

Problems and Challenges Faced by Working Women in Handling their Parenting Responsibilities

Dr. K. Kavitha Maheswari¹; P. Selvi²

¹Assistant Professor, PG Department of Social Work, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli-620002,

²II MSW, PG Department of Social Work, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli-620002

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Abstract: This study explores the problems and challenges faced by working women, particularly female school teachers in Gangaikondan Panchayat, Tirunelveli District, in managing their parenting responsibilities alongside professional duties. With the increasing participation of women in the workforce, balancing work and family life has become a significant concern. Using a descriptive research design and census sampling method, data was collected through a structured questionnaire from women with children working in government and private schools. The findings reveal that while most respondents manage to balance both roles with moderate satisfaction, many experience stress, guilt, and limited time with their children. Key challenges include lack of time, mental burden, and limited involvement in children's education. The study highlights the need for flexible work policies, accessible childcare facilities, and support systems to enable better work-life integration. The findings emphasize the importance of institutional and familial support in promoting the well-being and efficiency of working mothers.

Keywords: Working Women, Parenting Responsibilities, Work Life Balance, Occupational Stress and Parenting Challenges.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A working woman refers to an individual who is employed or engaged in any form of paid or unpaid labor, contributing her skills and efforts to a profession, job, or business. This includes women working in various sectors such as corporate, government, education, healthcare, arts, or entrepreneurship. Working women balance their professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments and may work full-time, part-time, or on a freelance basis. Women play a crucial role in both family and society. In the Indian cultural context, women have historically been seen as caregivers of the family. However, in recent times, women actively participate in the workforce, earning money and contributing to household income. Despite this progress, a significant portion of the population still believes that a woman's primary responsibility is to care for her children and family. This perception leads to role conflicts for women, who today must simultaneously fulfill multiple roles. A modern woman is a caring mother, a dedicated homemaker, and a responsible member of society. The role of women is continuously evolving. They now bear the dual responsibility of managing both family and professional life, requiring significant adjustments in their daily routines. Working

women often experience stress due to these dual responsibilities. Moreover, societal constraints imposed on working women impact their physical and mental well-being. They also face difficulties in time management while juggling work and household responsibilities.

Parental responsibilities toward women encompass a wide range of duties and obligations that both fathers and mothers should uphold to support their daughters, wives, and female family members. These responsibilities not only shape a woman's personal and professional life but also contribute to gender equality, emotional well-being, and societal progress. Proper parental support enables women to navigate their roles efficiently, whether as daughters, professionals, mothers, or caregivers.

The study titled "Parenting Stress and Coping Strategies Adopted by Working Mothers" (Kedah, 2024) examines the delicate balance between Parenting responsibilities and work demands. The findings indicate that managing both obligations simultaneously can lead to stress, with working mothers reporting fatigue and reduced time spent with their children. Coping mechanisms such as support networks and flexible work schedules are shown to help reduce stress. To

promote work-life balance for working mothers, the study suggests that organizations need to implement stronger family-friendly policies. In another study, Menon, R., and Nair, S. (2023) focus on the psychological effects of Parenting guilt on working mothers in the education sector. Their research indicates that guilt negatively impacts mental health and job performance, particularly when coupled with a poor work-life balance. The study concludes that organizations should implement support groups and counseling services to address this issue.

Lee, S., and Tang, T. (2022) investigate how workplace flexibility impacts the parenting roles of working women in South Korea. Their study finds that flexible work schedules allow women to better balance their dual responsibilities, leading to increased job satisfaction and family harmony. They recommend that more businesses adopt flexible work arrangements.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

➤ Aim

The study aimed to know the problems and Challenges faced by working women in handling their parenting responsibilities.

➤ Research Design

This study follows a descriptive research design to analyze the problems faced by working women in handling their parenting responsibilities, specifically school teachers in Gangaikondan Panchayat, Tirunelveli.

➤ Universe

The universe of this study consisted of female teachers working in government schools and private schools in Gangaikondan Panchayat, Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu.

➤ Sampling Techniques

Census method was adopted, meaning all female teachers who meet the study criteria (working women with children) was included in the study. This ensures comprehensive data collection without sampling bias.

➤ Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in Gangaikondan Panchayat, Tirunelveli, to check the feasibility of conducting research over there and permission was sought for conducting data collection over there.

➤ Pre Test

A pre-test was conducted with five female teachers to validate the questionnaire. This was helpful to identify unclear or ambiguous questions, ensuring better data collection during the main study. There was no addition or deletion took place hence the pretested. Respondents were included in the sample.

➤ Tools of the Data Collection

The primary tool for data collection self prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire covered the aspects like socio-demographic details, Economic status, work place details, work life balance, parenting responsibilities and psychological aspect.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Findings on Personal Details

Nearly half of the respondents are at the age category of 31-35. 54.2% of respondents hold a postgraduate degree and a Bachelor of Education, indicating a strong focus on advanced education and teaching. 94.2% of the total respondents, indicating that the institution is primarily staffed with academic professionals. 3/5th of respondents identify as Hindu. Nearly 3/4th of the respondents belong to a nuclear family. B Majority of respondents (82.4%) belong to small families with fewer than 5 members. A little more than 3/4th of the respondents (77.1%) have had arranged marriages.

➤ Findings on Socio- Economic Status

Majority of respondents (80%) have only one child. All respondents (100%) reported that they live with their spouse, indicating a universal trend of cohabitation within marriage. A little more than 2/5th of the respondents are having the marital life span of 1-5 years. Nearly 1/2 of the respondents have 1-5 years of work experience. The income distribution of the respondents majority (61.4%) fall within the income range of ₹21,001 – ₹35,000, indicating that this is the most common income group in the study. The majority (86.6%) have two earning members in the family, indicating a dual-income household structure. A significant majority (86.6%) reside in their own houses. A little more than 1/4th of the respondents have husbands engaged in business.

➤ Findings on Parenting Details

The distribution of respondents based on the age of their children. More than 1/2 of the respondents have children below the age of 5. It is seen from the above table that a vast majority of respondents (97.1%) work exactly 8 hours per day. More than 3/5th of the respondents opined that they have flexible working time. 53.7% of respondents state that their organization provides sports, school, or crèche facilities.

➤ Findings on Problems and Challenges Faced by Working Mothers

52.8% of the respondents rarely feel that their work interferes with time spent with their children. 40% of respondents rarely feel the need to give up career advancements. Most common strategies for ensuring family time despite work commitments are support from a caretaker (36.6%). 54.2% of respondents experience this impact sometimes, indicating that work-life balance challenges are common but not constant. 80% of respondents rely on family support sometimes, indicating that while they manage parenting responsibilities independently at times, they still need occasional assistance.

58.5% of respondents rely on family members, making it the most preferred choice for childcare. This suggests that many working parents trust their extended family to provide care and supervision while they are at work. 50% of respondents highlighting better child care is the need. The above data reveals that a majority of respondents (57.1%) sometimes experience guilt about not spending enough time with their children due to work and Parenting responsibilities. Majority of respondents (57.1%) have never sought counselling or mental health support despite facing challenges related to Parenting responsibilities.

A majority of respondents (58.5%) experience less stress due to their responsibilities, indicating that they have manageable workloads, effective coping strategies, or adequate support systems to balance their duties. Majority of respondents (71.4%) adopt a Supportive/child oriented parenting style, suggesting a preference for a more democratic or child-centered approach. Varying levels of Parenting contribution to a child's educational development. A significant portion of respondents (40%) reported having a low level of involvement, indicating that many parents may face challenges such as work commitments, lack of time, or limited knowledge about how to actively support their child's education.

Majority of parents (47.1%) spend 1 to 2 hours with their children daily, suggesting that while they make an effort to engage with their children, their time may be limited due to work and other responsibilities. The most significant challenge reported is educational challenges (47.1%), indicating that nearly half of the respondents struggle with supporting their child's learning, managing school-related responsibilities, or addressing academic performance concerns.

80% of respondents feel the compulsion to prioritize work over family "sometimes," indicating that while work demands occasionally take precedence, most parents still strive to balance their professional and family responsibilities. The most commonly cited factor is family responsibilities (45.7%), suggesting that nearly half of the respondents feel mentally burdened by parenting duties, household management, and family-related concerns.

47.1% of the respondents identifying increased stress as the most common challenge. The most commonly utilized resource is parent support groups (60%), indicating that the majority of respondents find emotional and practical support from peer networks. Majority of respondents (78.5%) are somewhat satisfied with their current work-life balance. Majority of respondents (60%) are somewhat satisfied with their balance between life and their parenting role. Majority of respondents (70%) have sometimes reduced their work hours or considered leaving work due to Parenting responsibilities.

Majority of respondents (74.2%) prefer flexible work hours as a key workplace policy to support their well-being and work-life balance. 52.8% of respondents believe their work schedule partially affects their children's performance, indicating that while work commitments may influence their child's academic or social development, other factors such as support systems, school environment, and parenting strategies also play a role. 64.2% of respondents stated that they do not experience ill health due to workload, meaning that a majority of individuals are able to manage their work responsibilities without adverse health effects. 27.1% of the respondents reported feeling stressed, indicating that hormonal changes, discomfort, and possibly external factors such as work or personal responsibilities contribute to heightened tension during menstruation.

The research data on how work affects time with children reveals that 52.8% of the respondents rarely feel that their work interferes with time spent with their children, suggesting that their schedules allow some balance between professional and personal life. Career advancements without major setbacks, a considerable number face occasional or frequent trade-offs. Organizations could address this by offering mentorship programs, career development initiatives, and flexible work policies to ensure employees do not have to choose between professional growth and personal commitments.

Most individuals experience occasional disruptions due to parenting, only a minority face constant challenges. organizations can support working parents by offering flexible work schedules, remote work options, or Parenting support programs to help mitigate these impacts and improve overall productivity. Family support remains the most common solution, a growing reliance on professional caretakers suggests a shift towards alternative childcare arrangements. Employees can support working parents by offering childcare facilities, flexible working hours, or financial assistance for professional childcare services to ease the burden of balancing work and Parenting responsibilities.

There is a necessity for organizations to implement family-friendly policies, such as on-site childcare, reduced workload expectations, Parenting leave options and promoting a culture of shared parenting responsibilities to better support employees in balancing work and family life.

Overall, while the majority of the respondents experience low to moderate stress, a smaller percentage struggles with high stress, underscoring the importance of stress management strategies, workplace flexibility and family or professional support systems to help individuals navigate their responsibilities effectively. Nearly half of the respondents feel mentally burdened by parenting duties, household management and family-related concerns. This indicates the need for better support systems, shared responsibilities, and stress management strategies for parents.

The organizations should consider implementing policies that support career progression for working mothers, such as mentorship programs, flexible schedules, childcare assistance, need for better work life balance strategies, mental health support and share family responsibilities. The most commonly utilized resource is parent support groups (60%), indicating that the majority of respondents find emotional and practical support from peer networks. This suggests that parents rely on shared experiences, advice and encouragement from others facing similar challenges, emphasizing the value of strong community based support systems.

Demanding work schedules, long hours, or high pressure environments may be contributing to health issues such as fatigue, anxiety or other stress related conditions. This could be due to better work life balance, effective stress management, or supportive workplace policies that prevent burnout. Balancing work and parenting is a significant challenge for working women, often leading to stress, career limitations, and emotional strain. This research highlights key issues such as time constraints, workplace biases, and inadequate support systems. Despite these obstacles, many women develop resilience and adopt strategies to manage both roles effectively.

To create a supportive environment, organizations must implement family-friendly policies like flexible work schedules, remote work, Parenting leave, and childcare support. Workplace cultures should also eliminate biases against working mothers to ensure equal career opportunities. Beyond the workplace, societal attitudes must shift to encourage shared parenting, reducing the disproportionate burden on women. Policymakers should enforce legal frameworks that support work-life balance, including paid Parenting leave and accessible childcare services.

IV. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, addressing these problems requires collective action from employers, families, and society. By fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment, women can thrive in both their professional and parenting roles, contributing to greater gender equality and overall societal well-being.

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