

The Physical and Psychological Effects of Dual Burden on Working Women: A Qualitative Analysis of the Working Women in District Sheikhpura

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Abstract: The study explores the role of women in society, particularly their dual responsibilities in public and private domains. It investigates the physical and mental involvement of working women, the challenges they face, and the effects of managing both domains on their well-being. Through qualitative research involving interviews with 30 women, it was revealed that these women worked over 14–15 hours daily, leading to significant physical and mental strain. The Common issues include fatigue, fast aging, restlessness, and reduced personal satisfaction. Their social lives are limited to professional interactions, and hobbies such as reading and writing poetry have been abandoned due to time constraints. Many rely on painkillers, antidepressants, and sleeping pills. Despite satisfaction in providing for their families, they lack quality time for themselves and with loved ones. The women appealed to the government to improve working conditions, including giving daycare centers or support systems for mothers, as no institutions currently offer these facilities in the district.

Keywords: Dual Burden, Working Women, Society, Public and Private Domain, Mothers



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Introduction

Women play an essential role in society regardless of whether they are working or homemakers, they are an inevitable component of family unit. Levine (2001) claimed that in the past few decades, a large number of women have contributed to breadwinning activities which have increased their responsibilities. The present research is an attempt to analyze and explain how the dual burden of responsibilities has influenced women particularly, those women who are performing dual roles both in public and private domains. Chen (2020) concluded that women who are working more than 50 hours per week in both domains of their lives face some severe physical and psychological effects including, stress and physical health deterioration. It was stated that the increased working hours in both domains of life can enhance the chances of being sick and stressed.

This article is an attempt to analyze some of those aspects of her life in the context of Pakistani society. It is estimated the average working hours of a working woman are 7-9 per day, as more than 9 hours are restricted by ILO (International Labor Organization) adopted in 1919. So, after performing her services in the work field, women have to perform household chores which create double physical and mental pressure for them.

Women have always in their tradition seen as the "homemakers". In her private domain, she cooks food, washes clothes, and is involved in childbearing and child-rearing. Moreover, she is supposed to look after the needs of her husband, children, and other family members. Along with these responsibilities, the public domain has made her a professional doctor, teacher, banker lawyer, etc. This domain has its demanding tasks and challenges. In an attempt to create a balance between these two domains, the individual identity of the woman has been captivated. The woman in the modern world is empowered because she earns which makes her economically independent, but in reality, she has become captivated by her "double responsibilities".

The present research aims to study to what extent this idea is true that a working woman, who appears to be "empowered" and "independent" is captivated mentally and physically due to the double processes of the responsibilities she carries.

Problem Statement

In the last few decades, due to modernization and its corresponding industrialization, a large proportion of the women in society have entered and are continuously entering into the workforce which empowers them in their financial domains of life and improves their worth in society. Meanwhile, these women are trying to manage their household chores with traditional societal expectations. But, in the process of managing these domains working women of the society are suffering a lot in terms of psychological and physical connotations.

After studying their challenges this study will offer evidence-based recommendations for improving their physical and psychological well-being to increase their satisfaction in life.

Significance of the Study

There is a serious need to identify and categorize the obstacles that working women face while they are managing both domains of life. Because a lot of studies are present to glamorize their empowered look but few studies are conducted to analyze their challenges in the context of the society of Pakistan. In this patriarchal society, women are a crucial part of the family unit having less familial support system and insufficient infrastructure development at their workplaces caused many psychological and physical difficulties that compromised their well-being. This research is focusing on the following objectives:

- To examine the extent of the physical and mental involvement of working women in both domains of their lives.
- To analyze the perceived levels of difficulties faced by working women while managing both domains of their lives. (Personal and professional domains)
- To investigate the perceived levels of mental and physical pressure experienced by working women while performing in both domains.
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for improving their well-being.

Review of the Literature

Aslam (2013) concluded that from some previous decades, the world witnessed a mass population of women involved with productive activities. Their work was valued and the general image of women was suddenly modified in society. A large number of movements run for women's empowerment and to secure equal women's status in society. It helped women to boost their image but on the other hand, it was challenging to manage double and triple roles for them. Developed nations understood this notion in the early stages that the absence of women in houses can cause serious harm. Therefore, to fulfill these gaps those nations modified the structure of their society by establishing alternate institutions like daycare and old age homes.

Hashmi (2017) claimed that the modernization has enlightened the world. Every person, nation, and region received its effects in different ways. In other aspects, feminism also took birth in the lap of modernization. Movements



were run for the sake of women's emancipation including physical, mental, and social freedom. Rights were acknowledged by society and she is also considered a responsible person by omitting discriminatory behavior previously attached to her to consider her a bird of the nest. Shiva (2013) summarized in a study that women have to engage in double and sometimes triple roles as domestic roles along with productive activities and community management which affects their whole dynamics of life and enhances their problems in managing both domains of life. Singhal (2015) concludes the impacts of double and triple roles (community management) on working women. This is influencing their physical, mental, and passionate prosperity antagonistically making it hard to achieve an equalization in their own and working life. Aside from this, it might negatively affect decision-making ability due to role strain and role conflict.

Materials and Methods

A research methodology is a range of systematic steps and processes that help to explore the verbal and non-verbal realities. The philosophical base of the qualitative research design is interpretive. Hennink, M., (2020) contributed that Qualitative methodology tends to explore the subjective realities with the help of in-depth observation of the concerned population. The researcher has used an interview guide with open-ended questions to get their lived experiences while managing both domains of their lives. The rationale behind using qualitative research is to uncover inclusive and rich information about the social realities of these women regarding physical and psychological pressure managing both domains of their lives. It is based upon the comprehensive and detailed perception of the population regarding difficulties and their effects on their life. In the current study, the researcher has utilized the qualitative research method to find out the in-depth subjective truth of the studied phenomenon (Bryman, 2012).

In-depth interview techniques helped to facilitate the data collection and to find out the subjective realities of respondents about the issue. A series of open-ended questions in the form of an interview guide was used to uncover the perception of the respondents about this issue. The semi-structured interview guide was written in simple and easy language having probing themes, codes, and informed consent along with it and every interview lasted for an average of 30 minutes (Braun, 2012). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data including all its steps i.e., to prepare Verbatim Transcripts, Anonymity of the data, Categorizing and Conceptualizing, and report writing.

Population of the Study

The research was conducted in the urban areas of Sheikhpura, a district in Punjab. The data was collected from three tehsils (Sheikhpura, Sharqpur, Safdar Abad) randomly selected. The target population of the research was working women from the district of Sheikhpura. 30 interviews were conducted as the point of saturation came. Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized for selecting the participants having similar characteristics. The inclusion criteria while sampling was to choose those working women who were married, and having children working in the education, banking, and health sectors. Other unmarried or childless working women working in these sectors were excluded from the study. The all-ethical considerations were applied to accomplish the whole process of research to eliminate the chance of harm for both the interviewer and interviewee. The data was described in the form of a report of the final task which made the researcher able to generate the comprehensive research report.

Results and Discussions

Engagement in Public and Private Domains

This theme aims to explore the nature, duties, and tasks that women of the target population were performing daily. The rationale behind the depiction of this scenario was to understand the true nature of their physical and mental involvement in the workplace. The reason behind knowing about their job is to attempt to know their level of willingness attached to this job. The choice of being a career woman or remaining a housewife is also changing with time. Most of the interviewed women have been doing jobs for more than one and a half decades. According to them if a woman does not have financial problems, then she should not do a job. Then she should stay home and look after



her children. The reason behind their statement was that performance in both domains caused serious harm to her social, mental, and physical health. These women were chosen from different work fields. The first interviewed woman was from the teaching field working in higher secondary schools and narrated that:

“Although I am here to teach mathematics this school does not have a sports instructor. We are strictly instructed to encourage and prepare the students for extracurricular activities on the sports base. Therefore, I was assigned this very challenging duty”.

A nurse working in a hospital responded that:

“Nursing is a great responsibility and work of mental attention. I have to observe the patients all day and night. A patient can sleep but we cannot sleep. I have to work eight to nine hours per shift which is hectic and challenging”.

The third group of interviewed women was from the banking sector. These women were also performing eight to nine hours per day as standard labor time in the banking sector. The nature of their job is also very tricky and time-consuming. Kids are not allowed in the work field and no additional day care centers are provided by the organization. So, they have to manage their children on their behalf. As participant C3 explained that

We are from the finance sector. I have to perform different transactions all day long. A single click of the wrong key can bankrupt the entire branch. So, I have to do every task carefully without any disturbance.

Involvement in Private Domains

After working in public domains all interviewed women were working in their private domains also. Only two of them claimed that they had part-time servants and maids for the cleaning, moping, and washing of the clothes. Except for these two, remaining all were doing their domestic chores themselves. They were moping, cleaning the house, and washing the clothes of their entire family. All women were cooking food themselves because their family members did not like to serve by servants. Regarding the sharing of responsibilities, the attitude of family members of all women varied. Women belonging to joint families have different types of challenges than nuclear. The women who belonged to the joint family system were doing their assigned domestic chores on a massive level. If she was only washing the clothes or ironing them, it was the time-consuming task of the whole day. Almost all women were spending their weekends doing different kinds of tasks. Participant B2 explained that

Sunday is not a rest day for me; it has also a long range of tasks to do. I wash the all clothes and uniforms of my children and iron them all. Because there is no time for me to wash them in working days, moreover I peel and crush different vegetables like onion, ginger, and chili which is time time-saving act and facilitates me during my cooking. There is another huge pile of work to do.

Participant C4 stated that:

Although the attitude of my husband is very polite and kind and he warmly appreciates my efforts but does not help me out his upbringing is not like that temper and he is not trained to do domestic chores.

The Perceived difficulties Faced by Working Women while Managing both Domains

- Difficulty in role management
- Unplanned activities and challenges of both domains
- Role conflict and Role strain
- Excessive workload
- Work-life balance

Difficulty in Role Management

Grünenfelder (2013) stated that Both domains have a long range of duties to perform. Although organizational activities are to some extent fixed and pre-defined. But the household chores are not predefined, pre-planned, and controlled. So, these women faced great difficulty in managing the roles of both domains. One stated that



In case of slight changes in routine even if the car stops to move for half an hour the entire day becomes the prey of mismanagement and chaos. All day minds continuously chase behind to catch every moment of the clock but at the end of the day still many excuses have to be delivered before all family members.

Unplanned Activities and Challenges of Both Domains

Unplanned challenges include the sudden occurrence of any event in the planned daily routine (Proctor, [2014](#)). Mostly, all women were confronted with these unplanned challenges which created a bottleneck situation for them. These unplanned activities were sudden meetings, emergencies, or incidences. As one of them stated that

Being a nurse, it is a common thing to confront sudden challenges including a large number of patients with having critical condition is common in hospital. In case of these kinds of emergencies, the whole routine disturbs abruptly and creates mental strain, confusion, and tiredness.

Meanwhile, unplanned situations also emerge on a domestic level. As one of them stated about the unplanned situations in their life by saying that

The unplanned and sudden situation includes the illness of any family member of the family which requires additional care. This is a very unpleasant situation for me which I think disturbs the smooth flow of my routine including sleeping patterns. Whenever children fall ill their mother has to look after them without any argument excuses or complaints of tiredness.

Role Conflict and Role Strain

Another important subtheme related to their life was the repeating phenomenon of role conflict and role strain. The working women were confronted with this situation which was creating mental tiredness and confusion in their lives. According to the sociological definition, the meaning of role conflict is such kind of situation in which contradictory demands of different roles take place before a person and confuse him/her. Role conflict takes place in the presence of different statuses in the life of a single person. In contrast, this role strain is a situation in which a person becomes confused about fulfilling the contradictory obligation attached to a single status.

One of them stated that I am fighting on a battlefield in which I have to fight as a mother, as a wife as a caretaker, and as a good daughter-in-law in the private domain of my life. Meanwhile, I have to struggle for my livelihood and try to be a good employee in the public domain. These expectations make me confuse and always create a stumbling situation for me.

Another described in such a way that

I feel a bottleneck situation like a mouse that is in a trap while leaving my house. I leave my baby girl under the supervision of my sister-in-law. She weeps behind me. I call her and take her on a video call to stop them from weeping. Then I feel I am not performing my duties being a mother and I am not a good version of the mother as she is supposed to be for her children.

Excessive Workload in Personal and Private Domains

Almost all interviewed women claimed that the responsibilities of both domains create an excessive workload for them. Umer ([2013](#)) concluded that the excessive workload is responsible for fatigue, stress, and mental and physical tiredness. According to the psychologist, the excessive workload is a leading source of mental illness and decreases the level of satisfaction with their life. The interviewed working women pointed out in direct manners how they think that they are confronted with this situation.

“Although, apparently it looks very decent to get up early, finish the household chores, get prepared, and go to the office. Every person in your community looks to you in an admiring way that you are responsible, active, enjoying



empowerment, and bringing wealth into the house. But in the depth of facts, only working can understand better the whole scenario that how much hectic life we spend. Our whole life is full of challenges and workloads”.

Work-life Balance and Subjective Well-being of Working Women

Negi (2017) stated that the work-life balance is an attempt to create an equilibrium between the public and private domains. It has its different dimensions like as maintaining the work-life along with health, family, friends, entertainment, and other all aspects of life. Individuals who experience more happiness, joy, and contentment and less anger and sadness have a high level of subjective well-being. In contrast, individuals who are dissatisfied with their lives frequently feel negative emotions such as anger; fatigue, and dissatisfaction and have a low level of subjective well-being. Here subjective well-being means the physical, social, and psychological state of working women.

Regarding their health and subjective well-being one of them said that

Although I am fully aware and conscious about my health and diet time the overburden of work does not permit me to do any kind of exercise for fitness. Moreover, often my children and husband take breakfast but I miss it because of have no time to dine or to pack lunch boxes for me.

Mani (2013) claimed that leisure time is most important for a person's subjective well-being but due to overburdening these working women are deprived of their recreational time. Friends and social circles are very important parts of the life. A person feels relaxed as he or she meets with some older friends and peer groups or is involved with favorite hobbies. After talking about the friend circle and entertainment one said that.

Entertainment is a rare part of my life. It is enough that I can see my blood relation and can attend important family events. Meanwhile, there is no concept of a movie or outing due to a shortage of time although it was part of my university life. Job has given me a new social circle which is different from our previous friends.

Perceived Physical and mental pressure while managing both domains

- Physical and Mental Stress
- Physical and Mental Fatigue
- Lower levels of satisfaction

As it has been observed in previous themes and subthemes these women are performing duties in both domains and are suffering from excessive workload. According to the routine which they have described they are continuously working normally more than fourteen to fifteen hours collectively in both domains. These working hours often increase when some unspoken and sudden challenges are encountered with them as all are already mentioned in previous themes. All interviewed women were undergoing different physical and mental pressures due to the overburdened and busy routines of both domains.

Stress: Catalyst (2020) defined that Stress describes a physical and mental arousal regarding all experiences of life. Stress is not a tangible disease rather it only can be diagnosed through its symptoms. The major symptoms of stress are anxiety, headache, depression, insomnia, and irritability. It can be triggered through daily work responsibilities and their overburden, the death of a beloved one, war, or any other unusual situation. Towler (2013) commented about the side effects of the stress is a natural and beneficial gift of God that creates awareness in the body to cope up with challenges. But it can be harmful for mental and physical health if repeats itself again and again. All interviewed women were suffering from physical and mental stress reason behind their stress was the busy schedule of their lives. One of them described stress in the following forms;

There is a rush in my life, I am always finding myself in a rush from home to job and job to home. Every minute of my life is calculated and sold. If I am late for office, it will decrease my job efficiency. If come back home late then it means that everything is going to be late for the next hours, the lunchtime and tuition of my children. So, this calculated routine is very stressful for me. My heart runs fast to think about the frowned boss in case of being late for office.



Fatigue: Almost all interviewed women were using the word fatigue in interviews. One of them explains the fatigue in these manners.

After a busy day and work routine of both domains, the body turns into a wound. It seems like my body is an empty jar that is full of pain. Zero motivation arises when even my husband shows some sexual arousal and wants sexual pleasure. Often, my fatigue becomes a leading cause of fights in the house. It seems like life is bounded by a chain of responsibilities. The difference between slavery and our plight is that we do all freely and choose all options of life as society demands. But literally, we work as a slave from day to late night for the better future of our children and pay for it in the form of physical and mental restlessness. My body and mind suffer all day but still, the job needs time and I cannot think about leaving it. That's why I said it's a kind of slavery.

Another woman, while talking about her physical pressure said that.

I think working women's body starts to show them ten to fifteen years old extra than non-working women. Excessive workload and fatigue make us lazy regarding self-care. Only wearing ironed clothes and having a makeover is not all about maintenance but proper rest, diet and mental peace are also important. I knew many women in my age group who looked younger and fresher than me. Although I wear expensive clothes and other brand items, they seem fresher than me.

Lower Levels of Satisfaction

Lakshmi (2013) commented that satisfaction level with life is a more important factor for mental peace. Human beings work their entire life to attain physical and mental peace and satisfaction. The feelings of mindfulness are the ultimate goal of a person's hard work. It is often said that keeping your mind fresh will keep your whole body. According to the Stone (2013), the self-satisfaction was examined through different indicators. First of all, the indicator of self-satisfaction is about the self-worth of the participants. Self-worth is the sense of importance and self-approval by their family members. All interviewed women were satisfied with the self-approval that they were provided by their families during the decision-making process.

Often all married sisters unite in their mother's home but I cannot because all others do not do the job except me. So, I cannot go and stay anywhere according to my wish. My all life is designed and controlled by job routines and job commitments. I feel less satisfied when I cannot spend more quality time with my spouse and children.

Conclusion

After a detailed discussion of the findings and reviewed literature, it is concluded that most of the findings complement the reviewed literature previously done by different national and international scholars. According to this discussion, the modern risk factors are not as much related to material needs but the subjective well-being and quality of family life are hampering drastically which is another form of risk to human beings. These women remain involved with the busy and highly attention-seeking routine and spend hectic routine from dawn to dusk to manage their livelihoods according to the needs of the time. The body captivation is occurring in the form of excessive workload which these women are performing in both domains. During the whole day, these women are confronted with different types of responsibilities which increase their physical and mental fatigue and stress and have many negative effects towards them. The busy routine of both domains is creating physical and mental pressure and strains for these women. Although, these women are appreciated by their families due to earnings and are warmly welcomed in decision-making processes but their families contributing less to reduce their domestic responsibilities. Therefore, these women are undergoing severe kinds of mental and physical pressures including stress fatigue, and anxiety, and taking different types of painkillers and antidepressants daily.

Recommendations

These all recommendations are based upon the suggested opinions the working women. The rationale behind asking



about their suggestions was that the person who gets through any situation can the true nature of the problem and also can suggest some better solutions to the problem.

- The first suggestion was for the family, according to them all, the family should understand the nature of their busy routine especially the husband should not feel shame to share domestic responsibilities. It's only the way the family can reduce their responsibilities through sharing.
- Their second suggestion for the organization in which they were working, was that the organization should reduce the extra burden of the responsibilities of administrative tasks and should only command the duty for which they are hired.
- The third recommendation was for the government, as they all were saying that the government should establish some daycare centers along with organizations or in the main city where they can leave their babies in case of having a nuclear family.
- The government should revise policies to promote flexible work arrangements including remote and part-time work to tailor to the needs of each individual. All organizations should introduce workplace wellness programs to reduce work-related pressure and enhance the mental and physical well-being of women.



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