

Problems And Challenges Faced By Urban Working Women In Odisha

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a patriarchal society like 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. 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 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, 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). .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 upliftment 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. According to Robin (2002) "Sexism is the root oppression, the one which, until and unless we uproot it, will continue to put forth the branches of racism, class, hatred, ageism, competition, ecological disaster and economic exploitation.

No other human differentiations can be similarly powerful in reproducing oppressions, and so, women are the realleft."

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 well- being, social status and empowerment of women (Andal,2002). Women have been playing vital roles in households since ages. Now women are also recognized for their value in the workplace and are

engaged in wide range of activities of work in addition to their routine domestic work. Building a society where women can breathe freely without fear of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination is the need of the hour, to ensure a better future for the next generation.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Educated urban women are presumed to be more aware of the opportunities and challenges of the workplace or educated urban women can better understand their roles and limitations in the workplaces and are perceived to be bold enough to develop their own personalities, with or without encouragement from their families. An assessment of the problems and issues plaguing urban working women is therefore a necessity for better understanding of workplace dynamics related to women. It is possible to accept that as more and more women have entered the workforce, there is no longer a solid family-support at home (Schwartz, 1992). “Women have increased their participation in paid employment considerably during the past 30 years, but men have not increased their participation in housework to the same extent” (Evertsson and Neramo, 2004). Women still perform majority of the care giving role and juggling of work in the family. Gender is seen as a significant determinant of negative job spill-over because employed women are expected to carry out the responsibility for family services and still be able to smoothly handle their work roles (Delgado and Canabal, 2006). It is a fact that women have to face problems just by virtue of their being women. And if they are working the problems are multiplied manifold. Working women are those who are in paid employment. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. This attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not for other jobs influences those who are involved in the recruitment of female employees. 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.

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.

Research Problems

The study evinces the following research problems for the study at hand related to problems and challenges faced by working women in the workplace: they are Balancing between paid employment and family care, work related stress problems faced by workingwomen, Tolerance of abuse, violence and discrimination, Mental pressure and safety problems.

Objectives of the Study

The study attempts to address the following key research objectives:

1. To gain knowledge about the problems and challenges faced by urban working women in the workplace.
2. To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to women's status, safety and security.
3. To study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for upliftment of family, community and society that can lead to their overall development.

Implication of the Study

The study would help us in understanding the present status of women in our society what kind of problems they are going through

- To find out the gaps between the problems faced and probable solutions to the problems faced by workingwomen.
- To create awareness among the society about the equal importance of men andwomen.
- To improve the existing status and security of the women.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

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

Okolo (1989) studied that another obstacle is the lack of role models of executive women due to their scarce presence in top managerial positions. Likewise, this study found out that there is no gender difference in organizational hierarchies when a woman has already gained access to them. "The lack of impact in women can occur because executive and managerial women have developed survival features becoming immune to the effects of men's hierarchies. A hierarchy composed by men solely may have an effect upon the election of a managerial board, and then its further influence is not very strong."

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."

Wentling (2003) showed that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant. In her study on working women in Delhi, she has shown that "traditional authoritarian set up of Hindu social structure continues to be the same basically and hence women face problem of role conflict change in attitudes of men and women according to the situation can help to overcome their problem."

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."

Skinner and Pocock (2008) investigated the relationship between work overload, work schedule control, work hours and their fit with preferences and work-life conflict among full-time employees (N=887). It was found that the "strongest association with work-life conflict was demonstrated by work overload, followed by work schedule control, work hours and work hours fit. Time-based

work life policies, procedures and interventions were found necessary, but not sufficient, for addressing work-life conflict. They called for effective management of work overload to support a healthy work-life relationship.”

Ahmad and Aminah (2007) examined the work-family conflict experienced by 239 married female production operators in dual-career families, the social support they received and the coping strategies used to manage the conflict. “The women experienced more work interference with family than family interference with work. The intensity of work interference with family was significantly higher in the earlier life-cycle stage than in the later stage. About two thirds of the women indicated that they intended to leave their job upon having another child, mainly due to the rising cost of child-care services. They received the least social support from their supervisors compared to other sources, and tended to cope with conflict using reactive role behavior and personal role redefinition strategies.”

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Nature and Scope of the Study

The study is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify the problems and challenges faced by urban women in different professional sectors like public sector enterprises, banks, schools and colleges, hospitals, commercial organizations etc. Further the study also aims also at finding out the organizational supports for women employees so that the women employees are able to give their best to their organization and are able to reach their full potential. The present study surveyed only urban women employees in Bhubaneswar city. The study was conducted within Bhubaneswar city and it is multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural. This diversity makes it more attractive for this research study. The places covered for the study were the local schools, colleges, banks, hospitals, Commercial organizations etc. Primary data was collected from 75 working women of the organized sector using a mixed-methods approach that included face to face

interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire. Seventy-five responses were found to be complete and valid. The data collection period ranged a one month period from December 2016 to January 2017.

Methods

Methods was adapted for establishing the validity and reliability of the study:Data were collected using face to face interviews and through two focus group discussions and the questionnaire method.

Data collection process

Both qualitative and quantitative aspects have been taken into consideration for the study. The methodology followed was a questionnaire-based survey among the urban working women of the selected localities and there is a face to face interviews and FGDs. Data were collected using the personal contact approach. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 75 working women located in Bhubaneswar city. The statements/items for the questionnaire were formed after consulting relevant literature and some preliminary study conducted in the area. Besides the attitude scale, the survey questionnaire also included a section to capture the general profile of respondents. They were asked about their demographic background including age, education level, marital status, occupation, years of experience, nature of organization etc.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussions

The graphical representation of each of the items is given below:

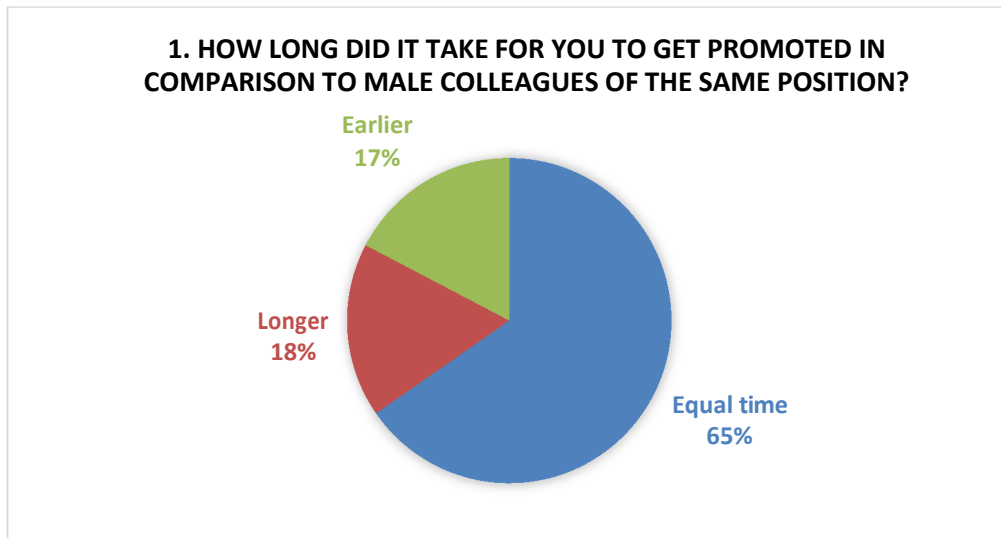
1. How long did it take for you to get promoted in comparison to male colleagues of the

same position?

Table 4.1: Time Taken for Women to get promoted as compared to their male colleagues (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Equal time	49	65
Longer	13	18
Earlier	13	17

Figure 4.1: Percentage distribution of time taken for women employees getting promoted as compare to their male colleagues



Source: Primary data

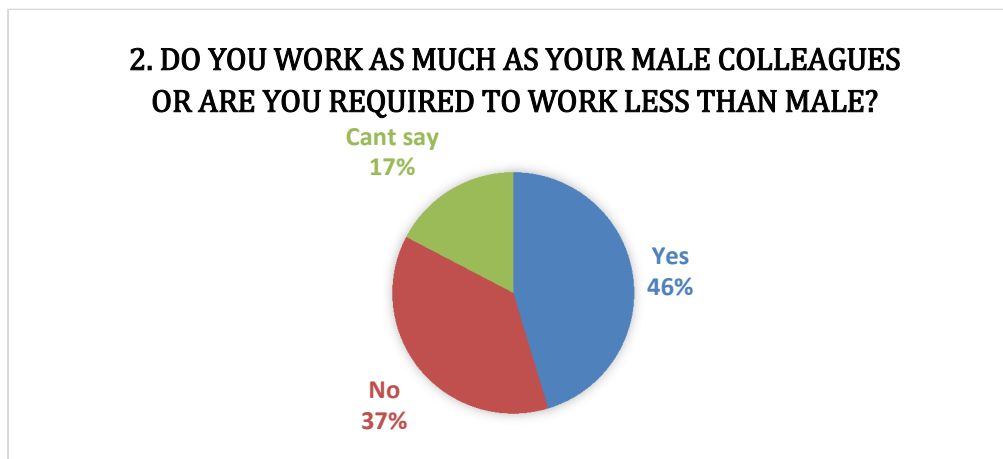
Inference: According to the above information 65% of female employees were promoted at the same time irrespective of their gender, 17% women were promoted earlier than their male colleagues and 18% took longer than their male peers. The above data reflects that gender bias related to promotions do not prevail much in the working atmosphere.

2. Do you work as much as your male colleagues or are you required to work less than male?

Table 4.2: Time spent on women (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	46
No	28	37
Can't say	13	17

Figure 4.2: Percentage distribution of time spent on work



Source: Primary data

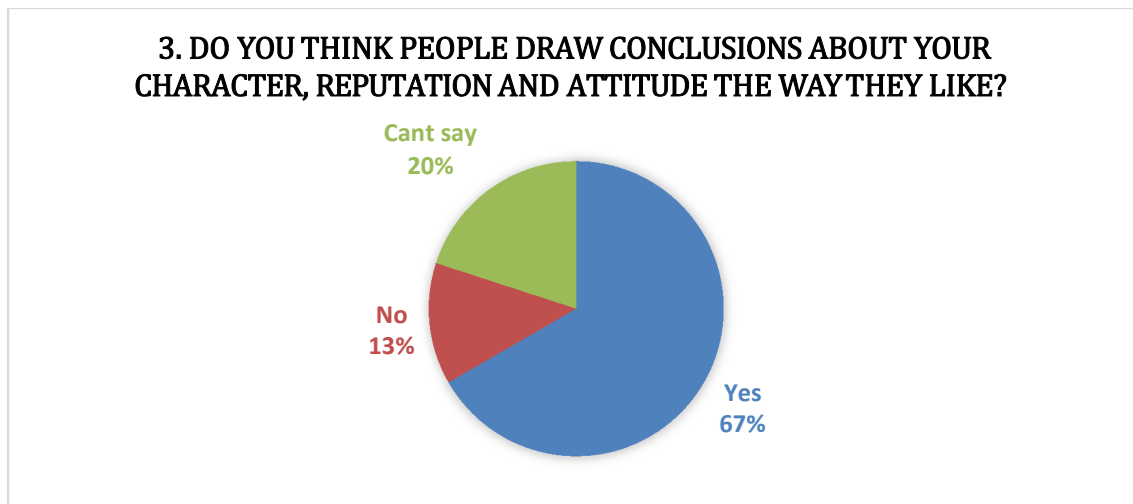
Inference: According to the above information 46% women agreed they were working as much as male colleagues, 17% women were not sure about their answers and 37% women agreed they were not working as much as their male colleagues because sometimes post or position also matter in work process. Accordingly duration of work hour factor also differs for men and women.

3. Do you think people draw conclusions about your character, reputation and attitude the way theylike?

Table 4.3: Regarding people drawing conclusions about working women’s character without any reasons (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	67
No	10	13
Can't say	15	20

Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution of perception regarding people drawing conclusions about working women’s character without any reasons



Source: Primary data

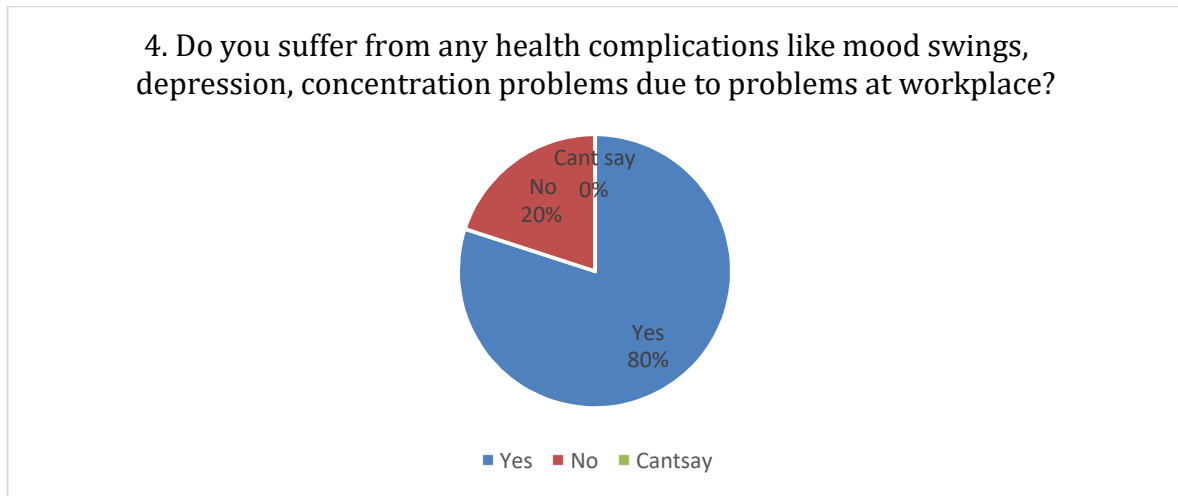
Inference: According to the above information 67% women agreed people draw conclusions about character, reputation and attitude the way they like, 13% women said they were not bother not have a time to think about others and 20% said don’t have any idea what people said about them.

4.Do you suffer from any health complications like mood swings, depression, concentration problems due to problems atworkplace?

Table 4.4: Women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	80
No	15	20
Can’t say	0	0

Figure 4.4: Percentage distribution of women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace



Source: Primary data

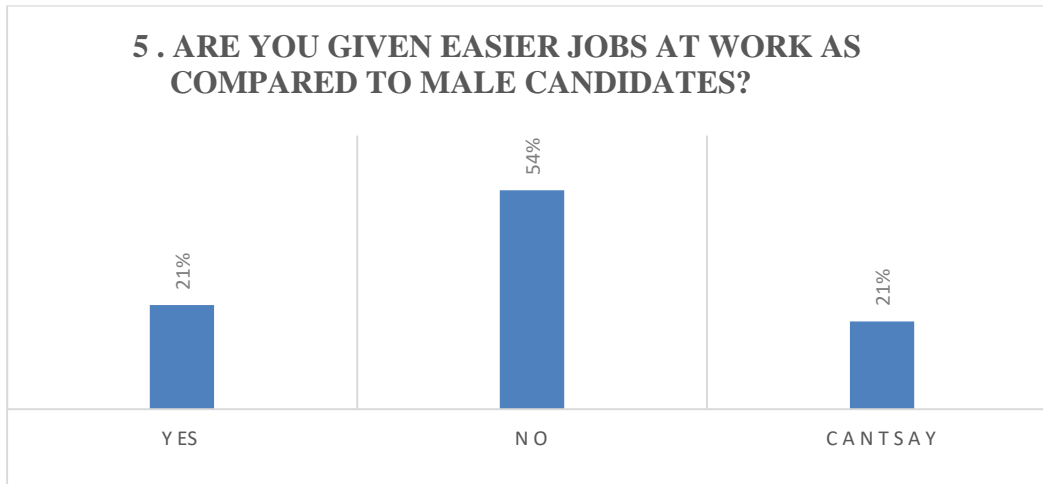
Inference: According to the above information 80% women suffer from health complications, 20% women have not faced any kind of health complications like headache, depression, concentration problems etc.

5.Are you given easier jobs at work as compared to malecandidates?

Table 4.5: Perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	25
No	40	54
Can't say	16	21

Figure 4.5 Percentage distribution of perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates



Source: Primary data

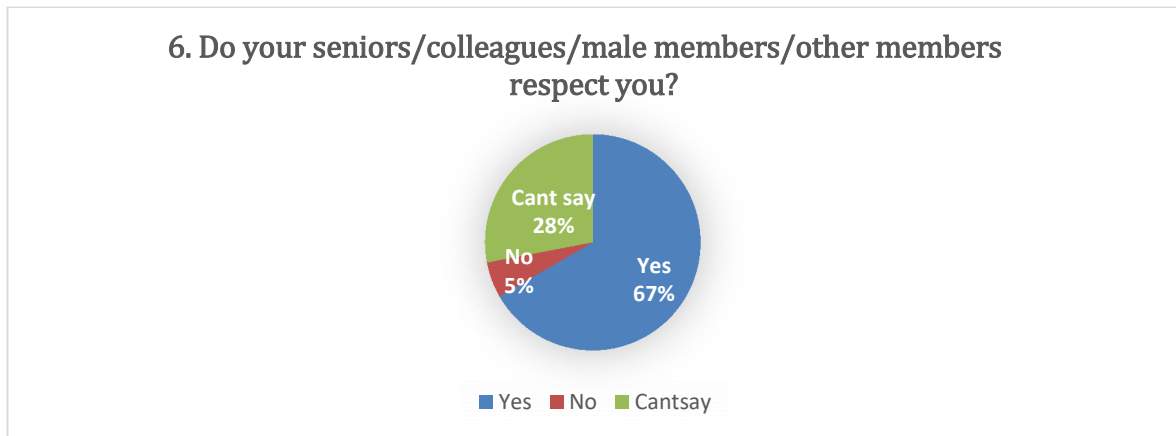
Inference: According to the above information majority of the women are of the opinion that they are not given any easier jobs as compared to their male colleagues. They work as hard as anyone.

6. Do your seniors/colleagues/male members/other members respect you?

Table 4.6: Perception of women on being given respect at their workplace(in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	67
No	4	5
Can't say	21	28

Figure 4.6 Percentage distribution of perception of women on being given respect at their workplace



Source: Primary data

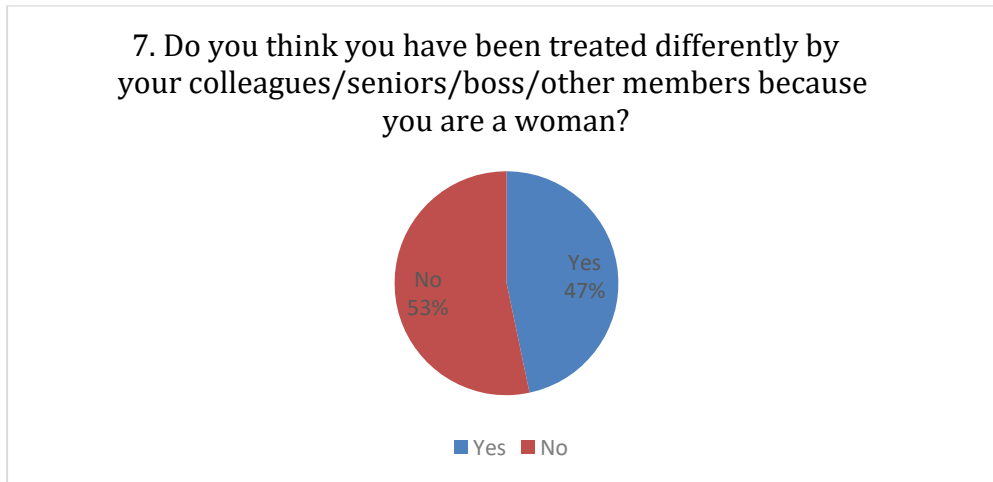
Inference: According to the above information women in general feel that people respect them in the workplace.

7. Do you think you have been treated differently by your colleagues/seniors/boss/other members because you are a woman?

Table 4.7 perception among women on being treated differently by their colleagues/seniors/boss/other members (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	47
No	40	53

Figure 4.7 percentage distribution of perception among women on being treated differently by their colleagues/seniors/boss/other members



Source: Primary data

Inference: According to the above information 53% female responded said that were not treated differently while 47% female responded said they were treated differently. People enjoy working with friends, which often inadvertently turns into favoritism. It can start as something as simple as being included on a lunch outing where business is discussed and may lead to something much more substantial, like getting salary and promotional benefits. Wanting to work with people you like is fine, as long as it is fair to other employees.

8.Are you facing problems related to your family life and professional life?

Table 4.8 Perception among women facing problems related to your family life and professional life (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	33	44
No	42	56

Figure 4.8 Percentage distribution of perception among women facing problems related to your family life and professional life

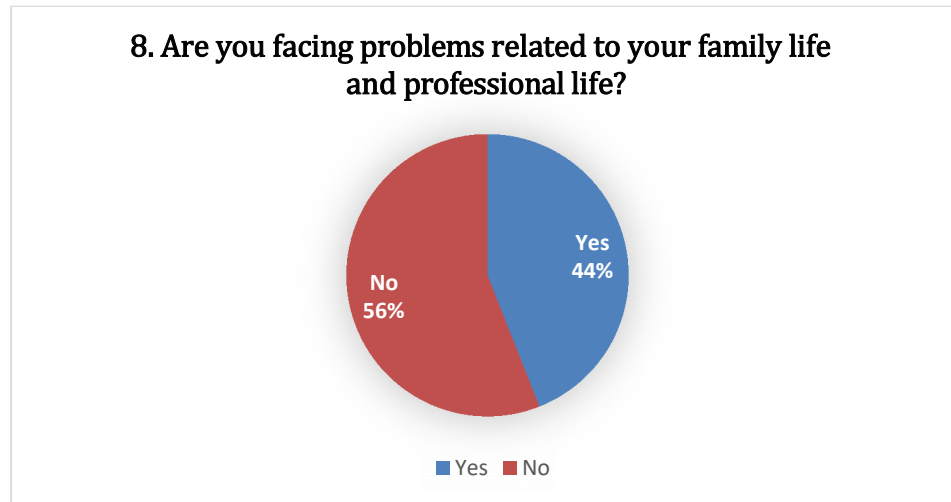


Figure 4.18

Source: Primary Data

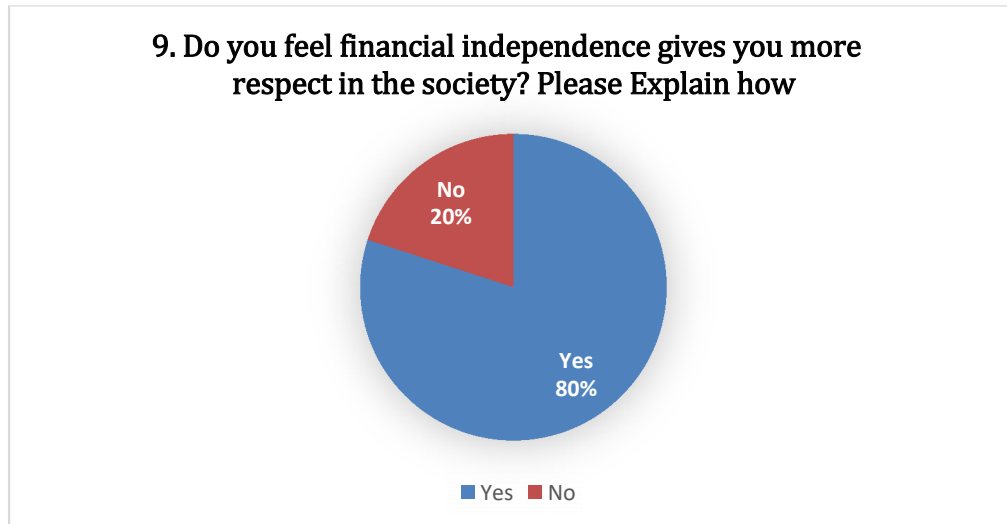
Inference: 56% females responded agreed they were not faced with any problems relating to family life and professional life. 44% females responded that they find it difficult to manage family life and professional life because they have to go home to the family and attend to the household chores and take care of their families. They wished for some definite coping strategies to aid them to carry all the work-load and still be able to take care of their private issues.

9. Do you feel financial independence gives you more respect in the society?

Table 4.9 Perception among women on financial independence giving more respect in the society (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	80
No	15	20

Figure 4.9 Percentage distributions of perception among women of financial independence giving more respect in the society



Source: Primary data

Inference: According to the above information 80% of the women responded said that financial independence gives them more respect in the society where as only 20% 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

Interpretation of Qualitative Data

Most of the working women said that as working women you will definitely suffer from problems. Health related problems like physical and mental stress, general weakness, excessive work load because of work pressure, family pressure etc. are all very real issues. Sometimes the stress is so profound that they feel like leaving their jobs but then they realize that these are all a part of life that they have to fight and endure, which ultimately makes them stronger. Gender

discrimination also happens, men think that women are not capable enough to work properly and unable to take decision in a better way. One more interesting, but bitter fact that was revealed was that female colleagues also give mental stress, like indulging in jealous behavior, unnecessary gossip and rivalry. Several women also commented on injustice meted out to them by their female colleagues where they spread negative rumors about one's character and upbringing. They neither listen to, nor are they interested in listening to your side of the story, but simply continue with their comments, and any objection to that is met with arguments and unreasonable behavior. They try to harass by creating confusion and misunderstanding with superiors and complain about other females. Male members also try to extract sexual favors. If one is a single/divorcee/separated from husband, then other male members try to get close and if they do not a favorable response then they start talking spreading rumors casting aspersions on the woman's character and family. They resort to name-calling and ascribe certain derogatory names that influence others in the workplace. People become judgmental and become blind to one's good qualities, instead highlight only the bad ones. Not only male colleagues but also female colleagues resort to this kind of mental torture and harassment.

If working women work and get a higher post then people usually think that the woman has got the higher post because of favoritism and draw conclusions on her character rather than accepting her capability of achieving this kind of a position. Most of the women admitted to discrimination happening inside the workplace in a city like Bhubaneswar. In Bhubaneswar they face more mental pressure, health complications, depression, and criticism from male and female colleagues. But female colleagues are more personal in their criticism, they comment more on a colleague's character, standard of living, family matters, even dressing styles etc. Financial independence gives women more respect in the society. For a woman, being financially independent is very essential. It

enhances one's reputation and begets more freedom and independence in the society. Women feel self-empowered and better and it helps them in their economic and social status also.

Own Observations

It was observed that different women have different perception of their needs, fears, frustrations etc. Some are happy with their jobs; some are frustrated because of harassment, both mental and physical; some women have a good job environment; some are highly depressed because of issues with their colleagues, both male and female. One interesting fact that was revealed was that those women who are more beautiful or have enough good personality and can carry themselves in a good way; people instantly draw a particular conclusion about their character that is highly negative. They think about her in a wrong way and assume that those women having a friendly kind of nature inside workplace male member generally think that kind of objects for them they can do anything with her.

Key Findings

1. Working women face problems because of their female colleagues (jealousy, rivalry, competition etc.)
2. Colleagues, both men/women draw conclusions about women's character, sometimes without any basis.
3. Financial independence gives women more respect in the society as perceived by the working women.
4. Working women feel they are facing more mental pressure and depression than non-working women.
5. Working women are forced to leave their small children at home because of their work.

Chapter 5

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. 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 guard setc.
- 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 workingwomen.

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 adversesituations.

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