

A Study on the Women Workforce in relation to Societal and Personal Factors

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Available at <https://omniscientmjprjournal.com>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20353710>

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the elements of society or personal factors which influence women's labour market activity. While females are starting to establish more in this work, traditional responsibilities and individual commitments might still have a major impact on many of the female office holders. A descriptive survey type of data collection technique was used. A close-end survey was conducted on 40 active working ladies from all domains of professional areas. The data analysis revealed that marital status has a big impact on the professional way of life, personal care habits and this in turn affects their professional path. Non-public factors such as schooling, self-esteem, and family support are stronger than external forces but t-test proposed no substantial statistical difference between the two. The analysis revealed the presence of empowering plans, adjustable working systems and provision of enablement programmes were the more predominant contributors for a harmonious work-place for women and are thus indicators for a synchronized consideration that must be extended between families, business places and policy makers to better support women's livelihood and life reconciliation at work.

Key Words: Women workforce, Societal Factors, Personal Factors, Gender Equality, Work- Life Balance

INTRODUCTION

Women's role in the labor force is a key indicator of social and economic development. When women enter the workforce, stay in it, and advance in their careers, the benefits are felt beyond the individual to their families, the workplace, and society as a whole. Also, at the same time women's employment is not determined by education or will to work. Issues of health, confidence, family support, and marital status play a role along with social expectations, work place environment, and culture which in turn play a role in whether women do join the workforce and stay in it. In India these issues are very much at play as many women balance paid work with caregiving, domestic responsibilities, and social prescriptions of family roles. For some women supportive homes, flexible work arrangements and access to resources which foster growth do in fact, enable them to have continuous careers. But for others, what we see is that social pressure, lack of institutional support, and unfair workplace practices which favor men over women create barriers to entry and success. Thus, it is a mistake to see women's labour force participation as a choice made in isolation; it is very much a product of the social structure which women are a part of and which in turn shapes that choice.

The study conducted in 2026 examined the age-period-cohort effects and found that the prime reproductive age of women largely determines their labor force participation, with marriage and childbearing events significantly influencing women's working life (Ali, 2026). Similarly,

Pavithra & Prabha (2025) emphasized the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures and gender socialization continue to restrict women's access to economic opportunities, confining them to lower-paying, lower-status roles and limiting their participation in high-skill and leadership positions. This research demonstrates that women's employment issues extend far beyond individual choice or education level and are substantially determined by the broader social environment in which women live and work. Multiple 2024 studies provide crucial insights into current trends. An interstate analysis revealed significant regional variations in female labor force participation rates, showing a concerning decline from higher levels in 2004-2005 to as low as 17.5% by 2017-2018 (Singh & Meher, 2024). The jobless growth of the Indian economy has impacted women more severely than men, as the job market appears able to absorb growing numbers of male workers but not female workers (Singh & Meher, 2024).

The choice of a woman to join and stay in employment was greatly influenced by social factors. The best jobs for women were typically determined by social views, gender stereotypes, and beliefs. Most cultures encouraged women to prioritise their family obligations and duties over their job goals, which led to disruptions in career patterns or little to no career advancement (Pegu, 2015). Similarly, Choudhary (2024) studied in Haryana that age, social group, and marital status play substantial roles in women's rural workforce participation. Deshpande & Kabeer (2024) revealed that women with a family history of working women are more likely to participate in paid work, suggesting that family traditions either support or constrain women's labor market engagement. Many studies have reported a similar effect of gender roles and prevalent social structures in the participation of women workforce. This indicates that women's employment is a complex issue that extends beyond individual choice or education level. An urban-based study from the same year found that marriage and family duties decrease women's likelihood of employment, while vocational skills increase the probability of women entering the labor force (Mukherjee & Agarwal, 2023). The research demonstrates that professional and vocational skills increase women's employment probability, particularly in urban settings.

But research from 2021 challenged the prevailing narratives about women's workforce participation. It stated that the decline in the female labor force participation cannot be attributed solely to voluntary withdrawal due to increased household income, but rather reflects demand-side constraints and unavailability of steady gainful employment (Deshpande & Singh, 2021). Along with the prevalent social structures and factors; Education, family support, health, and financial status were commonly occurring individual factors that significantly impacted women's employment in addition to the social constraints. The foundation for determining professional growth, pay, and career opportunities was education. Higher educational attainment was directly linked to better employment opportunities, higher pay, and easier entry into leadership roles. However, socioeconomic disparities, gender discrimination, and early marriage continued to be obstacles for most women in obtaining high-quality education, particularly in developing countries (Mehtap et al., 2016). In places with limited educational options, women were also encouraged to pursue conventional occupations and were not motivated to seek professional careers or higher education. The involvement of women in the workforce was also strongly influenced by their health and well-being. Career continuity was impacted by physical and mental health conditions, including reproductive health concerns, maternal health complications, and limited access to high-quality healthcare. Career disruptions were common during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period; in certain places, inadequate maternity leave regulations exacerbated this issue. Women who lacked access to quality childcare facilities found it difficult to return to work, forcing them to compromise their careers. Because women frequently

multitasked at work and at home, stress and burnout were major concerns, making work-life balance a persistent challenge.

All the above-mentioned research findings clearly indicate the possible factors affecting the participation and involvement of women in varied professional areas. But, there is a dearth of studies which look up to both personal and social factors together, especially with respect to marital status and work experience. Keeping the dearth of studies in mind and the need to understand the present workforce dynamics, the present research was conducted to study the major factors influencing the participation of the women workforce i.e. personal and social factors.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were studied in the present research:

1. To study the status of the women workforce with respect to marital status and work experience.
2. To study the status of the women workforce with respect to personal factors and societal factors.
3. To compare the effect of societal factors and personal factors in relation to the women workforce.

METHODOLOGY

a. Research Design

The quantitative research method using descriptive survey design was used for this research. This research seeks to find out what societal and personal factors influence women in the workforce.

b. Population and Sample

The target population was women currently/previoursly working/worked in the field of education, health, administrative work, private/public jobs, and entrepreneurship. The target age group was from 18-40. The distribution of the sample with respect to the sectors is given below:

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample in present research

Sector	Number of Women
Teaching and Education (Schools, Colleges, NGOs)	12
Corporate Sector (Aon, WNS, Private Companies)	8
Medical and Healthcare (Hospitals, Health Sector)	4
Banking and Finance	3
IT and Data Analysis	4
Government Sector (PSUs, Govt. Institutions)	3
FMCG and Manufacturing	2
Aerospace	1
Research and Development	2
Media and Communication	1
Total	40

c. Sampling Technique

40 women from age group 18-40 were purposefully selected from the population of women working/worked in the field of education, health, administrative work, private/public jobs, and entrepreneurship from urban and semi-urban locations of Delhi/NCR. The Purposive sampling technique was used to make sure the all possible representation of women who would be in

different personal and societal conditions.

The small number of sample taken for research is due to the unwillingness of women to respond and provide the necessary responses.

d. Tool

The self-constructed questionnaire (five-point Likert's Scale) with two dimensions, Personal Factors and Societal Factors was employed in the current research. The validity of the questionnaire was established using face and Scale-Level Content Validity Index where S-CVI= 0.78. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.76, showing the acceptable level of reliability of the self-constructed tool.

e. Data Analysis Process

The collected data were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics, namely mean and standard deviation and Inferential Statistics; t-test which was represented using graphs and calculation of percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

By using the above-stated statistical techniques, the data were analyzed objective-wise and presented below:

a. Objective 1: To study the status of women workforce with respect to marital status and work experience.

To study the status of women workforce with respect to the marital status and work experience, mean value and standard deviation values were calculated. Based on the values, the box-plot was used which indicates that married respondents exhibit higher median values and relatively consistent variability, whereas unmarried respondents demonstrate lower scores with greater variability. This means the married respondents have more years of work experience than their unmarried counterparts. This may be due to the inclination of women towards their profession/career after getting married and fulfilling all major family responsibilities. The findings were supported by the study conducted by Mukherjee and Agarwal (2023) in an urban setting, which reported that marriage, family responsibilities, the type of family system, and career breaks do in fact play a role in women's likelihood of work and continuity of that work.



Graph 1: Box-plot representing distribution of scores among married and unmarried respondents

b. Objective 2: To study the status of women workforce with respect to personal factor and societal factor.

The mean scores of the responses obtained from women indicate a notable difference in the factors influencing women's workforce participation. The mean score for personal factors was 48.25 which was found to be significantly higher than the mean score for societal factors which had a mean score value as 31.75. This suggests that personal factors exert more influence on women's engagement in their professional roles than external social structures.

This means that women are more affected by what is going on within themselves, their education, health, family support and self-confidence than by what the outside social structure is presenting to them as options in professional growth.

The obtained result is in agreement with the World Development study (2024), which reported requirement of women as the primary doers of domestic chores as the main issue of decline in the women in workforce. The similar findings were reported by the Time Use Survey study (2020) wherein the issue of the double play of unpaid domestic and caregiving roles is an issue which women in rural and urban households face in their professional growth.

c. Objective 3: To compare the effect of societal factor and personal factor in relation to women workforce.

To statistically compare the effect of personal as well as social factors for women's work-force participation, t-test was conducted. The analysis gave a *t-value of 0.307 and a p-value of 0.787* at 0.05 level of significance. This value led to the acceptance of null hypothesis which means there is no significant difference between the effect of personal and societal factors in relation to the participation of women in professional roles.

The findings obtained supports previous research indicating that women's participation in the Indian labour force is influenced by both their domestic duties, including household tasks and child rearing (e.g. child care) as well as broader social rules and structures. More specifically, these two factors can have an impact on a woman's ability to find work (for example, social norms dictate that women will first look after the needs of the family and domestic responsibilities ahead of her career), which places great limitations on her ability to work and to pursue professional opportunities. The interaction of cultural and personal obligations establishes significant barriers for women in their efforts to pursue careers in India.

CONCLUSION

This study engaged with the many complexities of women's participation in the workforce especially as it relates to the country of India. Specifically, the study examined how personal and societal factors influence women's decisions regarding work and ultimately their longer career engagement. In that regard, the study also clearly identifies that personal factors, such as education, confidence people support, health- both physical and mental have a greater impact on women's ability and willingness to work than social expectations. Though still relevant, social factors, including norms or standards, cultural demands, and discrimination exist, but their impact on the confines of individual factors are limited. The buffering of social factors is enabled by either personal factors or personal empowerment or both. Many women effectively mitigated the impact of social factors on their career progression when they developed solid personal foundations in their lives and used strong support of family, friends, and coworkers. The study reveals a significant connection between marital status and work experience as married women perceived their ability to transition back into work and retain long-serving work roles easier once their peak family obligations were managed; unmarried women, on the other hand, wrestle between societal

expectations regarding their obligations of marriage, which may have disrupted or delayed career trajectories.

Statistically, the exploratory analysis illustrates that personal and societal factors are distinct, interdependent, and interact in many ways reinforcing and disrupting one another for women, and are fulfilled by distinct yet responsive measures. Their interaction also reinforces the need to view women's employment results using a dual lens that integrates the socio-cultural context of placement with the agency of change in the workforce. Because the study brings together empirical data with a thematic analysis, the implications that emerge add to current discussions regarding gender equity and workforce participation. It reiterates the fact that individual interventions disconnected from a coherent systemic process cannot result in transformational change, but that a radical approach to transforming the work environment through empowerment, education, and self-awareness, as well as a structural dismantling of mindsets and barriers associated with women's employment and promotion needs to happen.

In conclusion, to increase women's participation in the workforce, we would need to be attentive not just to policies and awareness, but the importance of a cultural change that recognizes women's choices and aspirations, and enables equitable shared responsibility in work and home. Our goal needs to reflect being fully inclusive and equitable of all working women.

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