

Working Women's Dual Role: A Sociological Study of Family and Workplace

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Abstract: The participation of women in the workforce has increased significantly over the past few decades. Along with their professional responsibilities, women are also expected to perform household duties and take care of children, elderly family members, and other domestic responsibilities. This dual role often creates stress, work–family conflict, time pressure, and difficulties in maintaining a healthy work–life balance. The present study examines the dual role of working women from a sociological perspective. It explores the major challenges faced by working women in balancing family and workplace responsibilities and analyses the impact of these responsibilities on their personal, social, and professional lives. The study also highlights the importance of family support, workplace cooperation, and gender-sensitive policies in reducing the burden of dual responsibilities. The paper is based on secondary data collected from books, research articles, government reports, and published literature. The findings indicate that although women have achieved remarkable progress in education and employment, traditional gender roles continue to influence their daily lives. A supportive family environment, flexible workplace policies, and equal sharing of household responsibilities can improve the quality of life of working women. The study concludes that achieving gender equality requires changes not only in workplace policies but also in social attitudes and family practices.

Keywords: Working Women, Dual Role, Family, Workplace, Work–Life Balance, Gender, Sociology.

1. Introduction: Women play a vital role in the development of every society. In recent years, their participation in education, employment, politics, business, and public life has increased considerably. Economic development, globalization, urbanization, technological advancement, and changing social values have encouraged women to become financially independent and actively participate in the labour market. Today, women contribute significantly to the economic growth of families as well as the nation.

Despite these achievements, women continue to perform their traditional responsibilities within the family. In many societies, especially in India, women are expected to manage household work, childcare, cooking, and the care of elderly family members, even when they are employed full-time. As a result, working women perform two important roles simultaneously—one as employees in the

workplace and the other as caregivers within the family. This situation is commonly known as the dual role of working women.

Managing these two roles is often difficult. Many working women experience work pressure, lack of time, physical fatigue, emotional stress, and conflicts between professional and family responsibilities. These challenges may affect their physical health, mental well-being, job satisfaction, career development, and family relationships. The situation becomes more difficult when there is limited family support, rigid workplace policies, or traditional gender expectations.

From a sociological perspective, the dual role of women is closely related to gender roles, family structure, socialization, cultural values, and the division of labour. Society often expects women to perform domestic responsibilities regardless of their employment status. Therefore, understanding the experiences of working women is essential for promoting gender equality and improving their quality of life.

Several government initiatives and organizational policies have been introduced to support working women, including maternity leave, childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and equal employment opportunities. However, many women continue to face discrimination, unequal domestic responsibilities, and work–family conflict. These issues require continuous sociological research to understand their causes and possible solutions.

The present study focuses on examining the dual role of working women in family and workplace settings. It aims to understand the major challenges experienced by working women, the impact of these challenges on their social and professional lives, and the importance of family support and workplace cooperation in maintaining work–life balance. The study also provides suggestions that may help policymakers, employers, educational institutions, and families create a more supportive environment for working women.

2. Statement of the Problem

Women have become an important part of the workforce in almost every sector of society. They are working as teachers, doctors, engineers, administrators, bankers, entrepreneurs, and professionals in both public and private organizations. Their increasing participation in employment has improved their economic independence and social status. However, employment has not reduced their traditional family responsibilities. In Indian society, women are still expected to perform household work, childcare, and the care of elderly family members, even when they are employed full-time.

As a result, working women perform two important roles simultaneously. At the workplace, they are expected to complete their professional responsibilities efficiently, while at home they are responsible for managing household activities and family care. These multiple responsibilities often create work–family conflict, time pressure, physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and mental fatigue. In many cases, women receive limited support from family members because traditional gender roles continue to assign domestic work mainly to women.

Although government policies and organizational initiatives such as maternity leave, childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and work-from-home options have improved the situation, many challenges still remain. Gender stereotypes, unequal distribution of domestic work, workplace discrimination, and social expectations continue to affect the personal and professional lives of working women. These challenges may reduce job satisfaction, career growth, physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

Several studies have examined work–life balance, gender inequality, and women’s employment. However, most studies have focused either on workplace issues or family responsibilities separately.

There is still a need for a comprehensive sociological study that examines how family expectations, workplace demands, and social values together influence the dual role of working women.

Therefore, the present study attempts to understand the dual role of working women from a sociological perspective. It focuses on identifying the major challenges faced by working women, examining the impact of dual responsibilities on their personal, social, and professional lives, and suggesting measures that can improve work–life balance and promote gender equality.

3. Review of Literature

A review of literature provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study. It helps identify what has already been studied, the major findings of previous research, and the gaps that still exist. During the last few years, research on working women in India has focused mainly on work–life balance, work–family conflict, gender inequality, organizational support, and unpaid care work. However, only a limited number of studies have examined these issues together from a sociological perspective. The following review presents important studies conducted in the Indian context after 2020.

Shah (2020) examined the work–life balance and health of working women in India. The study was conducted among employed women from different organizations in Western India to understand how they manage professional and family responsibilities. The findings revealed that most respondents were satisfied with their work and family life but still experienced moderate work–family conflict because of multiple responsibilities. The study further reported that physical fatigue, stress, and lack of personal time affected women’s overall health and well-being. It concluded that family support, organizational cooperation, and effective time management are essential for maintaining a healthy work–life balance among working women.

Chaudhuri, Arora, and Roy (2020) reviewed work–life balance policies adopted by Indian organizations and analysed their influence on employees. The review showed that Indian organizations have gradually introduced flexible working hours, maternity benefits, childcare support, and employee welfare programmes. These initiatives improved employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention. However, the authors observed that many organizations still lack effective implementation of family-friendly policies, especially for women employees. They emphasized that organizational support is one of the most important factors in reducing work–family conflict.

Janiso, Shukla, and Reddy (2021) analysed data from the Time Use Survey (2019) conducted by the Government of India to understand gender differences in unpaid household and care work. Their analysis showed that Indian women spend considerably more time on unpaid domestic work than men, irrespective of education, occupation, or income level. The study concluded that social norms and traditional gender roles continue to determine the unequal distribution of household responsibilities. The authors argued that reducing women’s unpaid care burden is necessary for improving their labour force participation and career development.

The Government of India Time Use Survey (2019) also highlighted that women devote a much larger proportion of their daily time to unpaid domestic services and caregiving than men. Even among employed women, household responsibilities remain significantly higher than those of male family members. The report clearly indicates that unpaid domestic work continues to be one of the major barriers to women’s economic participation and career advancement.

The International Labour Organization (2022) examined the global situation of care work and highlighted the Indian context as well. The report emphasized that women continue to perform a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, limiting their opportunities for paid employment, skill

development, and leadership positions. It recommended expanding childcare services, paid parental leave, and flexible work arrangements to promote gender equality and improve women's participation in the labour market.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022–23) reported an improvement in women's labour force participation in India. However, the report also suggested that many women remain concentrated in informal employment and self-employment, where job security, social protection, and work–life balance are often limited. This indicates that increased employment alone does not eliminate the challenges associated with women's dual responsibilities.

NITI Aayog (2022) observed that women's empowerment depends not only on employment opportunities but also on education, health, safety, mobility, and equal participation in decision-making. The report stressed that reducing gender inequality within families is essential for improving women's social and economic status.

The studies reviewed above clearly indicate that recent research has increasingly recognised the importance of work–life balance and organizational support. However, they also reveal that traditional gender norms continue to influence women's everyday lives, making it difficult for many working women to balance professional and family responsibilities successfully.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21) highlighted remarkable improvements in women's education, health awareness, and decision-making in India. However, the survey also indicated that many women continue to experience unequal responsibilities within the household. Although educational attainment and employment opportunities have increased, domestic work and caregiving responsibilities remain largely women's responsibility. These findings suggest that economic participation alone is not sufficient to ensure gender equality within the family.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2022–23) reported a gradual increase in female labour force participation in India. However, the report also pointed out that a large proportion of women are engaged in self-employment or informal work where social security, flexible working conditions, and career advancement opportunities are limited. This indicates that although employment opportunities have expanded, the quality of employment and work–life balance continue to remain important concerns for working women.

The Women and Men in India Report (2023) published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation presented important gender statistics related to education, employment, and labour force participation. The report showed that women have made significant progress in education and employment, but their participation in paid work continues to be affected by family responsibilities, childcare, and unpaid domestic work. The report recommended strengthening gender-sensitive employment policies and improving support systems for working women.

UN Women (2023) emphasized that women continue to perform a disproportionately higher share of unpaid care work than men. The report argued that unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities limits women's career advancement, leadership opportunities, and economic independence. It recommended greater investment in childcare services, family-friendly workplace policies, and equal sharing of domestic work to achieve gender equality.

Bhuvanendran (2024) presented a conceptual review of work–life balance among women employees. The study explained that work–life balance is influenced by organizational culture, workload, family support, flexible work arrangements, and psychological well-being. The author concluded that organizations should adopt employee-friendly policies to reduce stress and improve both productivity and quality of life among women employees.

Pareek (2024) examined work–life balance in Indian organizations and discussed the major barriers faced by women employees. The study found that long working hours, technological changes, work pressure, and traditional family expectations continue to create difficulties in balancing personal and professional life. It suggested that organizations should strengthen flexible work policies and employee assistance programmes to improve work–life balance.

Ali, Sujood, Naz, and Azhar (2025) conducted a systematic literature review using research published on Indian women and work–life balance. The study concluded that career motivation among women is closely associated with organizational support, family cooperation, leadership opportunities, and flexible workplace policies. The authors also identified several research gaps and recommended more sociological studies focusing on cultural and family factors influencing women’s careers.

Recent discussions based on government survey findings also indicate that childcare responsibilities remain one of the major reasons for lower labour force participation among urban Indian women. A large proportion of women either leave employment or do not enter the labour market because of unpaid caregiving responsibilities. These findings reinforce the need for stronger institutional support and a more equal sharing of family responsibilities.

Critical Analysis of the Reviewed Literature

The reviewed studies clearly indicate that research on working women in India has expanded considerably after 2020. Most studies focus on work–life balance, work–family conflict, organizational support, unpaid domestic work, career motivation, and gender inequality. They consistently report that women continue to bear greater responsibility for household work despite their increasing participation in paid employment.

Most of the available studies have been conducted from the perspectives of management, human resource management, psychology, or organizational behaviour. Comparatively fewer studies have analysed the issue from a sociological perspective by connecting family structure, gender norms, socialization, cultural expectations, and workplace experiences.

Another important observation is that many studies focus on specific occupations such as banking, education, healthcare, or information technology. Relatively few studies attempt to understand the broader social experiences of working women across different occupations within the Indian social and cultural context.

Summary of Literature

The literature reviewed suggests that the dual role of working women remains one of the most significant social issues in contemporary India. Although women’s educational attainment and labour force participation have improved, traditional gender norms continue to place the primary responsibility for domestic work and caregiving on women. Family support, organizational flexibility, equal sharing of household responsibilities, and gender-sensitive public policies are consistently identified as important factors for improving work–life balance.

4. Research Gap

The review of literature shows that most recent studies have focused on work–life balance, career motivation, mental health, or unpaid domestic work separately. Limited attention has been given to understanding the combined influence of family responsibilities, workplace expectations, and social values on the dual role of working women from a sociological perspective. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive sociological analysis of the challenges faced by working women and the factors affecting their work–life balance.

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the dual role of working women in family and workplace.

2. To identify the major challenges faced by working women in balancing family and professional responsibilities.
3. To analyse the impact of dual responsibilities on the personal, social, and professional lives of working women.
4. To examine the role of family support and workplace environment in maintaining work–life balance.
5. To suggest measures for improving the work–life balance of working women.

6. Research Questions

1. What are the major challenges faced by working women in balancing family and workplace responsibilities?
2. How does the dual role affect the personal, social, and professional lives of working women?
3. What role does family support play in reducing work–family conflict?
4. How does the workplace environment influence the work–life balance of working women?
5. What measures can help working women balance their family and professional responsibilities effectively?

7. Research Methodology: The present study is conceptual and descriptive in nature. It is based entirely on secondary data collected from various published and authentic sources. The purpose of the study is to understand the dual role of working women in family and workplace from a sociological perspective.

The secondary data have been collected from research articles published in peer-reviewed and UGC CARE journals, books, book chapters, government reports, reports of national and international organizations, newspapers, and other reliable academic sources. Recent studies published after 2020 have been given special attention to understand the changing social and professional conditions of working women in India.

The collected information was carefully reviewed, compared, and analysed using the descriptive and analytical method. The study examines the relationship between family responsibilities, workplace expectations, gender roles, work–life balance, and the challenges experienced by working women. It also analyses the role of family support, organizational policies, and social attitudes in reducing work–family conflict.

Since the study is based only on secondary sources, no primary survey, interview, questionnaire, or statistical analysis has been conducted. The conclusions have been drawn on the basis of available literature and published evidence.

Although the study is limited to secondary data, it provides a comprehensive sociological understanding of the dual role of working women in contemporary Indian society. The findings may be useful for researchers, teachers, policymakers, employers, and organizations working for gender equality and women's empowerment.

8. Discussion and Analysis:

8.1 Changing Role of Women in Indian Society: Indian society has witnessed significant changes in the position of women during the last few decades. Increased access to education, economic development, urbanization, globalization, and government policies have encouraged women to participate in higher education and paid employment. Today, women work in education, healthcare, administration, banking, business, information technology, and many other sectors. Their contribution has strengthened both the family economy and national development.

However, despite these positive changes, traditional social expectations have not changed at the same pace. In many Indian families, women are still considered primarily responsible for cooking,

cleaning, childcare, and caring for elderly family members. Thus, employment has increased women's responsibilities instead of reducing them. This situation has created the dual role of working women.

8.2 Dual Responsibilities of Working Women: Working women perform two equally important roles every day. They are expected to complete their professional duties efficiently while also managing household responsibilities. This double responsibility requires effective time management, emotional stability, and physical energy. Many women begin household work before leaving for their workplace and continue domestic responsibilities after returning home. As a result, they often have limited time for rest, recreation, or personal development. This continuous pressure may affect their physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

8.3 Work–Family Conflict: Work–family conflict is one of the most common problems experienced by working women. It occurs when the demands of work and family cannot be fulfilled at the same time. Long working hours, official deadlines, household responsibilities, childcare, and social obligations often create stress and role conflict. Many women experience feelings of guilt when they are unable to give sufficient time to either their family or their profession. This conflict may reduce job satisfaction, family harmony, and psychological well-being.

The problem becomes more serious when family members do not share domestic responsibilities equally. Therefore, work–family conflict is not only an individual issue but also a social issue influenced by cultural values and gender norms.

8.4 Factors Affecting Work–Life Balance: Several factors influence the work–life balance of working women. Family support is one of the most important factors. Women who receive emotional and practical support from their spouses and family members are generally able to balance their responsibilities more effectively.

The workplace environment also plays a significant role. Flexible working hours, maternity benefits, childcare facilities, supportive supervisors, and equal opportunities help women perform better in both family and professional life.

Personal factors such as time management, health, education, and financial stability also contribute to maintaining work–life balance. At the same time, social expectations and traditional gender roles continue to create additional pressure on women.

8.5 Sociological Perspective: The dual role of working women can be understood through different sociological theories. Role Theory explains that every individual performs multiple social roles. Working women perform the role of an employee, wife, mother, daughter, and caregiver simultaneously. When the expectations of these roles become difficult to manage, role conflict and role strain occur.

Feminist Theory argues that gender inequality exists because household work and caregiving responsibilities are mainly assigned to women. Although women participate equally in paid employment, they continue to perform a larger share of unpaid domestic work. Therefore, feminist scholars emphasize equal sharing of household responsibilities and equal opportunities in workplaces. From the perspective of Structural Functionalism, family and workplace are important social institutions. When responsibilities are shared equally among family members, both institutions function more effectively and contribute to social stability.

8.6 Importance of Family and Workplace Support: Family support is one of the strongest factors in reducing the burden of dual responsibilities. When husbands, parents, and other family members participate in household work and childcare, women experience lower stress and greater job satisfaction. Similarly, organizations can support working women by providing flexible working

hours, maternity leave, childcare facilities, equal career opportunities, and a safe working environment. Such measures improve employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity. Creating a supportive environment at home as well as in the workplace is essential for achieving gender equality and improving the quality of life of working women.

8.7 Overall Analysis: The analysis shows that the dual role of working women is the result of both social expectations and professional responsibilities. Although Indian women have made significant progress in education and employment, traditional gender roles continue to place a greater burden of unpaid domestic work on them.

Achieving work–life balance requires the combined efforts of families, employers, educational institutions, society, and the government. Equal sharing of household responsibilities, supportive workplace policies, and positive social attitudes are necessary to reduce work–family conflict and promote women’s overall well-being.

9. Findings of the Study: On the basis of the review of literature and sociological analysis, the following major findings have been drawn:

Women’s participation in education and employment has increased significantly in India during the last few decades.

Despite their professional achievements, working women continue to perform the majority of household and caregiving responsibilities.

The dual role of working women creates work–family conflict, time pressure, physical fatigue, and psychological stress.

Traditional gender roles remain one of the major reasons for the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities in Indian families.

Family support, especially from spouses and other family members, plays a significant role in reducing the burden of dual responsibilities.

Supportive workplace policies such as flexible working hours, maternity leave, childcare facilities, and equal career opportunities improve work–life balance.

Lack of organizational support and gender discrimination negatively affect women’s career development and job satisfaction.

Work–life balance contributes to better physical health, mental well-being, family relationships, and professional performance.

Gender equality cannot be achieved only through employment opportunities; equal participation in household responsibilities is equally important.

The dual role of working women is not only an individual issue but also a social issue that requires collective efforts from families, employers, society, and the government.

10. Suggestions: Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

Family members should equally share household and childcare responsibilities.

Employers should introduce flexible working hours and work-from-home facilities wherever possible.

Organizations should provide childcare centres, maternity benefits, and counselling services for working women.

Equal opportunities for promotion, leadership, and professional development should be ensured without gender discrimination.

Government policies should strengthen programmes that promote women’s employment and work–life balance.

Educational institutions should organize awareness programmes on gender equality and shared family responsibilities.

Society should encourage positive attitudes towards working women and challenge traditional gender stereotypes.

Mental health support, stress management programmes, and employee wellness initiatives should be promoted in workplaces.

Future policies should focus on reducing unpaid care work through community support services and family-friendly programmes.

Further sociological research should be conducted on rural women, women in the informal sector, and women working in different occupational groups.

11. Conclusion: Women have become an important part of the social and economic development of modern India. Their contribution to education, employment, administration, healthcare, business, and many other sectors has strengthened both the family and society. However, despite these achievements, working women continue to experience the burden of dual responsibilities. They are expected to perform professional duties efficiently while simultaneously managing household work, childcare, and family care.

The study shows that the dual role of working women is influenced by social norms, traditional gender roles, family expectations, and workplace demands. Although women have gained greater access to education and employment, unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities remains one of the major challenges affecting their work–life balance.

Family support, organizational commitment, and government initiatives can significantly reduce work–family conflict. Flexible workplace policies, equal sharing of domestic work, childcare facilities, and gender-sensitive organizational practices can improve the quality of life of working women.

From a sociological perspective, achieving gender equality requires changes not only in laws and workplace policies but also in social attitudes, cultural values, and family relationships. Equal participation of men and women in both paid and unpaid work is essential for creating a more just, inclusive, and balanced society.

In conclusion, the dual role of working women should be viewed not as a personal burden but as a social responsibility. Strengthening family support systems, promoting gender equality, and creating inclusive workplaces will help working women achieve both professional success and family well-being. The findings of this study may contribute to future research, policy formulation, and social awareness regarding the changing role of women in contemporary Indian society.

12. Limitations of the Study: The present study is based entirely on secondary data collected from books, journal articles, government reports, and other published sources. Therefore, the findings depend on the availability and quality of existing literature.

The study focuses mainly on the Indian context and does not include primary data collected through surveys or interviews. As a conceptual study, it provides a broad sociological understanding of the dual role of working women but does not examine the experiences of a specific occupational group or geographical area.

13. Scope for Future Research: Future studies may be conducted using primary data to understand the experiences of working women in different professions such as teaching, healthcare, banking, information technology, and public administration.

Comparative studies between rural and urban women, public and private sector employees, or married and unmarried working women may provide deeper sociological insights.

Future researchers may also examine the impact of digital technology, remote working, artificial intelligence, and changing family structures on the work–life balance of working women in India.

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