



PROBLEMS FACED BY THE WORKING WOMEN IN THEIR WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Working women have the right to complete integration in the development process particularly by means of an equal access to education and equal participation in social, economic, cultural and political life. In addition, necessary measures should be taken to facilitate this integration with family responsibilities which should be fully shared by both partners. Accordingly, this study focuses on women's socio-economic status without dealing in-depth with other aspects of status. It also examines the extent to which social, demographic and behavioural characteristics of the working women themselves alleviate or aggravate their economic problems. Working women face a myriad of challenges in their workplaces, stemming from systemic gender inequalities, cultural biases, and organizational structures. These challenges can significantly impact their career advancement, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

Key words: Socio-economic status, demographic and behavioural characteristics.

Introduction

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. The condition of women in a society is an index of that society's place in civilization. India is a multifaceted society where women's status is heavily dependent on different variables that include geographical location (*Urban/Rural*), educational status, social status (*Caste and class*), marital status, financial status, age, etc. As such, women have restricted mobility, access to education, and health facilities, lower decision-making power, and higher rates of violence. Despite existing reservations for women, their political participation is also hindered even at the district and panchayat (local governing bodies) levels and also at the state and national levels. Policies on women's welfare and empowerment exist at the national, state, district and local (panchayat) levels in many sectors such as health, education including economic opportunities, and political participation etc. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice at the ground level. That's what drove us to study the socio-economic status of working women in Tirupati district.

To analyze the socio-economic status of rural and urban working women in Tirupati district, the study focused more on negative discrimination against working women of rural areas, and urban areas in general and comparison between them. The analysis of the impact of social and economic factors on the overall social life of the working women in the specified areas carried out. Furthermore, the experiences of working women about the attitude of their families, friends, relatives, and colleagues at workplace according to their status in society and type of job are also the focus of the present study.

The results of the study showed that different age groups of working women have different kinds of problems and challenges and different categories such as married, single, divorcee, single parents, separated have different issues at stake in the workplace. Some problems are common like mental anguish and physical pain, lack of proper balance between work and life, unfair treatment at the workplace stressful life and workplace discrimination. But challenges are age or category specific like prejudiced and stereotyped. Thinking safety and security issues etc. Some probable solutions for problems are found to be proper safety and security measures by the parent organizations, sensitive and supporting partners at home, effective childcare policies, and appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms for women at the workplace. Networking initiatives have emerged as powerful tools for addressing these challenges. And promoting women's empowerment in the workplace. By fostering collaborative relationship among diverse stakeholders, networking initiatives facilitate the exchange of resources, information, and support mechanisms that can help women navigate the complexities of work life balance. Through networking, women can access opportunities for mentorship, peer support, skill development, and advocacy, which are crucial for overcoming barriers and advancing in their careers while fulfilling their caregiving roles.

Objectives

1. To understand the problems faced by working women in rural and urban areas of Tirupati district.
2. To offer some viable solutions for problems rural and urban working women facing in families and at workplace.
3. To study the problems of working women in demographic and behavioural characteristics of rural and urban areas of Tirupati district.
4. To analyse and focuses on women's socio-economic status of working women.

Methods of data collection:

For an in-depth analysis about the social status of rural and urban working women in Nellore district Investigative methods were used to get data from the respondents. An interviewing schedule is used where questions are asked to the respondents and answers are recorded. It is the most appropriate method to get the information by visiting them to have the appropriate knowledge about their socioeconomic conditions.

Sampling design: Stratified Random Sampling Method is used to select the respondents in Tirupati District of Andhra Pradesh. In the first stage, 5 Rural Mandal's and 2 Urban Mandal's are selected in Tirupati District. In the second stage, 2 villages are selected from each Mandal. In the third stage, 10 respondents selected are selected from each village. 50 respondents are selected from each of the Mandal. Thus, 200 married working women are selected from both rural and urban areas in the district.

Analysis and interpretation of data

In order to analyse and present the collected data, qualitative and quantitative methods are used. Data have been interpreted in the form of tables which present the major findings of the study. Each table has two parts, one for the rural working women and the other for the urban working women. Percentages of each category are calculated and compared with each other. The required data are analysed and interpreted for establishing the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of one to the other in respect of working women.

Factors affecting working women's employment:

To have a comprehensive understanding of the women's involvement in income-oriented activities, it is important to know the factors affecting or limiting the employment possibilities for women in Tirupati district. Therefore, in the following parts a detailed discussion about the factors such as age, education, marital status, occupations, and financial status of the working women has been done.

Demographic information:

Age group is one of the important factors for domestic violence. 42 per cent of the respondents belongs to 31-35 age group (rural 26%, and urban16%), 31 per cent belongs to 36-40 age group, 23 per cent belongs to 26-30 and finally only 4 per cent belongs to 41-45 age group. It is found that 31-35 age group women show maturity of their lifestyles. 25-35 age group women are facing persisting challenges like marriage, family, and children, caring about elders etc. In view of this, it can be suggested that women need to have a lot of patience. It is also found that majority of women belong to 31-35 age group are facing domestic violence. When compared with working women from rural areas, working women from urban areas are more prone to domestic violence.

Of the total sample population, 51 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, followed by quarter (25%) are of Christians and the remaining 24 per cent are Muslims.

Houses are classified into four kinds- kutchha, pucca, tiled and hut based on the materials used for the construction of roof, wall, and floor. The proportion of pucca houses is twice as high in urban areas as compared to rural areas. In rural areas relatively more families live in kutchha houses most of which are huts with thatched roof and mud walls. Such houses do not provide enough protection against inclement weather conditions. Among the total sample population, 48 per cent of the respondents have kutchha houses, 35 per cent pucca houses, 9 per cent huts and 8 per cent tiled houses. Respondents in urban areas have a good housing pattern like kutchha and pucca houses compared to respondents in rural areas.

Nuclear family system is a family structure that consists of parents living with their children, also known as an immediate family. A joint family is a form of family where the grandparents, father, mother, and children live jointly under one roof. A predominate, 80% of the respondents belong to nuclear family and the remaining 20 percent to joint family. In urban, nuclear families are more than in rural but joint families are more in rural than in urban. If a family is nuclear, size is 2-5 members as well as joint is having more than 5 members. 36

per cent of the respondent's size is 3-4, continued that 29 percent are only having 2 members, 20 percent having 5-6 members, 8.5 per cent are having 7-8 members and only 6.5 percent are having 9 members in a family.

Table 4.1
Demographic Status of the Respondents

Variable	Group	Area				Total	
		Rural		Urban			
		N (100)	%	N (100)	%	N (200)	%
Age group	26-30	20	10	26	13	46	23
	31-35	52	26	32	16	84	42
	36-40	23	11.5	39	19.5	62	31
	41-45	5	2.5	3	1.5	8	4
Religion	Muslim	23	11.5	25	12.5	48	24
	Hindu	49	24.5	53	26.5	102	51
	Christian	28	14	22	11	50	25
Social status	OC	26	13	12	6	38	19
	BC	31	15.5	32	16	63	31.5
	SC	42	21	26	13	68	34
	ST	1	0.5	30	15	31	15.5
House type	Own	77	38.5	39	19.5	116	58
	Rent	33	16.5	61	30.5	84	42
Residence type	Kutchha	57	28.5	39	19.5	96	48
	Pucca	19	9.5	51	25.5	70	35
	Tiled	9	4.5	7	3.5	16	8
	Hut	15	7.5	3	1.5	18	9
Family type	Nuclear	72	36	88	44	160	80

	Joint	28	14	12	6	40	20
Family size	2	30	15	28	14	58	29
	3-4	37	18.5	35	17.5	72	36
	5-6	20	10	20	10	40	20
	7-8	6	3	11	5.5	17	8.5
	9 above	7	3.5	6	3	13	6.5
Education qualification	Illiterate	15	7.5	10	5	25	12.5
	Primary	16	8	21	10.5	37	18.5
	Secondary	30	15	30	15	60	30
	Intermediate	19	9.5	23	11.5	42	21
	Graduate and above	16	8	20	10	36	18

Source: Field Survey

Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, belief and educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training and directed research. Education normally takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. The data explains that majority (30%) of the respondents studied secondary education (6-10), 21 percent intermediate, 18.5 percent primary level (1-5), 18 percent are graduate, and above and the remaining 12.5 percent are illiterates.

Marital Status:

Marriage is a socially or ritually recognised union between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, and any resulting in biological or adopted children and in-laws and other family through marriage.

Nearly 72.5 per cent of the respondents are married, 13.5 per cent divorced, 10 per cent separated and only 4 per cent widowed. In every family women are playing a variety of roles such as mother, wife, sister and daughter-in-law. As per data 77.5 per cent of the women are wives, and 22.5 per cent daughters-in-law. It is found that majorities are wives.

84 per cent of the respondents got married by arranged means and 8.5 per cent eloped and got married. According to the data, arranged marriage is the best choice for the women particularly in rural areas. Women have less chance to refuse the arranged marriage but in the urban areas it is somewhat different.

Marital life is an innate need for every human being. In rural and urban areas, there is no difference between marital life and living area. 43 per cent of the respondents have got married for 1-3 years, 39 per cent for 4-6 years, 7.5 per cent for less than a year only, 6 per cent for 7-9 years and only 4.5 per cent for 10 and above. In urban areas 27 per cent (total of 43%) women have been married for 1-3 year, in rural areas 21.5 percent (total of 39%) for 4-6 years.

Family is fundamental at every stage of human life. It is found that only 2 percent of working women belong to rural areas was happy with their family. 38 per cent of the women was in very bad terms with their family, 36 per cent opined that they were unhappy with their families, 24 per cent are somewhat happy with their

families. In urban areas 19.5 per cent (36%) women were unhappy and in rural areas 20 per cent (38%) women were in bad terms with their families.

Age was found to be one of the factors for healthy relationship between husband and wife. Adjustments and compromises should be from both sides which pave way for a happy married life. One of the factors usually goes unnoticed is the difference between ages of husbands and wives. Only 7 percent of the women are same age with their respective spouses, 39 per cent 1-3 years age difference with their respective spouses, 34 per cent 4-6 years age difference, 11 per cent 7-9 years and only 9 percent 10 years age difference. It is found that the age difference had the least impact on domestic violence faced by working women.

Table 4.2
Marital Status of the Respondents

Variable	Group	Area				Total	
		Rural		Urban			
		N (100)	%	N (100)	%	N (200)	%
Marital status	Married	68	34	77	38.5	145	72.5
	Divorced	14	7	13	6.5	27	13.5
	Separated	12	6	8	4	20	10
	Widowed	6	3	2	1	8	4
Position in family	Daughter in-law	25	13.5	18	9	45	22.5
	Wife	73	36.5	82	41	155	77.5
Marriage type	Arranged	90	45	78	36	168	84
	Love	5	2.5	10	5	15	7.5
	Eloped	6	3	11	5.5	17	8.5
	Within one year	8	4	7	3.5	15	7.5
Marital life duration	1-3 Years	36	18	46	27	80	43
	4-6 Years	43	21.5	35	17.5	78	39
	7-9 Years	7	3.5	5	2.5	14	6
	10 and above years	6	3	3	1.5	13	4.5
Satisfaction with family	Good	4	2	0	0	4	2
	Somewhat good	23	11.5	25	12.5	48	24
	Unhappy	33	16.5	39	19.5	72	36
	Very Bad	40	20	36	18	76	38
Age difference with husband	Both are same	7	3.5	7	3.5	14	7
	1-3 Years	38	18	40	20	78	39
	4-6 Years	31	15.5	37	18.5	68	34
	7-9 Years	14	7	8	4	22	11
	10 and above Years	10	5	8	4	18	9

Source: Field Survey

Employment and financial status:

Employment is necessary for every family. In rural areas majority depend on agricultural and agricultural related occupations and in urban areas on nonagricultural related occupations, private jobs, self-employed jobs etc. In every family father, mother or head of the house is working for family maintenance. In some families two or more are working for family.

In rural areas 32.5 per cent (total of 52%) families have two job seekers in each family and in urban areas 28.5 percent (total of 42.5%) families have one job seeker in each family. Only 5.5 percent families have three job seekers in a family. The above data shows that majority of rural families have two job seekers in each family, in urban areas one member. If both wife and husband are working, the reasons for violence are found to be money, working hours, husband's bad habits etc. If only wife working, the reasons for violence found to be power, self-esteem, family members' involvement and ego problems.

Occupation refers to the type of work done during the reference period by the person employed (or the type of work done previously if the person is unemployed) irrespective of the industry or the status in employment in which the person should be classified. With this regard a majority (37.5%) of the respondents were nonagricultural laborers followed by 25.5 percent of the respondents were skilled agricultural laborers, 16.5 percent were artisans, 13.5 percent were home based workers and only 7 percent were doing petty businesses. In rural areas 25 percent (total of 25.5%) women were skilled agricultural laborers, in urban areas 19.5 per cent (37.5%) women were working non-agricultural laborers (manual worker, daily wage labor, construction worker etc.).

Salary is the one of the most important things for any job. 39.5% of the respondents getting salary weekly, 22.5 per cent of the women getting salary daily and monthly, 8.5 per cent getting salary after finishing work and only 7 per cent getting in a noncausal way. In urban areas majorities are getting salary monthly and in rural areas getting daily wages.

Debt is inevitable to any person. Daily wages are not sufficient to make ends meet for laborers. In such cases they are forcing themselves to borrow and can't pay off debts, which are piling up. As a result, husbands in rural areas are wrangling over money. Therefore, debt is found to be the main reason for domestic violence. More than half of the respondents (58%) have taken debts and 42 per cent stated they hadn't taken. The number of borrowers is increasing significantly in rural areas compared with urban areas due to lack of job opportunities.

It is noticed that 42 per cent of the respondents haven't taken debts. 19.5 per cent of the respondents have borrowed money ranging from Rs.50, 001 to Rs.1, 00,000 followed by 17.5 per cent from Rs.1, 00,000. Next to 13 per cent from Rs.25, 001 to Rs.50, 000. The more they borrow the higher the tendency of violence.

When the environment of workplace is good, women are working happily. A majority 37 per cent of the women opined that their workplace environment is very bad, 33 per cent said maximum time they were experiencing bad environment, 23.5 per cent reacted that their work environment is looking bad and 6.5 per cent expressed that working area is somewhat good.

As per government rules the number of minimum working hours per day are 8 hours but, in some situations, it increases due to employer's intimidation. 48.5 per cent of the women are working 9-10 hours per day followed by 36 per cent working 7-8 hours, 13 per cent 5-6 hours and 2.5 per cent doing part-time jobs in urban working below 5 hours per day.

Over time duty is done in some sectors, a lion's share (66.5%) of the women is working overtime, 25 per cent never work overtime duty, 8.5 per cent of the respondents said they didn't even know whether they were working overtime.

Women working overtime get extra allowance. The above data indicates that in rural areas 9 per cent are spending their allowances on clothes, 8.5 per cent spending on health, food, durables etc., 6 per cent giving financial assistance to their mother, relatives, friends, or neighbors. In urban areas 15 per cent spending on clothes, 8 per cent on cosmetics and 5.5 for personal works.

On detailed analysis of the responses, it has been found that domestic violence can be caused by domination by men, power, physical harassment, mental anguish, psychological stress and finally money related (wages and over time allowance) and misuse of money. A majority (86.5%) of the women are affected by anyone of the above factors.

Table 4.3
Employment and financial status of the Respondents

		Rural Mandal's		Urban Mandal's		Total	
		N (100)	%	N (100)	%	N (200)	%
Job seekers in family	One	28	14	57	28.5	85	42.5
	Two	65	32.5	39	19.5	104	52
	Three	7	3.5	4	2	11	5.5
Occupation type	Skilled Agriculture labour	50	25	1	0.5	51	25.5
	Non Agriculture Labour	36	18	39	19.5	75	37.5
	Home based work	3	1.5	24	12	27	13.5
	Artisan	8	4	25	12.5	33	16.5
	Petty Business	3	1.5	11	5.5	14	7
Salary	Daily	25	12.5	20	10	45	22.5
	Weekly	36	18	43	21.5	79	39.5
	Monthly	20	10	25	12.5	45	22.5
	Finished Work	10	5	7	3.5	17	8.5
	Un casual way	9	4.5	5	2.5	14	7
Debts	Yes	66	33	50	25	116	58
	No	44	22	40	20	84	42
Debt Amount	No debts	34	17	50	25	84	42
	up to 25000	13	6.5	3	1.5	16	8
	25001-50000	13	6.5	13	6.5	26	13
	50001-100000	21	10.5	18	9	39	19.5
	Above 100000	19	9.5	16	8	35	17.5
Work place atmosphere	Somewhat good	2	1	11	5.5	13	6.5
	Looking Bad	24	12	23	11.5	47	23.5
	Maximum time Bad	41	20.5	25	12.5	66	33
	Very Bad	33	16.5	41	20.5	74	37
Working hours per day	Below 5 Hours	0	0	5	2.5	5	2.5
	5-6 Hours	3	1.5	23	11.5	26	13
	7-8 Hours	41	20.5	31	15.5	72	36

	9-10 Hours	56	28	41	20.5	97	48.5
Over time duty	Yes	59	29.5	74	37	133	66.5
	No	32	16	18	9	50	25
	Can't Say	9	4.5	8	4	17	8.5
Over time allowance usage	Personal	17	8.5	11	5.5	28	14
	Buying clothes	18	9	30	15	48	24
	Cosmetics	10	5	16	8	26	13
	Giving to Husband	2	1	3	1.5	5	2.5
	Any Other	12	6	14	7	26	13
Action against	Nothing will Happen	21	10.5	6	3	27	13.5
	Affect with Violence	79	39.5	94	47	173	86.5

Source: Field Survey

Problems faced by working women of rural and urban in Tirupati district:

Occupational problems as stress: In women occupational stress unavoidable. **World Health Organization's** (WHO) defines *Occupational or work-related stress* as “the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.” Work and family are the two most important aspects in women's lives. Balancing work and family has become a key personal and family issue for many working women. There are many facets in working women's life that subject to stress. They deal with home and family issues as well as job stress on a daily basis.

Reasons found for occupational stress in working women:

Imbalance between work and family leads to occupational stress. Imbalance between work and family life arises due to a number of factors. Following are various factors.

1. Mental harassment It is an age old convention that women are less capable and inefficient in working as compared to men. The attitude which considers women unfit for certain jobs holds back them. In spite of the constitutional provisions, gender bias creates obstacles in their recruitment. In addition to this, the same attitude governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job. The true equality has not been achieved even after 71 years of independence. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career.

2. Sexual harassment: Today, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and the types of their employment. They are facing sexual harassment on way home, at working places, educational institutions and hospitals, and home. It is shocking that the law protectors are violating and outraging modesty of women. Most of the women tend to concentrate on the poor service jobs whereas men are in an immediate supervisory position, which gives them an opportunity to exploit their subordinate women.

3. Discrimination at workplace: However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. They are often deprived of promotions and growth opportunities at work places but this doesn't apply to all working women. A majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay under the Equal Remuneration

Act, 1976 and are underpaid in comparison to their male colleagues. This is usually the case in factories and labour-oriented industries.

4. No safety of working women while travelling Typically, the orthodox mindset in the Indian society makes it difficult for a working woman to balance her domestic environment with the professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to work after six o'clock. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety every day about woman's safety while travelling. So many issues affect a working woman because she is closely protected or watched by her family and the society.

5. Lack of family support Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffer from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion.

6. Insufficient maternity leaves Insufficient maternity leave is another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives.

7. Job insecurity Unrealistic expectations, especially in the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes puts unhealthy and unreasonable pressure on the employee, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload, extremely long work hours and intense pressure to perform at peak levels all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stress.

8. Workplace adjustment Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be lesson of life. Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

Other reasons can be personal demographics like age, level of education, marital status, number of children, personal income and number of jobs currently had where you work for pay and work situation characteristics like job tenure, size of employing organization, hours worked per week, etc.

Findings of the study:

- 42 per cent of the respondents belong to 31-35 age group (rural 26% and urban 16%).
- More than half (51%) the respondents are Hindus.
- Majority (34%) of the respondents belong to Scheduled Castes followed by 31.5 per cent to backward classes.
- Noted that 58% per cent of the respondents are having own houses.
- Below half (48%) of the respondents have kutchha houses.
- A majority (80%) of the respondents is of nuclear family and the remaining 20 per cent belong to joint family.
- Majority (36%) of the respondents' size is 3-4.
- 30 per cent of the respondents studied secondary school education (6-10 class).
- Nearly three of fourth (72.5%) respondents were married.

- As per the research data more than three quarters (77.5%) of the women are wives.
- Lion's share (84%) of the respondents was married to by arranged means.
- Below half (43%) the respondents have been married for 1-3 years.
- 38 per cent of the women were in poor terms with their family.
- A majority (39%) of the respondents have 1-3 years age difference with her husband.
- In rural areas 32.5 per cent (total of 52%) of the respondents' families have 2 job seekers in each family, in urban areas 28.5 percent (total of 42.5%) have one person job seeker.
- A majority (37.5%) of the respondents are nonagricultural laborers.
- Below half (39.5%) of the respondents getting salary weekly.
- More than half (58%) of the respondents are ridden by debts.
- Nearly two fifth (19.5%) of the respondents having outstanding debts Rs.50,001 to 1,00,000
- A majority, 37 per cent of the women opined that workplace environment is very bad.
- Nearly half (48.5%) of the women are working 9-10 hours a day.
- 66.5 per cent of the women are working overtime.

Conclusions and some probable solutions: Challenges and problems faced by working women drawn from the analysis of responses.

- 1) Working women in urban areas feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life on the other.
- 2) Women are discriminated in all walks of life.
- 3) Women are subjugated, dominated and exploited both at work places and home.
- 4) Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to households, kids and family.
- 5) Working women generally face workplace sexual harassment, mental pressure, and safety issues.
- 6) Working women are facing problems such as leaving kids at home and going to work early in the morning.
- 7) Child rearing problems are always faced by working women.
- 8) People make particular perception or draw conclusion about characters of working women.
- 9) The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed.

The majority of working women in urban areas are young, but in rural areas mostly old women are working. This is because in rural areas mostly people are poor and have rigid beliefs. They don't want to send their young females to work. But in urban areas women are getting higher education and are participating in every field of life.

In a patriarchal society like India, a particular boundary exists only for women, and if they try to cross that boundary then people start maligning them. The general perception is that if some women are doing things differently beyond people's limited imagination, and out of sync with traditional thinking like going out for jobs, wearing different types of fashionable clothes, talking freely with male members etc., immediately they are branded as women with loose character. India probably has still a long way to go to make our workplaces free from any prejudices, abuses and harassments. Even then we can still try to solve some of the related issues and problems with

some possible solutions that have been mentioned above so that women become stronger and are able to handle any adverse situations.

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