

Issues and Challenges of Working Mother in Family with the Changing Scenario of Society



EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Although it was evident that working mothers encounter lot of challenges in the adjustment process but still they are satisfied with this situation and want to continue this status. Working women also suggest that young married women should join workforce either as an entrepreneur or an employee. They should empower themselves and should learn to respond to work and family pressures and use strategies to achieve balance. Many working mothers also felt that they were being good role models for their children. Finally the strategies being adopted by working mothers in making adjustments with their work-family relations includes positive attitude, acceptance, family co-operation, attentiveness, flexibility, time management and catharsis. In addition, they felt that they highly valued what time they were able to spend with their children. Mothers at times working had a negative impact on their children because after work mothers were sometimes too tired to interact as much with children as the children would have liked.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history women have been regarded as the weaker gender, both physically and intellectually. As a result women's roles tended to center around the home and raising children. Over time women have gradually entered the workforce and have gained increasingly prestigious positions. With more women currently in the workforce than ever before, fewer children are being raised by stay-at-home mothers and more are spending prolonged hours at childcare facilities.

The world communities are changing their lifestyles, cultural values and habits with the rapid industrialization, technological advancement and modernization. Presently access to latest knowledge and information through education is easily available for both men and women. Increasing participation rates of women at higher levels of education and exposure to mass media of communication have broadened their vision, increased awareness and opened new horizons for their empowerment and growth. In current scenario, women are fully utilizing their education and potential to further empower themselves and their families by actively participating in the nation work force.

The evolution of human motherhood

The origins of human motherhood date back to just under two million years ago when our most direct ancestors began to emerge as a separate species from other primates – the appearance of Homo Erectus. Unlike chimps and gorillas, these early human mothers began a new style of rearing their young – in particular, allowing others to assist with the feeding and care of infants. One reason for this change was the fact that human infants were, and are, much more dependent on adults, and mothers in particular, for survival in their early years. The young human, for example, requires around 13 million calories before it becomes nutritionally independent. In these circumstances mothers needed some help.

Throughout our evolution, then, motherhood has been positioned within supportive social frameworks – allowing mothers to develop the essential primary bonds with their infants and children, but also allowing them to be additionally productive members of the groups in which they lived. By the late Stone Age, when most of the evolutionary forces that have shaped our ways of living and even the manner in which the circuits of our brains are 'wired' had occurred, the role of women, including mothers, as gatherers of food was crucial to survival.

The modern mother

Can mothers in the 21st century, with all the advanced technol-

ogy and communication systems and the modern conveniences that we now take for granted, now dispense with all parents (or their equivalent) and happily raise their children single-handedly (or with just one male partner) within the much diminished 'nuclear' family size? Or do mothers have the same 'primeval' needs for support in their role as the primary guarantors of the future of the human species that they have always had?

It is, of course, impossible to trace the changing face of motherhood and the complex social networks in which mothers have found themselves over this vast expanse of time. The evidence from archaeology and anthropology may give us some clues, but without first-hand accounts from mothers themselves, and from those in their families and social networks, we can only make guesses as to what motherhood really looked like.

On the basis of these forms of evidence we have sought to answer some specific questions about the changing face of motherhood and determine the extent to which modern 'solutions' to motherhood are more or less beneficial than the solutions of the past. In particular we have raised issues such as:

- How have families, and the roles that mothers play within them changed over the years?
- How many mothers are now in paid employment outside of the home compared with the past, and what impact has this had on child care arrangements?
- Has the role of fathers changed in any significant way?
- Do 'modern' child-rearing patterns mean that mothers have more time to themselves?
- What has been the impact of modern conveniences, from pre-prepared baby foods and disposable nappies to washing machines and tumble driers, on the daily routines of mothers?
- What have been the changes in mothers' support networks, in terms of size, composition and function?
- Are mothers more or less detached from their own mothers than they were in the past, and what have been the effects of this change?

Researchers have concluded that women need to confront the professional duties and family responsibilities with a congruent approach. Though men at large appear to have accepted the women as additional earning hand; they are yet to extend their cooperation in performing domestic responsibilities. Resultantly working mothers have to make several adjustments to maintain healthy balance in their family living requiring integrated efforts

with work and family life . In order to be successful in balancing work and family life, working mothers have been found to be making several marital partnerships with their spouses inclusive of sharing house work, mutual involvement in childcare, joint decision making, equal financial influence and sharing emotional stress .

Children with working mothers are usually placed in group childcare, which results in receiving less one-to-one attention and instruction. This may have significant cognitive effects later in childhood. Behavioral effects may also arise. Mothers entering the workforce might also have a positive effect on children. With increased financial opportunities come increases in healthcare, nutrition, and educational opportunities. Working mothers are helping to meet the needs of their families by providing financially, but that on occasion their family relationships did suffer as a result of their employment.

Work– Family Life Adjustment

Increasing proportions of female participation in the labor force has created bigger challenges for women in the incorporation of new roles and responsibilities as well as managing their time with child bearing and child rearing years. Work-Family Life Adjustment Whether working on the job or at home, women has to play diverse and simultaneous roles by frequently switching on from one role to the other. Working on the job is a performance of professional duties assigned by the organization and work at home includes their family and domestic duties.

Work and Family adjustment is a complex issue that involves financial values, gender roles, career path, time management and many other factors. Work-Family life adjustment requires multiple role expectation from working mothers. A qualitative study found that at work a woman is expected to be committed, dynamic, competitive, straight forward, non-sentimental and a professional, while at home, she is expected to be sweet, soft, sensitive, adaptable, gentle, and unassertive and domesticated. As an ideal woman she wants to fulfill the duties of a faithful wife, a sacrificing mother, obedient and respectful daughter in-law and an efficient and highly placed career woman. These contradictory expectations cause the most confusion, tension and create many other problems for her. A career woman finds it difficult to do justice with both roles simultaneously.

Women joining the work force

Three major reasons that influence women to join workforce: economic, incidental and education. It had been derived that economic reason was the most important factor amongst all which persuaded them to join workforce. Women are left with no choice but to join the workforce and become an earning hand in case of being elder in the family in the absence of a main male earning hand. They took this responsibility to support their family financially. For some others higher economic needs drove them into the workforce. They wanted to opt for better quality life or wished to help their husbands financially. The prices were escalating rapidly and I could see many women joining workforce and contributing towards home uplift, so I also decided to join workforce to make our living comfortable”. Second reason that persuades women to join workforce is incidental and self empowerment. It seems that women want to join workforce when they feel they have plenty of time at home and they can also get support from their families. This way she also gets empowered. However, whether they enter the workforce for free time or with persuasion, it ultimately became their priority. Third reason for the women to join workforce is their education. They didn't want to waste their parents' investment as well as their own time spent in their studies and therefore they join work force.

Self-perception in relation to work

Women have both negative and positive perceptions related to their work. Working mothers find their job very demanding with respect to time and energy. Most of them face problem of long working hours and at times they also have to stay late for extra work especially where office timings are strictly followed. Being a working mother they demand relaxation of time from work. Women use public transport which causes their late arrival in offices. This becomes a strong de-motivation factor for them. They also have to listen harsh comments from their bosses and colleagues.

Furthermore, working in the male dominant environment is also a challenge for the working mothers. To compete with their male counterparts, they have to be more active, extra careful and draw line at workplace. “Working in a male dominant environment is also very difficult for me. Everyone is curious in finding each other's faults to take over his place. I have to be very careful, attentive and make best efforts to complete my work properly”.

Self-perception in relation to family

A working mother has to perform all activities that a house wife performs without having any relaxation. That includes cooking, washing, cleaning, ironing, kitchen work and looking after my children etc. From work, I get two days off, but there is no escape from the household responsibilities. Family responsibilities are equally demanding: This dual responsibility of work and home makes it a 24 hours job for the working mothers which ultimately make their life mechanical. To be a working mother is a 24 hours job with very little time to rest. Finding shows that male support is very necessary for working mothers.

Strategies for Adjustment

Working mothers use several strategies for making adjustments in their work and family life. One of their strategies is attentiveness and alertness. In this way they adjust themselves according to the environment. Work and family both demand time and vigilance. They lose focus on work if we do not get focused all the time”. Furthermore with positive attitude, acceptance and co-operation allow them to manage work and family life efficiently. Working women have to be emotionally and physically strong to perform multiple roles.

Conclusions

Women join work force for multiple reasons and economic reason is the most important among all. Education empowers and polishes their potentials and incidental reason provides them opportunities to gain experience. Work and family life adjustment happens to be a long, tiring and extremely challenging process. Work has its own demands which are quite different from family responsibilities. The real challenge is how working mothers respond to work and family pressures amicably and efficiently by using various strategies and adjustments. Since long our society has accepted women as an additional financial resource, however, the role of the male still needs to be redefined. As a matter of fact in the process of making successful and workable adjustments, family support and husband co-operation plays a vital role. In the process of making adjustment, working mothers have to compromise their sleep, sentiments and health. Working mothers also get frustrated after continuously leading a routine and mechanical life which affects them emotionally and physically. Although these women efficiently utilize these strategies to achieve a balance in work-family life but still more spousal help, organization support in the form of flexi time-options and appreciation is required to make them efficient, comfortable and relaxed.

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