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SOCIETAL CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Females with jobs all over the world generally and in Asian Context specifically, exert efforts from dawn to dusk but their work is neither recognized in the society nor is properly compensated, especially in rural and most of the urban areas. Therefore, they face numerous challenges in order to be productive in society as compared to their male counterparts. The research emphasizes on the challenges faced by working females especially in education sector of Pakistan's urban areas. In order to carry out the study empirically, a sample of 200 workingwomen was selected and asked to give their input regarding the issues they face in performing the dual jobs, which includes household chores and also the job related duties. The research focused on some of the glaring aspects including: managing the job responsibilities, workplace tensions, balance between family and job, deciding the career out of choices, facilities related issues, and family support and alike. The retrieved information depict that some of the really turbulent issues include; problems regarding work family balance, challenging work and its conditions, family and society related help, cultural and norms related fear about doing jobs, and the workplace structure. This piece of research provides a significant insight into the issues and recommendations on the solutions to the problems related to working females in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Workingwomen have been facing various issues in human society across the globe, regardless of the nature of society and the landscape. The issue gets worse in Asian organisations especially in Indo-Pak subcontinent. Either this issue has not been considered at all or has not been properly addressed. But whatever the reason is, women have been facing lot many hindrances on the way towards moving on the path of progress and prosperity. Additionally, when it comes to workingwomen, the issues increase in intensity and volume. Then, being a woman, multiple sorts of blockades and un-appreciative behaviors can be observed especially related to academia or in teaching sector of Pakistan. As compared to other parts so the world like the region of indo-Pak sub-continent, when the status of working women is observed, it can be seen as one of the worst issues especially associated with financial benefits and social perspective. This study focuses on the various significant such issues and puts forth various suggestions to overcome them.

Women rights have a long and complicated history in the world. With religion, governments and the general society claiming their stakes and interest in this matter, everyone wishes to have a say. The feminist movements attempted to make women realize their rights. Even amongst these movements, there exist many ideological, theoretical and conceptual differences. By and large, there is no one streamlined view when it comes to women rights. The chaos surrounding women rights links directly to empowerment of women. Women empowerment, in turn cannot be possible without an improvement in the social status of women.

Working women play a vital role for the development and progress of every nation as they are considered the pillars of a society. No society can mature properly without their participation. It has been seen and observed since ancient times that women play a significant role with equal labor force participation parallel to male counterpart in any form of work and almost in any field of life. Thus the trend of decline in fertility rate and family planning is greatly associated with women employment and therefore helps in reducing the population growth rate (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000).

In many Asian countries like Pakistan working women are still suffering from market discrimination. Their social status, values at work place and society are still being compressed by underpaid, over worked and low job status (Agapiou, 2002). Many researches reveal that the working women are Consistent with SOS theory and other previous conceptualizations, teachers have a set of illegitimate task experiences in two ways; unreasonable and unnecessary tasks (Dr. Server Sevil Akyurek, 2020). In both rural and urban areas the women unemployment is consistently higher as compared to men as majority of the women are employed in unorganized sectors. Mostly, women are concentrated in sectors known for low level of productivity, less income stability, low employment security reason and their dual responsibility at home and at work place. Organized services sector is mostly government services, and provides employment to small proportion of women. (Sadaqat & Sheikh, 2011).

Working Women either married or unmarried of different age groups face numerous stereotypical challenges at workplace which cause stress, depression, lack of confidence and are more susceptible to being harassed

psychologically which leaves them unable to maintain the balance between work and family life with job security issues (Konai, Mijan, Khatun, Islam & Hossain 2018).

This research narrows down the scope of working women in teaching field of private sector only. Teaching is a profession, which is highly popular among the female population in Pakistan. It is also quite an important one as teachers are the first source of indoctrination and knowledge dissemination. When it comes to the *feminization* of the teaching profession, Pakistan does not present a unique case (UNESCO, 2011). All over the world, this profession has emerged as one that is favored by women. It is the need of the hour and high time to identify those issues faced by working women in the field of teaching. Teaching is the most common profession chosen by literate females when they choose a career in urban and also some rural areas but this research deals only with the urban areas. Pakistan is the most urbanized country in South Asia (Amber, 2006). Keeping in view these facts, it cannot be denied that the problems faced by teachers affect the Pakistani society in many ways.

2. Research Questions

RQ1: What are the societal issues faced by workingwomen in Paksitan?

RQ2: Do workingwomen suffer from work life balance?

RQ3: How much social support is available for working women in Pakistan?

RQ4: Is demanding work an issue for workingwomen in Paksitan?

RQ5: What behaviour the society and family show to workingwomen in paksitan?

3. Significance of the Study

No doubt, the significance of the study on workingwomen cannot be ignored. It's a universally acknowledged truth that lots of issues exist. Based on the gap analysis, academic as well as general evidence show that there are lots of issues with workingwomen especially in Asian parts of the world. The study gets more importance when it talks more specifically about the societal aspects of the workingwomen issues. Regardless of the efforts put by government and some non-government organizations, issues related to workingwomen are not completely addressed; therefore still a lot of work is needed in this scenario. In addition, when we cull out the history of the literature on workingwomen, a considerable volume of literature supports the argument when it comes to the society related issues of women. Especially on the society related issues, literature has also evidenced that some studies have been conducted on the workingwomen but especially at private school teachers, no serious research is conducted in Pakistani society with the paradigm and framework of the study followed hereby. Social side of the issues of workingwomen is the real issue and this aspect seems to be very less highlighted in academic world. The study is having academic as well as practical significance; academic in a sense that it could fill in the existing gap in literature and practical in a sense that it would be very supportive to the managers of the human resource in various organisations. Such researches could prove to be beneficial and valuable in order to form solid policies regarding private sector of education.

Furthermore, this adds up to the significance in a way that the study can help the organisations to understand the society related issues of workingwomen and thus help them to manage their workforce in an effective manner.

4. Literature review

It's universally acknowledged that working women face a lot many issues as compare to their male counterparts, in various fields all over the world. Based on the supposition, social scientists conducted researches to test it out. Therefore, all over the world, research surrounding women and their social problems as working women point to the same direction. In almost all societies women face problems with discrimination, low wages, work-family balance, social support etc. but specifically in collectivistic societies, women have to face both kinds of problems i.e. low wages gender discrimination, negative attitudes of colleagues and also problems with negative attitudes of the society which does not really encourage women to work and even when they do, they do not have the same degree of independence and control over their lives than their male counterparts do (Antoniades, 1975; Jahan, 2000; Pathak & Singh; Asadullah & Fernández, 2008; Konai et al, 2018).

For working women in collectivistic societies, social status takes on different challenges. These women face issues which are different from and same as those faced by women who are homemakers. Extant research on Pakistani women and their participation in workforce taps on all kinds of issues, ranging from social, political, historical, religious and psychological factors. The social status of Pakistani working women varies with respect to many variables like class, urban or rural background etc. The number of Pakistani working women in urban areas is increasing rapidly (Amber, 2006) and most of these women are employed in the private sector of education as teachers (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2010). Empowerment of these women is of much significance and, for this purpose, the social problems they face need to be highlighted.

One of the studies also show that women's physical and mental health has been found to be correlated with their social status (Mulatu & Schooler, 2002; Macran et al, 1994).

Status refers to a position socially occupied by an individual in reference to those around that individual. Social status of teachers has been discussed in holistic terms in literature. Hence, the proposition is devised as:

Proposition 1: There exists issue of work family life balance in Pakistani working women

The reason for job is a very important determinant of social problems because if women work to earn freedom, it implies that they do not have enough of it without working. In Pakistan, women also face problems with lack of facilities regarding transport and miscellaneous benefits, salary, independence regarding expenditure of salary and job satisfaction. A research which focuses exclusively on working women in Rawalpindi shows that these women face the same problems as mentioned above (Farhat, 2010; Maqsood, Ch, Zia & Cheema, 2005).

Kumar & Purushothama (2018) illustrate in their research that the change in

education system over the years has put a bad impact on the health and well-being of female teachers resulting in poor performance and affecting their personal and professional life quite negatively. Other than being responsible for delivering the quality education, female teachers are burdened with non-productive activities too much that it adds to their stress, resulting in them being unable to maintain a proper work and a healthy family life balance. According to literature available on social issues of working women and female school teachers in Pakistan, work-family balance, reason for choice of profession, independence, freedom of mobility, facilities and employee benefits, psychological and sexual harassment, social support in reference to support shown by the society at large in the form of positive perception and notions of respect for female teachers and also the support shown by immediate family members like parents, in laws and spouses (Jalal-ud-Din & Khan, 2008; Shafique, Anwar, Akbar & Khan, 2012) devise the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Social Support for working women is an issue in Pakistan.

Researchers have showed that in Pakistan, teaching is viewed as one of the most respectable professions for women but at the same time, it is one of the least preferred career choices. It is rarely the first career choice for Pakistani women (UNESCO, 2013).

Thus working women and female school teachers face issues which are either directly related to their professional life or their social and domestic life. Social problems like work-family balance, social support and reasons for choice of teaching as a profession, occupational respect and job satisfaction in teaching profession can be clustered together as these have been known to determine the social status of female teachers (Farroq, Feroze, & Kai, (2017); Mughal & Siddiqui, 2017). Research finds several social problems which are unique to women in Pakistan. These problems have plagued the society since decades and have a history embedded in religion, industrialization and globalization. However, to trace the origins is quite difficult. What would be fruitful and productive is a research that encompasses the identification of such issues, labeling them so that certain policies can be formulated based on these issues.

Private sector has been ignored by researchers and policy makers alike in Pakistan although the problems in private sector could be of different nature than those of the government sector. All the governmental policies are mostly strictly followed by the government sector alone. Private sector has become an unmanageable mess.

Based on the above mentioned insights into the topic at hand, it has been found out that the social status of women can be improved through empowerment which entails working on job satisfaction levels through social support and also through the formation of solid policies regarding the education sector, not to mention allocation of the proper amount of budget to it (Mughal & Siddiqui, 2017). In Pakistan, the government sector offers more job security and benefits than the private sector (UNESCO, 2013; Khan & Bibi, 2011; India Development Foundation, 2005). This needs to be addressed as almost half of the women workforce is a part of the private sector and schools are a place where quality of education being provided

cannot be compromised because they form the basis of practical lives of generations to come.

5. Methodology

On the basis of literature review, a trend line of the issues was highlighted which led to the gap identification in literature. Education sector of Pakistan was considered as one of the discipline in which mostly workingwomen can be found, thus it was considered better to select education sector to collect feedback. Based on literature review and contextual analysis, it was found that within education sector, mostly females are found at school level where they suffer a lot from various societal issues. Thus it was chosen as most suitable population to address the issues of working women in Pakistan. The population comprised of the workingwomen (school teachers) especially from private schools. It was selected because majority of working women could be considered joining education sector in Asian Society especially in Pakistani society.

The study was conducted in the private education sector, the population was female school teachers. The study was held in the contrived environment, where researcher's interference was minimal, as primary data was collected. It was cross sectional study data was collected one time.

6. Sampling & Data Collection

A sample of 200 was selected from the population using convenience-sampling techniques. A research instrument was employed carefully which was designed to extract the responses in such a way that it would be unbiased and of academic standard. The study is quantitative in nature and based on primary data collected from the selected sample. The research instrument was anchored on five point Likert scale. The purpose of the instrument was to elicit primary data as feedback from the workingwomen about their issues.

The responses were to be recorded using the Five Point Likert scale as for each item's response where 5 stood for "strongly agree", 4 for "agree", 3 for "neutral" 2 for "disagree" and 1 for "strongly disagree". Once the data were collected, it was analyzed by using SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics were employed in order to check the respondents' feedback about the issues as a case in point. A percentage analysis was conducted as well.

7. Results & Discussion

7.1 Work family balance

Balancing work and family life

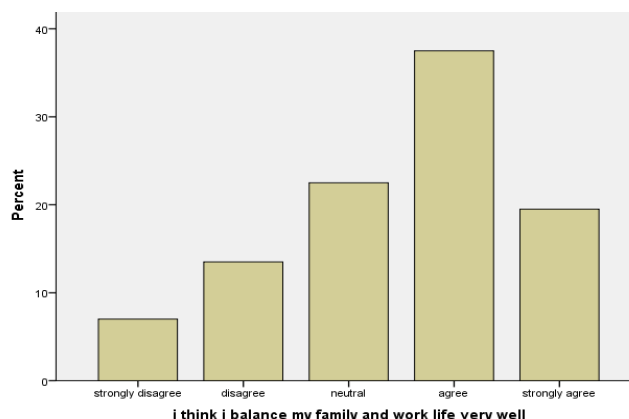
In order to elicit the response related to work life balance, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as:

"I think I balance my work and family life very well."

After obtaining responses from the working-women (teachers), the results depict that 37.5 percent of teachers agreed, 19.5 agreed strongly, 22.5 remained neutral, 13.5 disagreed and 7 percent disagreed strongly on the statement that they thought they maintained a balance between their work

and family life.

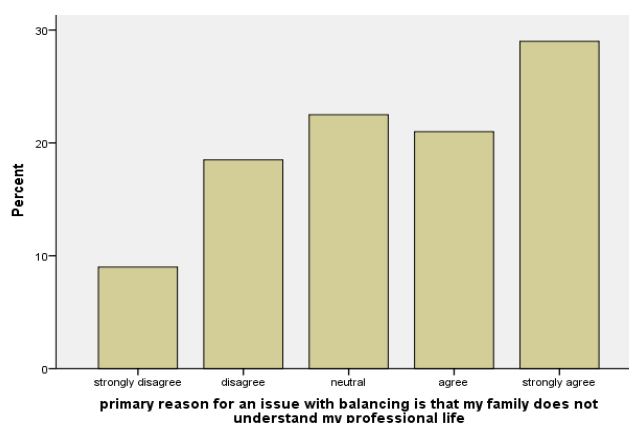
Figure 1: Balancing work and family life



Reason for Primary issue with balancing

In order to elicit the response related to work life balance, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “Primary issue with balancing is that my family does not understand my professional life.” After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 09 percent of the female teachers disagreed strongly, 18.5 percent disagreed, 22.5 percent remained neutral on this statement, 21 percent agreed and 29 percent agreed strongly.

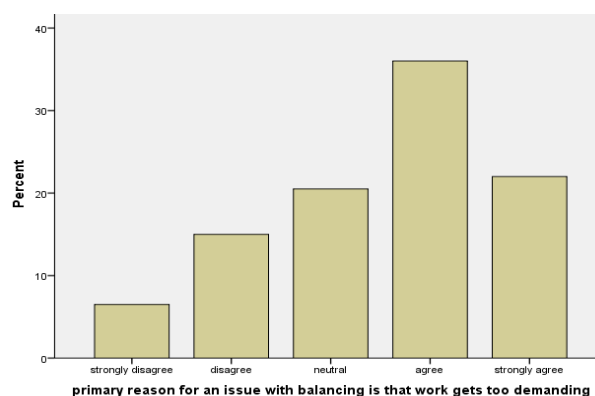
Figure 2: Reason for Primary issue with balancing



Working women and demanding work

In order to elicit the response related to work life balance, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as:

“Primary issue with balancing is that work gets too demanding” After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 36 percent of responses leaned towards agreement, 22 percent agreed strongly, 20.5 percent remained neutral, 15 percent disagreed and 6.5 percent disagreed strongly.

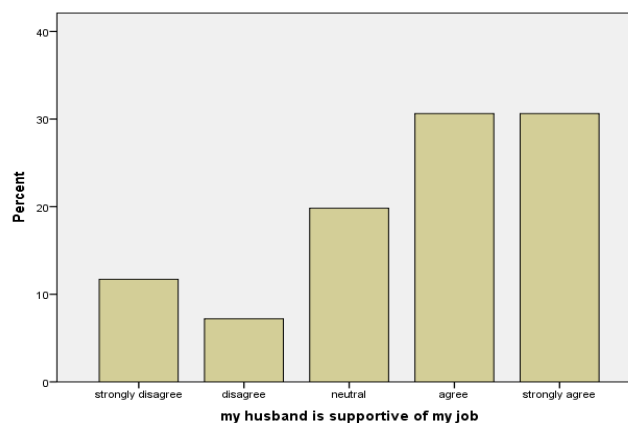
Figure 3 Working women and demanding work

The above responses express the teachers' issues with balancing their domestic and professional lives. Although many of them say that they balance their work and family pretty well, they also respond in the affirmative to a statement which holds their families and demanding work responsible for disturbing that balance. While the negative attitudes, marital satisfaction, job satisfaction etc. do affect the work-family balance (Kumar & Purushothama (2018), an answer to the contradiction could be that the statement was such that it referred to the respondents' ability to manage work and family due to the role that they are expected to play as a mother and wife in the Pakistani society. Many women do not like to fail at balancing their work and family, so they could have responded in the affirmative due to this.

7.2 Social support and working women

Husband's support

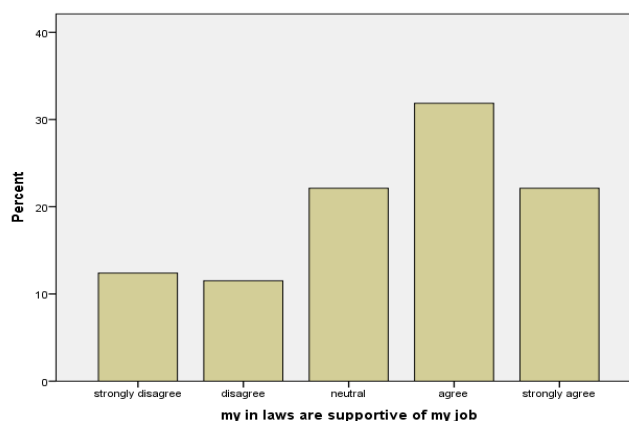
In order to elicit the response related to the husband support, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: "My husband is supportive of my job". After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that out of 111 married respondents, 17 percent of respondents agreed and the same number strongly agreed, 11 percent remained neutral, 4 percent and 13 percent disagreed and disagreed strongly respectively.

Figure 4 Husband's supportive

In laws support and working women

In order to elicit the response related to In laws support, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “My in laws are supportive of my job”. After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 22 percent of married respondents strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed, 22 percent remained neutral, 10 percent disagreed and 12.5 percent strongly disagreed.

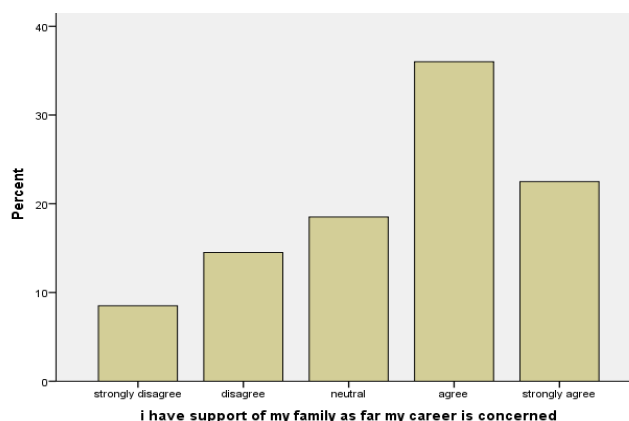
Figure 5: In laws support



Support of family and working women

In order to elicit the response related to the family support, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “I have support of my family as far as my career is concerned”. After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 22.5 percent and 36 percent strongly agreed and agreed respectively, 18.5 percent were neutral, and 14.5 percent and 8.5 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Figure. 6: Support of family and working women

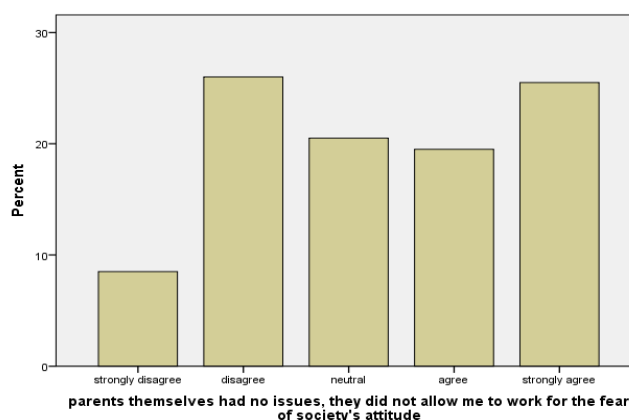


Parents and fear of society's attitudes and working women

In order to elicit the response related to parents and societal fear, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “Parents themselves had no issues but they did not allow me to work for the fear of society's attitudes.” After

obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 25.5 percent strongly agreed, 19.5 percent agreed, 20.5 percent chose to be neutral, 26 percent disagreed and 8.5 percent strongly disagreed.

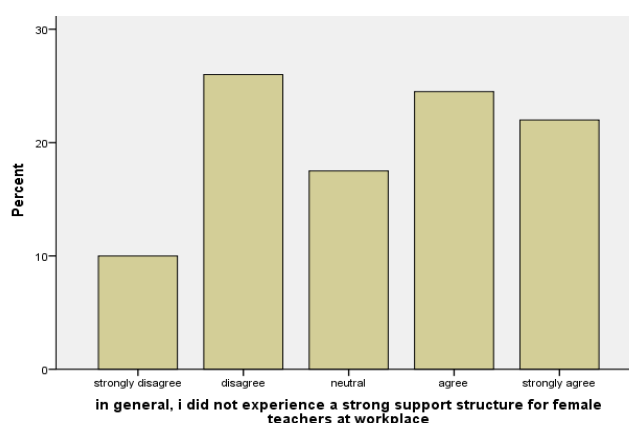
Figure.7: Parents and fear of society's attitudes and working women



Experience of support structure for females at the workplace

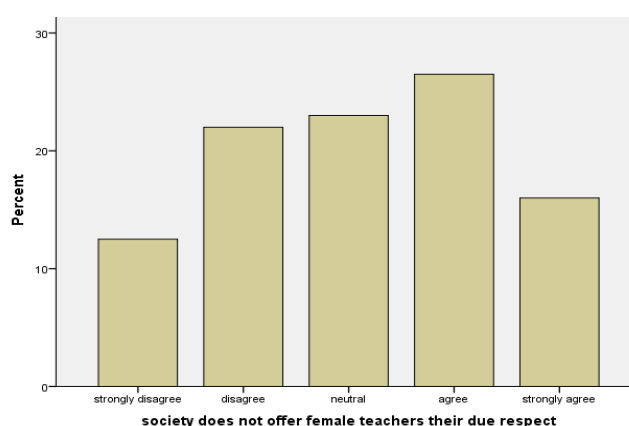
In order to elicit the response related to workplace support, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “In general, I did not experience a strong support structure for female teachers at the workplace”. After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 22 percent strongly agreed, 24.5 percent agreed, 17.5 percent were neutral, 26 percent disagreed and 10 percent strongly disagreed.

Figure. 8: Experience of support structure for females at the workplace



Societal support and respect for working women

In order to elicit the response related to the societal support and respect, a statement was given to them with some choices from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a Likert scale as: “Society does not offer female teachers their due respect”. After obtaining responses from the working women (teachers), the results depict that 16 percent of respondents agreed strongly, 26.5 percent agreed, 23 percent remained neutral, 22 percent disagreed and 12.5 percent disagreed strongly.

Figure. 9: Societal support and respect for working women

The respondents show that they have the support of their families, husbands and in-laws when it comes to their careers. And truly, most of the research on working women says the same. In urban areas a majority of the women are supported by their families to work (Amber, 2006).

Women are not encouraged to work, as the social role ascribed to them wants them to stay at home. Generally, working women face negative perceptions from the society. This statement validates that fact for female school teachers in the sample. Even when the immediate family is supportive, they discourage women to work because it is frowned upon by the society at large. A majority of women disagreed with the statement that overall, they did not experience a strong support structure for females at the workplace. An explanation of this apparent contradiction could be that teachers do not think that the extent of their problem of support at work place is great enough to warrant this statement but nevertheless, the problem of support does exist for them.

This response to the statement that “Society does not offer female teachers their due respect” is in accordance with the other like it where respondents tell that the society’s perception of female teachers does not grant them their due respect.

8. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are made:

A lot of the societal problems of female teachers are just an extension of low socio-economic status of women in the society. Problems with social support and work family balance are not new. To improve work family balance, social support needs to improve as well.

Teaching needs to shed its reputation of being a last choice for females in the society. Other professions need to be encouraged for females so that they do not feel bound to teach if they want to work. Also, the value and responsibility of a teacher’s role needs to be clarified so that it may not be taken as lightly so as to give an impression that it is an undesirable but available job. Seminars and workshops need to be arranged and the importance of teaching should be institutionalized through all the agents of socialization i.e. religion, law, media, politics, family etc. so that the society moves towards a future which appreciates the significance of teaching and does not make it a last resort for women to turn to. For doing this, the same means as mentioned above need to be utilized to inculcate the importance

and value of other professions for the women of a society. Time and other resources need to be invested in this interest.

Apart from social reforms, at the political level, policies need to be formulated. Although the private sector cannot be bound to follow governmental policies regarding government education institutions; some policies can be made to keep the system from being as unmanageable as it is today. Research regarding the standard of education, resources, statistics and problems of the private sector of education can make this policy making much easier because right now, not much of such helpful research exists. This could deal with problems surrounding working women's benefits, salary and work load.

To improve social support, we need to turn to institutionalization of respect and understanding between the two genders so as to reduce the problems they face in their practical lives regarding gender roles (Agapiou, 2002) These issues give rise to a disturbed work family balance, less social support, less self-dependence of women etc.

The society needs to decide what it expects from its men and women so that they can carry out their tasks without friction in the form of opposition from religion, the left wing groups, the international organizations etc.; all of which have their own views regarding gender roles. Seminars, workshops, curricula, media etc. are tools which can be used for the purpose of increasing social support, dialogue which encourages men and women to resolve their issues regarding one another, the need for women to work and issues with the notion of women working.

9. Conclusion

After doing the extensive literature review, in depth analysis and dimensional discussion, it is concluded that working woman in the teaching sector has been known to be overworked. Variables like work-family balance and social support take into account the fact that their mental and physical well-being is at risk due to being overworked. These responses validate the extant research. Social support is directly proportional to a healthy professional life and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, more support would mean better attitudes towards female teachers which would ultimately improve their socio-economic status as social support has also been linked to job performance, successful careers and employee-employee interactions i.e. a healthy job environment

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