondents included their role in family decisions, conflict with family members and their attitude regarding working status of women.

1. Role in decision making regarding family affairs

Decision making is an important activity of the family organization. According to their capabilities adults of the household do involve in day to day decision making as well as major decisions having lifelong consequences. Generally, in our society, women are associated with the private domain of the household while men are associated with public domain (Valk and Srinivas, 2011).

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to extent of role in economic affairs (Percentages)

Economic affairs	Working Women (N=80)					Home Maker (N=40)				
	Full	Partial	Not at all	Mean Score	SD	Full	Partial	Not at all	Mean Score	SD
Hold on personal income	86.25	3.75	10.00	3.12	0.9	-	-	-	-	-
Hold on Husband' income	45.00	25.00	30.00	1.97	1.2	52.50	20.00	27.50	2.43	1.0
Hold on family income	52.50	10.00	37.50	2.30	1.2	47.50	10.00	42.50	2.15	1.1
Contribution in household expenditure from personal income	56.25	18.75	25.00	3.18	0.9	-	-	-	-	-
Savings from income	20.00	20.00	60.00	1.69	0.9	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents according to role in decision making regarding household affairs (Percentages)

Family affairs	Working Women (N=80)				Home Maker (N=40)			
	Yes	Mean Score	SD	Rank	Yes	Mean Score	SD	Rank
Selling/Purchase of property	52.50	2.28	0.9	V	32.50	1.90	0.9	IV
Selling/Purchase of vehicle	52.50	2.28	0.9	V	32.50	1.90	0.9	IV
Purchase of household implements	81.25	2.91	0.8	I	77.50	3.18	0.7	I
Children's education	70.00	2.70	0.2	IV	70.00	2.62	0.9	II
Attendance of social & religious function	67.50	2.71	0.7	II	67.50	2.75	0.9	III
Rendering gifts / gift money on social functions	67.50	2.71	0.2	III	67.50	2.75	0.9	III
Going out to meet relatives	23.0	1.75	0.7	VI	12.0	1.28	0.2	V

Going out for recreation	14.0	1.35	1.9	VII	4.0	1.05	0.9	VI
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While men enjoy full freedom in their domain and also have the privilege to interfere in women’s domain, for women, let aside the interference in other domain, they are not granted the power to make decisions related to their own life. The perusal of Table 6 shows that 52.5 per cent of working women had role in making decisions regarding selling and purchasing of property like scooter, tractor as against 32.50 per cent of homemakers. Whereas in case of purchasing of household implements like refrigerator, television and other kitchen gadgets, majority of working women (81.25%) and homemakers (77.50%) had granted a power to make decision but jointly with other members of family like husbands and in-laws. Further it was found that 70 per cent respondents both working women and homemakers had freedom to make decisions regarding children’s education, attendance of social functions like marriage, birthdays and other religious activities and rendering gift or gifted money on these social functions. By comparing the working women with homemakers, it was found that working women had greater role in decision making process rather than homemakers. Mean scores obtained by taking the responses on four point scale inferred that among working women decision making regarding the purchase of household Rank-I with mean score 2.91. It was sad to note that for decision regarding going to meet relatives e.g. parents, sisters etc., only 23 percent of working women and 12 percent of home makers had right to decide on their own and rest

had to look at other family members like husband or in laws for permission. Similarly, only 14 per cent working women and as few as 4 percent of the home makers had the right to decide for going out for recreation e.g. fares and films.

The mean scores revealed that decision regarding purchase of household goods was at Rank-I for both the groups i.e. working women (M S- 2.91) and home makers (M S- 3.18) whereas decision regarding going to meet relatives and going for recreation for both working women (MS-1.75 and M S-1.35 respectively) and home makers (MS-1.28 and M S-1.05 respectively) were at the least Ranks with low scores.

2. Extent of conflicts with family members

Rationally, when married women involves in employment outside the home, it becomes husband’s responsibility to help his wife to share physical burden of household chores and care for children. However, the often quoted cause of conflict among the earning couples in India is the non- cooperative behavior of husband regarding housework and care of children. Due to the cultural reasons many a times, in spite of better earning status than their husband, women have to leave their job after giving birth to child (Ahmad, Aminah2007). Same trend was observed among the respondents of the study. The results presented in Table 7 show that the most important reason of conflict with husband was that husbands did not help in household work.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to the reasons for conflict with family members (Percentages)

Attribute	Working Women (N=80)					Home Maker (N=40)				
	Often	Some times	Never	Mean Score	SD	Often	Some times	Never	Mean Score	S D
Conflict with husband										
Helping in Household Chores	13.75	17.50	68.75	1.88	0.9	5.00	15.00	80.00	1.54	0.9
Spend more time & money on friends	12.50	18.75	68.75	2.23	1.1	25.00	37.50	37.50	2.68	1.1
Smokes/Drinks	15.00	30.00	55.00	2.85	0.9	10.00	20.00	70.00	1.87	1.1
Suspicious nature	25.00	28.75	46.25	2.36	0.9	12.50	35.00	52.50	2.46	0.9
Narrow minded	18.75	27.50	53.75	2.13	0.9	7.50	45.00	47.50	2.55	0.7
Criticize wife and children in front of others	2.50	7.50	90.00	1.71	0.8	2.50	17.50	80.00	2.20	0.5

Conflict with Parent In-laws										
Uncooperative regarding household work	75.00	12.50	12.50	2.42	0.7	5.00	30.00	65.00	2.07	0.9
Non recognition to dual roles	70.00	17.50	12.50	1.92	0.9	-	-	-	-	-
Not much interaction	70.00	17.50	12.50	2.02	0.9	7.50	30.00	62.50	2.20	0.9

It was noticed that 68.75 and 80.00 per cent of working women and homemakers respectively did not help their wives. With regard of habits, there were other important reasons of conflict like spending more time and money on friends by husbands (18.75 per cent). It was noticed that 15 and 10 per cent husbands of working women and homemakers respectively had the habit of smoking and drinking. It was found that most of respondents sometimes had conflict with their husbands on their suspicious nature. Further it was observed that 25 per cent of home makers and 37.5 per cent of working women reported that their in-laws had cooperative attitude regarding household work. Similarly 70 per cent of working women said that their in-laws had recognized their dual role. It was noticed that 12.50 per cent of working women were often in the state of conflict with their in-laws because of uncooperative attitude and for not recognizing their dual role.

3. Attitude regarding Working Status of Women

When asked that, if given choice, whether they wanted to carry on with the job, majority (86.25%) of the working women responded positively. Even homemakers showed positive attitude (87.50%) regarding working outside for work. Both the groups had their own reasons for it. Working women said that the main reason for carrying on the job was social networking (91.25). According to them going out for work had provided them with an opportunity to enrich their experience by facing varied situations and meeting varied people. Away from the family conflicts, they found solace in sharing family woes with friends which had been possible only due to their going out of the house.

On the other hand the main reason as given by majority of the homemakers (95%) was economic independence. According to them asking for money was quite humiliating for them and if given choice they would like to join the job. Other reason given by majority of working women (82.50%) as well as homemakers (92.50) for their positive attitude regarding job was recognition of their work. Both the groups agreed to the notion of ‘house work is never seen until it is not done’. According to homemakers they were taken for granted and were rarely appreciated for doing never ending, tedious and tiresome house chores whereas the working

women in their families or neighborhoods had the privilege of getting appreciation for their dual role.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to their attitude regarding working outside to earn and its reasons (Percentages)

Attitude	Working Women (N=80)	Home Maker (N=40)
Positive	86.25	87.50
Negative	13.75	12.50
Reasons for Positive Attitude	Working Women (n=69)	Home Maker (n=35)
Economic Independence	36.25	95.0
Recognition of Work	82.50	92.50
Active life	77.50	67.50
Social Networking	91.25	27.50

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that it did not matter what was the status of women (house makers or working women) and how much they contributed to the family income, being women they had to full fill the familial responsibilities which were expected essentially to be done by them. Working women used to wake up early in the morning before 5 o’ clock and sleep late night after 10 o clock after finishing household chores. They had to do all the household tasks on their own without help of family members or paid help. Though more than half of the working women respondents contributed their pay in family income but whenever they need money, they had to ask their husbands or mother-in-law. Despite physical, economic and social difficulties regarding family life, majority of the working women wanted to carry on their present job not for economic reasons but for the reasons of social networking and recognition of work. There is need to bring fundamental change in the attitudes towards women held by the society as a whole. Husbands can be more sensitive to women’s needs, and counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks and take care of children. It is

possible only through socialization of the males accordingly from the very young age.

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