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## **Working mothers in India: Multiple role conflict and the psychological distress**

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### **Abstract**

In India, women play different roles and are contributing in every domain of society. This paper tries to explore the psychological distress faced by working mothers and conflicts in their multiple roles. With birth of a child, women's responsibility increases which multiplies if they are working also. Motherhood changes the way in which a woman is perceived in society and at her workplace. Significant social and personal adjustments are necessary to cope with such a situation for women. Though, working women enjoy their identity, independence and financial benefits but still it is also true that they play dual role and are over-burdened with different works related to personal and professional areas. The problems become complicated and increase with birth of a child for working women. As a mother and dual demands of work place and family as well as proper rearing of child, they face various adjustment problems and it triggers psychological distress among them. This study tries to explore the level of psychological distress, how they feel and multiple role conflicts they experienced. As well as this study provides some interventions for improving mental health of working mothers.

**Keywords:** Working mothers, multiple role conflict, psychological distress

### **Introduction**

A working mother appreciates the stimulation that a job or career gives, especially one who has the good fortune to be able to balance her work and family life. She learns how to raise a contributing member of society while achieving financial freedom. Work, together with parenting, contributes to a woman's sense of completeness. Women have an integral role in every nation's family and social structure and contribute to every aspect of society. Women are increasingly having difficulties surviving in the modern world's competitive environment as time goes on. They demonstrate their worth by participating equally in every area in industrialized nations. On the other side, in underdeveloped nations, where women play traditional roles and rely on their spouses for their financial needs. But by pursuing a formal education, women are also breaking out the traditional thoughts and moving forward. The current study tried to find out the level of psychological distress experienced by working mothers and the conflict they feel during playing different roles at home and work place. The entire study is based on secondary sources, which include books, journals, published and unpublished theses & dissertations.

Working mothers play essential roles in their families and at work because they successfully balance both parenting and profession. It's critical to realize that both of these positions are incredibly demanding, and it will be difficult to fulfill either without sacrificing the other. Every family depends on its women. They are serious in their commitment to their tasks and obligations as a mother, wife and daughter. They provide emotional and social assistance. They take care of things. Women emerge from their seclusion during times of crisis and misfortune for the family. A woman who can balance a career with the additional responsibility of raising a kid is referred to as a working mother. Working women can be divided into two groups: those who stay at home and work, and those who manage to work outside the home while still taking care of their children.

The necessities of life and material goals frequently require both parents to work. A smart woman might insist on working to maintain a lucrative career and maintain financial independence. The single working mother juggles all of these responsibilities by continuing to support her family financially while still managing the home.

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### Multiple role conflict

Women plays different roles through childhood to till death like a daughter, a wife, a sister a daughter in law, a mother, a grandmother etc. As compare to non working women, working women faces different types of obstacles in balancing family and many role conflicts arises with the working mother. Several needs at home must be met after completing work-related obligations. In the current situation both partners strive to strike a balance with their profession as well as at home with their children. But women still face challenges since they must juggle various responsibilities, including a family maid, a tutor, a nurse, a cook and office worker.

### Psychological distress

Due to internal conflicts related to different roles among working mothers they feel psychological distress, anxiety, frustration and many other negative emotions. Psychological distress involves emotional suffering mental state characterized by symptoms of anxiety and depression with somatic symptoms. Working women are very vulnerable towards psychological distress than non working women.

### Working mother, multiple role conflict and psychological distress

In India, women have proven their worth in the work place. They have preserved the traditional household work ethics in addition to modifying the responsibilities of working women. A significant struggle for freedom in the traditional social sphere lies behind such success. The purpose of this study to find out the main issues (role conflict, psychological distress) faced by the working mothers in India.

Whelan (2014) <sup>[6]</sup> conducted a study to explore the role conflict of working mothers with determinants (identity, coping and satisfaction with life). Results showed that work-family roles have an influence on the working mothers' self perception during their life span. It also influences the domains they related. It was also found that part time working mothers have higher self efficacy and get family-work support rather than full time working mothers.

In a study, Behera and Padhi (1993) <sup>[1]</sup> explored role conflict among 126 working mothers in teaching profession at Berhampur, South Orissa. It was found that working mothers face high degree of role conflict as well as social-economical background of working mothers also play important role in level of conflict and congruency.

Gupta and Damodar (2020) <sup>[3]</sup> examined the level of psychological distress among unmarried 88 working and 64 non-working women. Through t-test it was found that there is no any difference between working and non-working women at the level of psychological distress. It indicated that work status does not play important role in psychological distress. Working women have more stress than non-working women (Patil, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>.

McQuillan *et al.*, (2003) <sup>[4]</sup> suggested that infertility is associated with substantial long – term distress. Ensel and Lin (1991) <sup>[2]</sup> conducted a study on life stress paradigm and psychological distress and found that social situations directly related to depressive symptoms well as social resources plays as role of mediator in psychological stressor and social stressor and by enhancing social resources, psychological resources indirectly affected distress.

As limited social, cultural boundaries due to gender biasness, women have to fulfill their duties with more difficulties. Due to involvement at work place, many times they are unable to manage family and children so it creates high level of role conflict and psychological distress among

working mothers. They find it difficulties to make balance between family and work satisfactory. It becomes more difficult when the family, spouse and children of working mothers not supported them. So it becomes very difficult task for working mother to make adjustment in this conflicting world as no one help him and share these responsibilities at home and work place.

### Discussion

Motherhood is not an easy task while with other job it becomes more difficult. Everyone knows that it is a full time job. It is estimated that 60 percent of working mothers found difficult to create and maintain balance between family and work. As a result, self-care frequently gets put on the back burner of priorities. Working mothers need to recognize that maintaining their whole well –being, which includes their mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health, is a crucial investment that will ultimately save time and energy, even though it can feel overwhelming to add more to an already heavy burden They don't take themselves at their priority list. Mindfulness exercise will change irrational mental thoughts by increase empathy, gratitude, resilience and happiness. Through mindfulness practices working mothers can improve their attention capacity, focus, feel less stress etc. Working parents are need to balance so many different responsibilities between work and family that a better feeling of well-being helps them be more present in the moment leading to improved productivity

### Conclusion

On the basis of the reviews, this study provides many insights regarding improvement of working mother in family as well as in institution. Through this study we can assess the main problems among working mothers as well as identify the main factors responsible for psychological stress and role conflicts which can help in the making policies essential intervention strategies to deal with this social stigma for working mothers in the work place, family and society. Further analytic empirical research is needed to find out potential predictive variables.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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