

# PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY URBAN WORKING WOMEN IN SPSR NELLORE CITY, AP

**Dr.R.VANI**

**Professor,DEP of MBA**

**Narayana Engineering College**

Dist-SPSR Nellore, AndhraPradesh,India.

---

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to understand the problems and issues faced by urban working women in Nellore city, AP. The objectives also included identifying the key socio-economic attributes contributing to women's status, safety and security, and to study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for improving of family, community and society. The study was confined to the urban working women in white collared jobs in the city of Nellore, AP. The study was based on primary data collected from working women Nellore city to find out the possible solutions for working women which could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.

**Key words:** working women, Problems and Challenges

---

## Introduction

In the history of human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact higher status for women vis-à-vis employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. Traditionally Indian women had been home makers but in the recent decades, proper education and better awareness, in addition to the ever increasing cost of living has made them to go out and choose careers. In a patriarchal society likes India it is still believed that a man is the primary bread winner of his family. Although Indian women have started working outside their homes but still they have a long way to go both culturally, socially and economically, to bring in positive attitudinal changes in the mind-set of people. It is generally perceived that gender bias against working women starts right from the stage of recruitment.

Most of the Indian men are not ready to accept that women are capable enough to work side by side with men in all the sectors, other than in a few limited ones like teaching, nursing and in clerical sectors. Their capabilities are generally underestimated as a result of which Indian women have a tendency to opt for less demanding jobs even if they are highly qualified. Women have the responsibilities to effectively manage their multiple roles in domestic as well as professional lives. Men generally do not offer any help in the households work. This makes the life of working women extremely stressful.

While a majority of the women still face discrimination and gender bias, in the last few decades, the number of women successful in politics, technology and business etc. is definitely on the rise. Society has started seeing women in a different perspective. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, secretaries, managers and officers etc. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex.

For centuries women have been subjected to exploitation and torture, physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenge and problems faced by them both at home and workplace. What we generally see today, in addition to various media and journal reports is that in the workplace women generally face mental stress, sexual harassment, discriminatory practices, safety and security issues etc (Martin, 1989). India's patriarchal society thinks of women only as homemakers and sexual objects and is generally subjected to exploitation and torture (Dube, 2001).

## Women in the Workplace:

Women in the workforce earning wages or a salary are part of a modern phenomenon, one that developed at the same time as the growth of paid employment for men; yet women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce (N. Andal 2002).

Economic, social and political empowerment of women is essential for the development of any society. Working women are essential for the development of the society, so empowerment of women is important to the process of uplifting of economic, social, political status of women. Traditionally women have been the under-privileged ones in the society, not enjoying the same rights or standards of living as the other half of the population. Status of women can be broadly defined as the degree of socio-

economic equality and freedom enjoyed by women. Economic, social and cultural factors interplay for reinforcing the gender differences in ownership, control and access to land through inheritance, marriage or informal networks (Arun, 1994).

Women's economic status in the household, depends on three levels of influence, viz., women's acquired economic and social power, the socio-economic status of their households and the level of support and opportunities in the community (Zhao, 1991).

Women's economic well-being is usually enhanced by women acquiring independent sources of income that begets increased self-esteem and improved conditions of their households and the overall level of development in their communities. The gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the most significant contributor to the gender gap in the economic wellbeing, social status and empowerment of women (Andal, 2002).

During earlier days there were some man-made boundaries for women but now women play vital roles in different sectors. Women today are breaking that boundary and are playing the dual role of balancing domestic life as well as professional life, giving a boost to their societal status in the process. The major problems for working women arise out of the dual responsibilities of the working woman - domestic work as well as office work. Though more and more women are coming out in search of paid employment and their families also need their income, the attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior, and second-class citizens. Even today, looking after the family and children is generally perceived to be the primary responsibility of the man.

Historically, women have suffered oppression and domination by the patriarchal society in India and have faced many problems and challenges. Women were taught to accept their position through the socialization process and also that all rules and regulation made only for women they were bound to follow including their 'initiation rites.' They are taught to be obedient wives and sisters and also to respect their elders; manners are taught to them, like how to walk, talk, sit, and work at home and many others. They are neither considered as individuals with a personality of their own, nor do they have any personal life. They are told that a man could marry more than one woman and they accept it silently, blaming it on their own fate. The inferior positions of women in the traditional Indian society have been reinforced by a number of traditional practices such as polygamy, early marriage, and illiteracy and by years of subjugation. Many of these practices are still found today in some places in the country.

Women working in some industries, factories, banks, hospitals etc. complain that they do not get time to look after and give care to their babies. The efficiency of a working woman is always suspected and questioned by most people, especially their male counterparts. In the upper class cadres, it is generally seen that all qualifications remaining similar, men are usually preferred. Authorities are doubtful whether women would be able to handle male subordinates, take independent decisions, cope with crisis and manage their duties properly (Andal, 2002).

Even though women prove they are efficient, authorities think twice before promoting them and even if women are given the chance, there is always a remark that they were given the position because they were women. Sexual harassment is another serious problem faced by working women. Whether in the organized or unorganized sector, whether illiterate, low paid workers or highly educated and highly paid executives, a large number of working women face sexual harassment at the workplace at one time or another. This is mostly from other male employees or their superiors. Women tend to hold lower-level positions than men even when they have sufficient skills to perform higher-level jobs.

The present study therefore aims at finding out if women face challenges in the workplaces which pose problems for them, and what are those particular challenges that women face working in the various sectors and what credible solutions and coping mechanisms can be offered to help them lessen such problems, so that women can understand their own value and ability to face problems in different ways. The study also aims at finding the problems of different age group working women and different categories of women like single, married, separate/divorcee, widow etc. Understanding the problems in a clear way would assist us in finding adequate answers in reducing the problems.

#### **Problems and challenges faced by working women in the workplace:**

- Balancing between paid employment and family care.
- Work related stress problems faced by working women.
- Victims of physical harassment and unfair treatment in the workplace.
- Tolerance of abuse, violence, harassment and discrimination.
- Sexual harassment, mental pressure and safety problems.
- Prejudiced and stereotyped thinking faced by working women.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The study attempts to address the following key research objectives:

- To know the problems and challenges faced by urban working women in the workplace.
- To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to women's status, safety and security.
- To study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for uplifting of family, community and society that can lead to their overall development.
- To find out possible solutions that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.

#### **Review of Literature**

The literature review shows that more focus is on married working women than on unmarried working women (Karl, 2009).

It is also seen that focus is more on organized sector rather than unorganized sector of working women (Shalz, 2011).

Eggins (1997) advocates for more facilities to women in the workplace, suggesting that "...it is an important part of developmental strategy as well as an act of social justice" The World Bank (1991) estimates that Indian Women make up one-third of the labor force.

Singhal (1995) is of the opinion that, "Participation of women in workforce is essential for economic development and population planning."

Somjee (1989) has some very strong critical comments. She has said that "in the history of women's studies, which is not very long, a variety of approaches have been adopted in order to understand women's problems and find solutions to them. such approaches range from how women are perceived in various cultures and historical settings, given their biological functions and what nature 'intended' them to do, to their decline in power and status vis-à-vis men in the complex social evolution, to a widely shared emphasis on the need to make women equal through the economic on the need to make women equal through the economic and legal route which treats them as individuals rather than those having the sole responsibility for looking after the family."

Mitra (1997) analyses the causes and comes to some important conclusions: "Relationship between women and professions could be perceived as one of women in full-fledged professions, medicine, law, academics, etc and another in the semi-professions-like nursing, teaching, clerks etc."

Ronald J. Burke, Mustafa Koyuncu and Lisa Fiksenbaum (2010) examined the relationship of the perceived presence of organizational practices designed to support women's career advancement and their work attitudes and satisfaction and their psychological well-being. Data were collected from 286 women in managerial and professional jobs working in a large Turkish bank, a 72 percent response rate. Five organizational experiences were considered: negative attitudes towards women, equal treatment, support, career barriers and male standards. Women reporting more supportive organizational experiences and practices were more engaged in their work, more job and career satisfied, and indicated greater levels of psychological well-being."

Sophia J. Ali (2011) "investigated the challenges facing women in career development. She found that most of the women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmers and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities. The study recommended that organizations should strive to ensure that career development programmers were set to enhance career development amongst women employees. Top management should also be committed to the career development of women, and organizations should also introduce affirmative action to urgently address career development of women."

### Research Methodology

Sources of data: Primary and Secondary data

Sample size: 80

Sample unit: working women located in Nellore city

Sampling technique: simple random sampling.

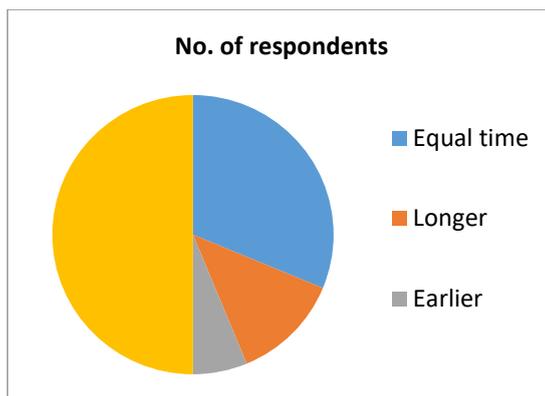
### Data analysis interpretation:

1. Time Taken for Women to get promoted as compared to their male colleagues .

Table.1

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Equal time	50	62.50
Longer	20	25.00
Earlier	10	12.50
Total	80	100

Figure.1



Source: Primary data

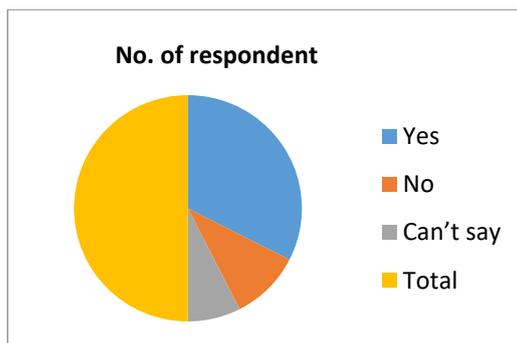
**Inference:** According to the above information 62.50% of female employees were promoted at the same time irrespective of their gender, 12.50% women were promoted earlier than their male colleagues and 25.% took longer than their male peers. The above data reflects that gender bias related to promotions do not prevail much in the working atmosphere.

**2.Basis for Women getting promotion on merit .**

Table.2

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	52	65
No	16	20
Can't say	12	15
Total	80	100

Figure.2



Source: primary data

**Inference:** According to the above information 65% felt that their promotion was based on merit and not on the basis of favoritism or any other indecent proposal, 20% were not agree and 15% as can't say.

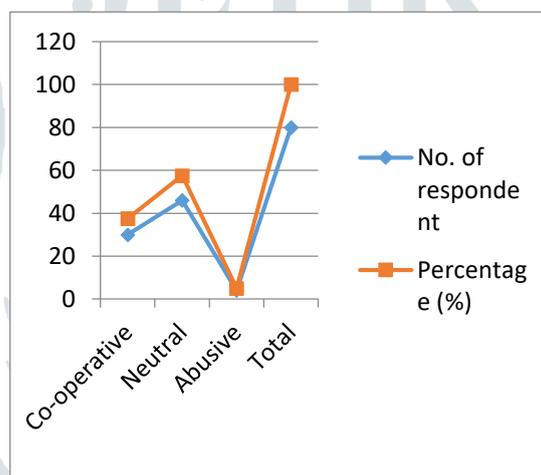
introduced in June 2000 followed by options on indices in June 2001 followed by options on individual stocks in July 2001 and finally followed by futures on individual stocks in November 2001.

**3: Attitude of boss towards female colleagues as perceived by the women Employees**

**Table.3**

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Co-operative	30	37.5
Neutral	46	57.5
Abusive	4	5
Total	80	100

**Figure.3**



Source: primary data

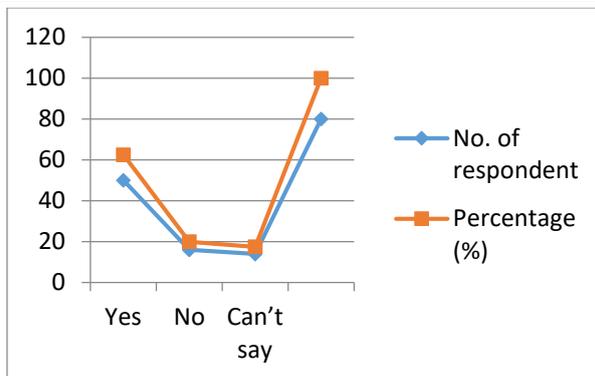
**Inference:** According to the above information 57.5% female agreed that their boss attitude towards them were neutral, 37.5% women said that their boss was co-operative with them and 5% women said their boss attitude towards them were abusive.

**4: Regarding people drawing conclusions about working women's character without any reasons.**

**Table.4**

etails	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
<b>Yes</b>	50	62.5
<b>No</b>	16	20
<b>Can't say</b>	14	17.5
Total	80	100

**Figure.4**



Source: primary data

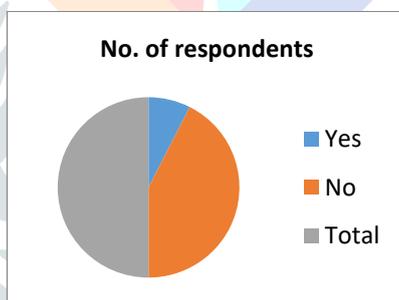
**Inference:** According to the above information 62.5% female agreed that people drawing conclusions about working women’s character without any reasons, 20% women said no and 17.5% were can’t say.

**5: Experience of sexual abuse at workplace**

Table 5

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	12	15
No	68	85
Total	80	100

Figure.5



Source: Primary data

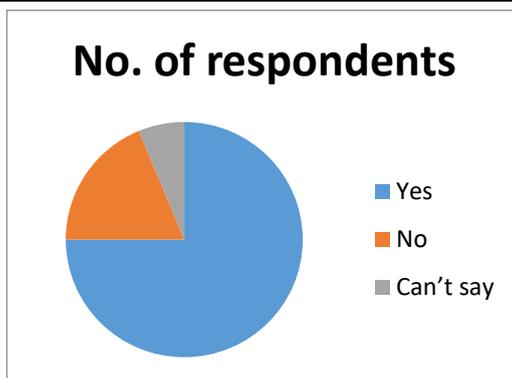
**Inference:** According to the above information 85% women said that they had not faced any kind of sexual abuse at their workplace, but a good 15% women agreed to have faced sexual abuse at workplace.

**6: Women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace**

Table 6

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	75
No	15	18.75
Can't say	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Figure.6



Source: Primary data

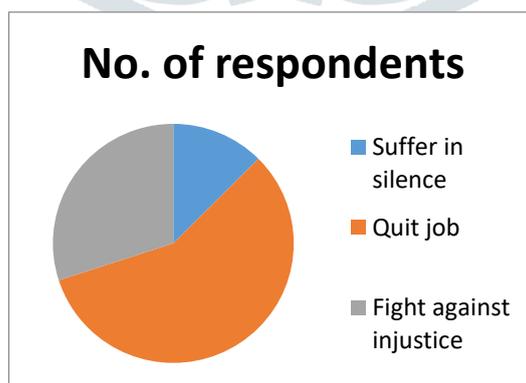
**Inference:** According to the above information 75% women suffer from health complications, 18.75% women have not faced any kind of health complications like headache, depression, concentration problems and 6.25% can't say.

**7: perception of women to behave when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination in the workplace**

Table .7

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Suffer in silence	10	12.5
Quit job	46	57.5
Fight against injustice	24	30
Total	80	100

Figure.7



Source: Primary data

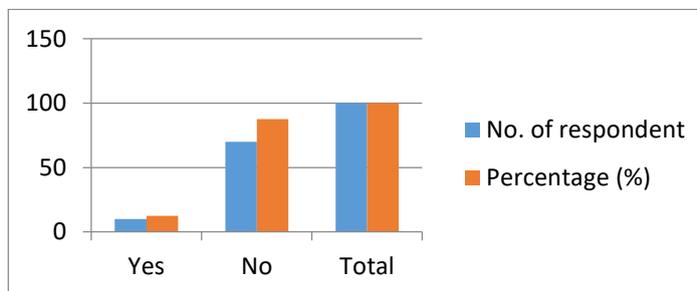
**Inference:** According to the above information 57.5% working women for either quitting their jobs, 30%to fight it out, if they face any harassment based on gender discrimination.

**8: Perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates.**

Table. 8

Details	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	12.5
No	70	87.5
Total	100	100

Figure.8



Source: Primary data

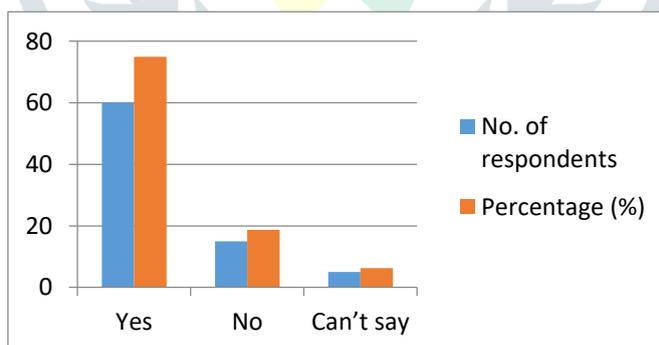
**Inference:** According to the above information majority of the women are of the opinion that they are not given any easier jobs as compared to their male colleagues. They work as hard as anyone.

**9: Perception of women on being given respect at their workplace**

Table.9

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	75
No	15	18.75
Can't say	5	6.25
Total	100	100

Figure.9



Source: Primary data

**Inference:** According to the above information women in general feel that people respect them in the workplace.

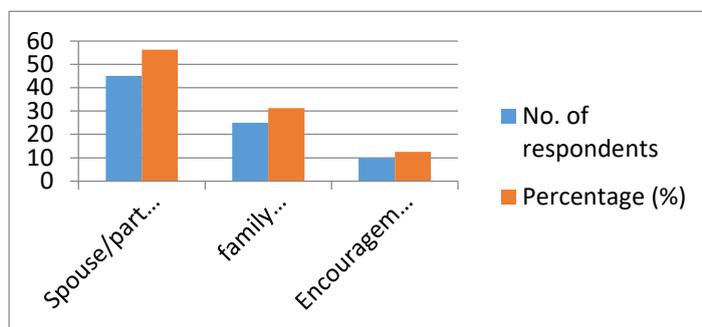
**10: support for balance between work and non-work activities**

Table 10

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Spouse/partner	45	56.25
family members	25	31.25

Encouragement to use paid	10	12.5
Others	0	0
Total	100	100

Figure.10



Source: Primary data

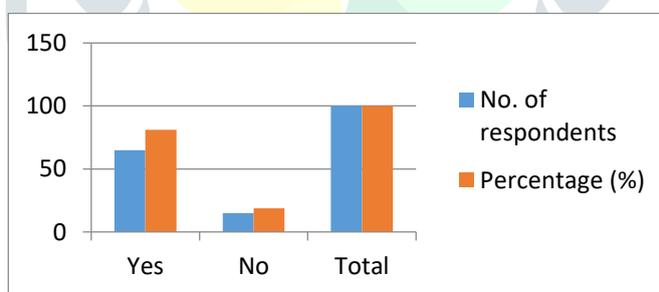
**Inference:** As per the given data support for balance between work and non-work activities is evenly divided among various support groups mentioned above. The ‘other’ category includes paid assistance, crèches, sympathetic colleagues etc.

**11. Perception among women on financial independence giving more respect in the society.**

Table 11

Details	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	81.25
No	15	18.75
Total	100	100

Figure.11



Source: Primary data

**Inference:** According to the above information 81.25% of the women responded said that financial independence gives them more respect in the society where as only 18.75% of the women responded did not agree to this. They felt that a perception of a sound character is also required to get respect. During the survey it was found that if you are a woman, being financially independent is very essential. It gives a woman a superior reputation and independence in the society

**Findings**

1. Sexual harassment by male colleagues is a reality. Mental harassment by female colleagues is also a reality.
2. Working women face problems because of their female colleagues (jealousy, rivalry, competition etc.)
3. Colleagues, both men/women draw conclusions about women’s character, sometimes without any basis.
4. Financial independence gives women more respect in the society as perceived by the working women.
5. Working women feel they are facing more mental pressure and depression than non-working women.
6. Not much aware about Acts and Policies favouring women in the workplace.
7. Health issues are also an important problem for working women.
8. Working women are forced to leave their small children at home because of their work. Lack of proper support system.
9. Life as a single parent very challenging for working women.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions related to the challenges and problems faced by working women drawn from the analysis of responses:

- Professional women feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life on the other.
- Women are discriminated against in all walks of life.
- Women are subjugated, dominated and exploited both at work places and home.
- Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to households, kids and family.
- Working women generally face workplace sexual harassment, mental pressure, and safety issues.
- Females are also highly judgmental about other female colleagues and try to put one at any given opportunity.
- Women face problems leaving kids at home and going to office early in the morning.
- Child rearing problems are always faced by working women.
- People make particular perception or draw conclusion about characters of working women.
- The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed.

## Recommended Solutions

- Partners can be more sensitive to women's needs, and counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks and take care of children.
- Organisations should have an internal code to ensure security of women employees and take measures to ensure that they discharge their job in a secure atmosphere.
- Governments should make it mandatory for companies to install Global Positioning System (GPS) in vehicles carrying women, in all industries which engage women in night shifts.
- Providing self-defence training to women; installing safety devices and CCTVs at the work place; undertaking police verification of cab drivers, security guards etc.
- Child care facilities and Child care leave for working women should be provided by every organisation.
- Flexible timing and Possibility to work from home are required for working women.

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 type of fashionable clothes, talking freely with male members etc., immediately they are branded as loose women. 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 at solving 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.

## REFERENCES

- Agapiou, A. (2002). Perceptions of gender roles and attitudes toward work among male and female operatives in the Scottish construction industry. *Construction Management & Economics*, 20(8), 697-705.
- Andal, N. (2002). *Women and Indian society: Options and constraints*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Arnove, R. F., Torres, C. A., & Franz, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Comparative education: The dialectic of the global and the local*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Karat, B. (2005). *Survival and emancipation: notes from Indian women's struggles*. Three Essays Collective.
- Karat, B. (1997). The Multiple Struggles of Women. *Frontline*, 14(19).
- Kazi, S. (1999). *Muslim women in India* (Vol. 98, No. 2). London: Minority Rights Group International.
- Khan, M. S. (1996). *Status of women in Islam*. New Delhi: APH Publishing.
- Martin, E. (2001). *The woman in the body: A cultural analysis of reproduction*. Beacon Press.
- Majumdar, M. (2004). *Social status of women in India*. New Delhi: Dominant Publishers and Distributors.
- Sarkar, L., & Sivaramayya, B. (Eds.). (1994). *Women and law: contemporary problems*. New Delhi: Vikas Pub.
- Sharma, A. (2002). *Women in Indian religions*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Shyamalie, H. W., & Saini, A. S. (2011). *Socio-economic Status and Livelihood Security of Women in the Hills of India and Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Readworthy.

Tomlinson, B. R. (2013). *The Economy of Modern India: From 1860 to the Twenty-first Century* (Vol. 3). New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

