

CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract: Education is the catalytic agent for social change. Indian women in present times are more educated than they have ever been. Earlier, women were confined to their households and were made to submit to the male dominated patriarchal society, as have always been in our country. Today, women in India are coming up in all spheres of life. They have begun to share a common social life which was not found in earlier times. Education has motivated women to aspire freedom i.e., social freedom, educational freedom, political freedom and freedom for career and earning.

Women today are breaking the traditional barrier for establishing their own identity. This is because the dynamics of social change and development has adversely affected a large section of women. The exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago, especially in urban setting. This has resulted in increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth in women.

The study adopts exploratory research design along with interview schedule as tool to collect data from the respondents. Observation method also been used for qualitative analysis. The sample size considered for the study is 61. The study looks into understanding the criteria recognized by the respondents about their social status, their quality of life influenced by education, their capacity towards coping with stressful situation and the contribution of education towards these issues.

Key Words: Education, Social status, quality of life, empowerment

Introduction: "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women" -Pandit Nehru. The position and status of today's Women in India is considered high in modern Indian Society. The population of women is almost half of the total population of India. A country or a community cannot be considered civilized where women are not honored. (Roy, 2013).

Studies on issues and problems of working women reveals that working women are major part of labor market of India. They are engaged in gainful employment and contributing to home and national economy. They should be given the due respect and status which they deserve in the society. In the changing socio-cultural environment of India, women are entering in a new era. (Neeta, 2003)

After Independence, women of India took to education in a relatively large number. For example in 1901, the literacy level of the females in India was just 0.6%, it increased to 39.42% in 1991 and to 64.1 in 2001. (Nair, 2010). Various benefits such as free-ship, scholarship, loan facility, hostel facility etc are being given to women who go for higher education in many towns and cities, educational institutions meant only for female children have been established.

In both villages and cities there has been a remarkable increase in the number of women going out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers. In the "employment market" they are successfully competing with the men folk. In every field, the number of women employees is steadily increasing since 1991, though in a smaller number,

women are getting recruited into the Army force, Air force and Naval force also.

Employment has given women economic independence and the feeling of importance. They now feel that they can stand on their own and look after the entire family by themselves. This has boosted their self-pride and self confidence. Employment provision has made them to feel that they need not live as parasites on their men folk. In order to give protection to the economic interests and rights of the women folk the government has undertaken various socio economic legislations, which cover areas such as rights to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefit and job security. The modern women are inclined towards the social issues, and trying hard to improve the social status of women at large.

Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home. Many women actively supported and participated in the nationalist movement and secured eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India. Traditionally Indian women exist because of the family and for the family. (Roy, 2013)

Just like their man counterpart, women are also fond of attending social functions and value her social life quite a lot. Previously, men-folk used to discourage women from leaving their households for attending social functions. Now the spread of education, especially that of women, and with that the changing social attitudes of educated women have changed the order.

The modern woman has started caring for her health, fitness, cultural needs and interests, academic pursuits, social intercourse, religious activities recreational needs, etc. The woman in modern times is entering into certain new fields that were unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. These are the woman's participation in economic, political, and social life. The modern woman keenly desires to enter into a work career because of the pressing economic needs of the family. In middle class families, much emphasis is given to the maintenance of high standard of living. To fulfill the economic needs of the family and to achieve higher standard of living the woman participates in economic activities. (Kiran 2015).

Along with all the positive aspects, however, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. (Dashora, 2013). For centuries, women have been subject to exploitation physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenges and problems faced by them both at home and at workplace. Tackling with all these hurdles women are stressed and struggling hard to balance their home lives, social activities and job. Outdated family structures have an uneven effect on the lives of Indian women.

In this context a study was conducted where 61 respondents working in various professions were interviewed. Questions like how they are managing to strike a balance between their work life and personal life, how they are out of cultural restrictions and social obligations and how their social status is hiking because of their education and employment were asked. Despite of all negative feedbacks on their economic control, family constraints and other glass ceiling issues, they expressed that their education and profession have certainly gained them a favorable social status which is most welcomed by them.

The study adopted exploratory and descriptive research design and the participants were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule. Satisfaction with life scale was used to assess their life satisfaction level and quality of life.

The Satisfaction with life scale is a 5-item scale designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either positive or negative affect). Participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of the 5 items using a 7-point scale that ranges from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Table below describes the **level of satisfaction** of the respondents.

The scoring of the scale says that if the respondent scores 31 – 35, then he is extremely satisfied, 26 – 30 stands for Satisfied 21 – 25 denotes Slightly satisfied 20 means Neutral 15 – 19 should be understood as Slightly dissatisfied 10 – 14 has the connotation of Dissatisfied 5 – 9 means that the person is

Table showing satisfaction with life according to the respondents.

SWL GROUP				
Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dissatisfied	6	9.8	9.8	9.8
Slightly Dissatisfied	9	14.8	14.8	54.1
Neutral	19	31.1	31.1	85.2
Satisfied	27	44.3	44.3	54.1
Total	61	100.0	100.0	100.0

Extremely dissatisfied. The result of the above study reveals that young mothers are slightly dissatisfied owing to their various psychological and emotional stresses.

The result of the above study reveals that nearly 9% of the respondents say they are dissatisfied. The reason for their dissatisfaction is that they are unable to cope with stress and give time for their children and at the same time they are required to work in order to support their families economically. Some 27% working women are slightly dissatisfied owing to their various psychological and emotional stresses posed by their employment and issues relating to work life balancing. Balancing between their responsibilities of family, children and other personal commitments and responsibilities at work place bears upon challenges in their day-to-day life which leads to stress.

Many of the respondent's (19%) answers were neutral saying that there are both pros and cons of employment and regarding quality of life.

Remaining 27% of the respondents were satisfied with their quality of life. Striking a balance between work and personal life of course is a challenge but the social status and economic empowerment gained because of education and employment is a positive note according to them.

Comparing the social status of her, one of the respondents was in a view that earlier when she was a home maker with just a bachelor degree was never recognized; once she obtained higher studies and got into a respectable profession, she was given so much importance, the attitudes of her own family members changed. In this case, it is more justifiable that education and employment definitely have a very important role to play in enhancing the social status of women; Working women.

Conclusion: Indian Women are playing major roles in many professions and other activities that can result in the growth of the country. Despite issues

concerning their physical issues, their capacity towards coping with stressful situation and the contribution of education towards these issues have

helped them balance between their work-personal life and proceed towards success in both.

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