

Chapter – 5

**Findings, Suggestions and
Conclusion**

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In a patriarchal society where men are regarded as bread winners and women as homemakers, the stereotypical notion that employment of a woman makes a little or no difference in her roles and responsibilities at home. Their employment is considered as secondary to her stereotypical role as a mother, wife and homemaker. Women often suffer discrimination in all spheres of life at home and at workplace. Inspite of the oppression, discrimination and gendered roles, women have achieved the status of employee.

Even though women work outside the home, they remain responsible for the major share of the household work and the child care in patriarchal society. The employed woman has to play multiple roles at home as well as at the work place. Though the employed women enjoy the status of being economically independent and decision making power at home, she encounters many problems in fulfilling the various demands at the workplace and at home.

The present research study tried to understand the empowerment of women teachers, identified various problems that they encounter at the workplace and at home which deters her empowerment and also tried to analyse the capacity of women teachers to empower and to sensitize others.

The researcher has adopted simple random sampling method for the selection of the sample. The data was collected using interview schedules. The sample consisted of women teachers who are working in the various government schools in Puducherry. Feminist research methodology was administered for the purpose of the study. Feminist research employs a variety of methods including both qualitative and quantitative methods. It has also developed a tradition for in depth qualitative studies dealing with women. Feminist research takes women's situations, concerns, experiences and perspectives as the basis for research. It embodies women's experiences in the social world from their own interpretation and using their language because women's experiences are made invisible, and are spoken about in male centric point of view.

Interviewing has become an important element in feminist qualitative methods for its ability to record women's thoughts, beliefs and values. In Women's Studies the research is an empowering process. Feminist research studies the social conditions of women in a sexist male stream and patriarchal society and enlightens people about taken for granted sexist practices and the gender blindness of Government and community practices that displaced, ignored and silenced women and led to an unequal discriminating social order and held them captive.

The present study was based on the indicators like education, reason for the choice of teaching as a career, problems they encounter at the workplace and at home, health problems, mode of transport, decision making power at home and at workplace in various aspects, support structures at home related to domestic work, the responsibility of women teachers as mothers in child care, number of hours spent on household work, number of hours spent on school related work at home, and gender sensitivity of women teachers. The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

Education

Education is one of the factors which provide the individuals with necessary qualification to enter into the employment and to fulfil their career goals. Moreover education fosters a sense of independence, empowerment and liberates them from subjugation and exploitation.

In the present study, majority of the women teachers which constitute 90 percentage are post graduates, 6.6 percentage of the teachers are undergraduates and 3 percentage are holding Doctorate degree. The education of the women teachers reveal that they are well qualified to work as secondary school teachers.

The findings related to the qualification of the spouse had revealed that 44.4 percentage are graduates, 34.4 percentage are post graduates and 21.2 percentage possess doctorate degree. It shows that the spouses of the women teacher are educated and interestingly 50 percentage of the spouses of the women teachers are also in the teaching profession.

Salary

Regarding the salary of the women teachers, 28.47 are earning below 30,000 per month, whereas majority of women teachers that constitute 71.52 percentage are earning above 30,000 per month. Women teachers are economically empowered and they share the burden of economic needs of the household.

Choice of the career

The definition of women's empowerment states that women should have a sense of self –worth, right to determine choices and right to access to opportunities. 57.6 percentage teachers have chosen teaching because of personal enthusiasm, 39.1 percentage have chosen because they perceived that teaching profession is suitable for women because of the stereotypical view that they can balance the two roles both as a homemaker and

Administrative Position

Women teachers at times suffer with lack of encouragement at the work place. They are often marginalized, their work was devalued, and they are discriminated in terms of assignment of tasks, conferring the privileges of promotion and opportunities for progression.

Among the women teachers, 43.7 percentage are enjoying Administrative position and additional responsibilities which is a good indicator of empowerment. It is an indication that women teachers have overcome the gender discrimination, glass ceiling and gendered division of labour at home and made their way to climb the ladder in their career.

Majority of women teachers that constitute 54.6 percentage are involved in the policy making related to the school administration and they were involved in decision making relating to various aspects for the improvement of the learning process in schools. It is an indication of women teachers' empowerment and it is also a good indicator for the professional growth of the individual teacher, encouragement for the girl students and development of the school as well as for the overall development of the country.

Economic independence

Regarding the empowerment in terms of economic independence, the findings have shown that 82.5 percentage of women teachers spend their salary on their clothing, 73.8 percentage of women spend their salary to buy cosmetics for them, 61.3 percentage of the respondents spend their salary on children's education, 80.5 percentage of the respondents spend their salary for the repayment of the various loans, 63.2 percentage spend a portion of their salary on savings.

Decision Making

Economic independence and financial contribution to the family enhances the decision making power of an individual, the present study found that the women teachers were involved in decisions but the large percentage responded that the decisions were taken jointly.

Majority of the women teachers which constitute 56.6 percentage have responded that the decision regarding the number of children was taken jointly by both husband and wife.

Shelter is an important component because it is one of the basic needs. As the working women are also the economic contributors to the family, the earning capacity empowers the women and provides them decision making power. Another reason is that as they are educated, they have the knowledge, confidence and networking and it enables the working women to take the decisions in major investments. 73.5 percentage respondents have revealed that the decisions were taken jointly to buy a house and also to buy a vehicle.

Education of the children is an important factor; hence it is found that 76.5 percentage take the decision jointly regarding children's education, whereas 23.5 have revealed that they take the decisions on their own.

Regarding the purchase of various articles, it was found that 41.1 percentage have responded that the decisions were taken by the respondents independently. 73.5 percentage have responded that the decisions were taken jointly regarding the purchase of clothing for the family members, and 39.1 percentage have responded that the decisions to buy kitchen utensils were taken jointly.

Freedom of mobility

Majority of women teachers i.e., 54.6 percentage of women teachers have their own vehicle and they go to school on their own. It is an indicator that they are empowered with the own vehicle and they have freedom of mobility.

Women teachers are empowered and they enjoy the freedom of mobility as it was found that 66.2 percentage visit places of worship apart from workplace, 11.3 percentage revealed that they go to movies for relaxation and for fun accompanied by the friends and 22.5 percentage revealed that they have the freedom to go for shopping.

Distance from home to school

The daily distance travelled by the women teachers from the house to the work place is an important contributing factor of fatigue. So the researcher tried to find the distance between the house and the school, mode of transport and the problems associated with the travelling of women teachers from home to the school. The study revealed that majority of the respondents i.e., 41.4 percentage had felt that the consumption of time as the factor that is causing a major problem. 38.7 percentage responded that they face the problem of harassment, whereas 19.9 percentage responded that they experience physical problems related to health like tiredness, pain in the legs and headache as they have to travel long distance. 39.8 percentage of teachers have revealed that they have to travel a distance of more than 10kms daily to reach the school.

Transfer

Empowerment depends on the right to have access to opportunities and resources. Majority of the women teachers i.e., 73.5 percentage have responded that they have accepted to go on transfer and they have expressed their willingness to work anywhere in

case if they are transferred. On the other hand 26.5 percentage of the respondents have responded that they have refused to go on transfer. There are various reasons to refuse the transfer which include distant place, spouse not willing, unable to leave the family as they have younger children who are dependent on them, aged parents, in-laws and very few have expressed that they have health problems which hindered them to accept transfer. Women are generally seen as care providers and responsible for family commitments.

Workload

Women teachers are often prone to the risk of stress because of dual responsibilities at home and at work place. They are frequently under pressure from work load. This pressure will have a negative consequence on the health of the women teachers. It is found that 55.3 percentage have responded that workload is affecting their health. From this we can infer that “women who experience stress from work overload have been correlated with negative consequences including health risk, reduced life satisfaction and lower mental health”.¹⁸¹

Majority of the teachers are suffering with the workload as 67.6 percentage spend 31 to 40 hours per week on teaching, 48 percentage of the women teachers spend 1-2 hours on counselling, 44 percentage spend around 3-4 hours and 7.9 percentage spend around 5-6 hours in a week. It is a major problem as it requires skill to deal with the students, mental ability and also patience to make them understand and convince.

Women, who are working as teachers, take the school work to their home even after the school. It was found that 80.8 percent of women teachers spend an hour in a day, after their school hours at home to prepare for the class, where as 19.2 percentage of women teachers spend up to 2 hours for the class preparation.

¹⁸¹ Duxbury and Higgins, “Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76.1991: 60-74.

Majority of the women teachers which constitute 93.4 percentage spend around 1 hour in correction work, either note books or exam papers, whereas 6.6 percentage spend around 3 hours in correction work. Majority of women teachers (93.4%) sleep for only 6 hours in a day, which clearly indicates that women teachers are double burdened.

Barriers

Many studies have concluded that there are certain barriers that keep women out of school administration. These barriers include gender stereotyping, discrimination, biased hiring practices, the political nature of the job and socialisation (Riehl & Byrd, (1997)¹⁸²; Dotzler, (1996)¹⁸³; Gupton, (1996)¹⁸⁴; Mahoney, (1993)¹⁸⁵; Shakeshaft, (1989)¹⁸⁶.

Bamji (2005)¹⁸⁷ also found that gender disparity at all levels and its adverse impact on women has become a face of life. This is partly due to biological role and responsibilities of women as mothers but mostly due to traditional mind set, which visualize women as a child bearer and home maker and men as bread winners. In the study it was found that 28.8 percentage of the teachers are discriminated on the basis of gender. The gender division of labour continues to reward women less in the workplace (Kingdom, 1998b).

From the study it was found that 31.1 percentage experienced comments at the workplace from the opposite gender, 29.1 percentage experienced verbal and non-verbal conduct of sexual nature, 21.9 percentage experienced staring, 6.6 percentage experienced stalking and 11.3 percentage have responded that they did not experience any form of violence.

¹⁸² Riehl, C. & Byrd, M. A, Gender Differences Among new Recruits toSchool Administration: cautionary Footnotes to an OptimisticTale. Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 19 (1),1997 45- 64.

¹⁸³ Dotzler, D, Increasing visibility: Women in School Leadership. The A.TA. Magazine, Summer, 1997:14-17.

¹⁸⁴ Gupton, S. 1. & Appelt-Slick, G, (1996). Highly Successful Women Administrators: The Inside Stories of how they got there (Corwin Press, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996).

¹⁸⁵ Mahoney, V, Breaking through: Women in educational administration. Prism. (Fall),1993: 1-12.

¹⁸⁶ Shakeshaft, C, Women in Educational Administration (California: Sage Publications,1989).

¹⁸⁷ Bamji, M. S, INSA Examines Indian women's Access to and Retention in Science. Current Science 88. 9(2005) 1361 - 1363, May 10.

From the results on the opportunity given to women teachers for the various training programs it was found that only 39.7 percentage of teachers had responded that they got the chance to attend the training program but majority of the teachers constituting 60.3 percentage were of the opinion that there operates gender discrimination and marginalization.

Household Work

“The employment of women has increased the responsibilities outside the home but the division of labour at home has not occurred. Women’s role in the home is described as “second shift” by Hochschild”¹⁸⁸. She found that women in dual-income homes carried the bulk of child care responsibilities and house hold work. The present study revealed that 30.1 percentage of women teachers does the shopping for home, whereas in the case of remaining 69.9 percentage, the daily shopping is done by their spouses.

From the study it was found that 73.5 percentage of the women teachers spend around 1-2 hours in completing the household tasks and 26.5 percentage spend around 3-4 hours. Regarding the household work it was found that 78.8 percentage of the women teachers take the responsibility of cooking, 47.7 percentage of the women teachers clean utensils as well as wash the clothes, 41.1 percentage does the mopping work.

The women teachers still perform child related work like giving bath, feeding, study hours and putting babies to sleep. It is found that most of the child care is done by the women teachers themselves, sometimes with the support from their spouses. It is found that 45.7 percentage of the women teachers take the responsibility of giving bath to the child by themselves, 45.7 percentage take the responsibility of feeding the child by themselves, 28.8 percentage of the women teachers pick and drop the children by themselves, 41.1 percentage have responded that teachers themselves take the responsibility to engage the child in play, 24.5 percentage of the respondents spend 1-2

¹⁸⁸ Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (Avon Books, New York: 1990).

hours in helping children to study and in doing their homework whereas 75.5 percentage have responded that they spend more than 2 hours in children's education.

From gender equality perspective, empowering women as teachers is critical to ensure that the experience of being a teacher is a positive one for them, and that their work has a sustained impact on gender relations in the community and in society, at large.

The recruitment of women teachers is an issue that has become increasingly important to Ministries of Education and other agencies supporting educational development, because of the impact that women teachers can have on girls' enrolment. In some conservative communities, parents will not allow their daughters to be taught by a male teacher. The presence of women teachers in schools can also impact positively on girls' retention in school and on their achievement. Studies have shown a positive impact from women teachers on girls' (and boys') achievement. A female role model can support and encourage girls to successfully complete their studies. A woman teacher can also be a good listener to the problems and provide guidance when necessary.

Women teachers play a key role in educating and socializing children beyond gender stereotypes, and act as crucial agents of change. It is not correct to make assumptions that women are necessarily always supportive of girls in schools or will make the school environment because women teachers are not necessarily very aware of gender equality concepts, and are often subject to the same gender assumptions and discrimination. Frequently, this makes it very difficult for them to acknowledge and act on gender inequalities affecting girl students and other women teachers.

Teacher's response to girl students problems

Women teachers have their own personal concerns and priorities, and hence we assume that they may not have the time or inclination to provide any additional time or energy to give to girl students. But the present study had found that 71 percentage of the teachers talk to the girl students in private, 79.8 percentage had revealed that they counsel the girls on various aspects which include non-academic related also. It was also found that 90 percentage of the girl students report their problems to the teachers.

At the school policy level, women teachers may act as advocates for girls, representing their perspectives and needs, and promoting more girl-friendly learning. Hence it is found from the present study that 83.1 percentage of the women teachers responded that they report to the authorities in the case of sexual harassment.

Encouragement to girl students

Girls education is dependent on various factors like the working hours of the school, distance of the school from home, domestic workloads, and quality of education in a safe and secure environment, hence 80.1 percentage of the women teachers were of the opinion that girls need encouragement to continue education. Women teachers promote girls' education, because the presence of women teachers ensures the continuity of girls education in schools.

Scholarship to girl students

Schools and teachers at all levels have a key role to play in developing a gender-sensitive future generation. Gender stereotypes exist in all human societies and in all human endeavours, professions, careers and institutions. It exists in home, school, and workplace. 100 percentage of the respondents were of the opinion that girl students need special scholarship to continue their education.

Self-defence training program to girl students

Self- defence training program for girls play an important role to help girls to fight protect themselves from various forms of violence occurring in the society. From the study it is found that 17.5 percentage schools organise self- defence training program for girls once in a year for a period of 15-20 days whereas in the case of 82.5 percentage have reported that their schools do not have any such training program.

Gender differences in the curriculum

Subrahmanian (2002)¹⁸⁹ found that teachers and curriculum in general reinforce social bias and discriminatory practices against women through the content and methods

¹⁸⁹ Subrahmanian, R, Gender and Education; A Review of Issues for Social Policy. Social Policy and Development Programme Paper Number 9, United Nations Research Institute for Social

of teaching employed in schools. 61.3 percentage of the women teachers have revealed that there are gender differences in the curricula, whereas 38.7 percentage have responded that they do not find any such differences.

Gender sensitization training program in teacher training

“Teachers and educators influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal.”¹⁹⁰ Hence women teachers should be aware of gender disparities; it was found that 50 percent of the women teachers have studied about gender-sensitization in their teacher training program whereas 50 percent have responded that they did not study about gender-sensitization.

Opportunity given to girl students

Educational system needs to be gender sensitive and gender friendly. This should be reflected in the opportunities given to boys and girls in sports, games and other activities. From the study it was found that 83.1 percentage of the respondents revealed that their school provides equal opportunity for both boys and girls to participate in inter school competition.

Girl student as leader

Most of the stereotypes often described boys as intellectually, competent, strong and brave, while girls as homely, warm and expressiveness, incompetent and passive. They portray the man as the strong, dominant person with leadership trait, while the woman is usually portrayed as being subordinate and confined to the home. In the study it was found that 65.6 percent of the schools have girl students as the leader along with the boy student.

Performance of boys and girls in various activities

Development, 2002.

¹⁹⁰ Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education For All 2005 UNESCO retrieved on October 15, 2009.

Martin and Halverson (1981) Gender stereotype is one type of “subjective perception of what a man or woman should be or how people should behave.”¹⁹¹ Most of these stereotypes often described men as intellectually, competent, strong and brave, while women areas homely, warm and expressiveness, incompetent and passive. The study found that 41.3 percent have responded that boys perform better than girls in exams conducted in the class, 43.1 percent have responded that girls perform better than boys, 15.56 have responded that both boys and girls perform equally good.

The study revealed that 34.4 percent have responded that girls perform better than boys in classroom activities, 33.1 percent have responded that boys perform better than girls and 32.5 percent have responded that both perform equally good.

The results of the study show that 47.7 percent have responded that boys perform better than girls, 32.5 percent have responded that both boys and girls perform equally good in extracurricular activities and 19.9 percent have responded that girls perform better than boys.

The results conclude that girls dominate boys in class room activities and fare good marks in the examinations. The opinion of the teachers that boys perform better than girls in extra-curricular activities reinforce the stereotypical view that girls are weak and are not good at strenuous activities.

Suggestions

The career choices of women have limitations because of patriarchy, stereotypical views, family's restrictions and expectations. Women are encouraged to work as teachers by the family members, hence even though 90 percent of the teachers are postgraduates they preferred to work as teachers. There should be a change in the stereotypical view and women should be encouraged into various professions.

Women teachers are suffering with the workload. The workload of the women teachers can be reduced by appointing more number of teachers in the school.

¹⁹¹ Martin, C. L., & Halverson, C. F, “A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children,” *Child Development*, 52 (1981): 1119-1134.

The government should take initiation to provide day care centres for the school teachers as child care is the major problem for most of the women teachers and which hinders their career advancement.

Only half the percentage of women teachers is equipped with the training on gender sensitization, hence it is suggested that the teacher training program should include gender sensitization as one of the subject. This may help in attaining gender equality.

Self-defence training program should be made as part of the curriculum of school students along with games and sports to build the confidence of the girl students and to ensure security.

Gender differences in the curriculum should be removed completely to promote gender equality. It will also help to exterminate gendered division of labour and stereotypes.

Girls should be given special scholarship at all levels to promote higher education. Because from the study it is found that both boys and girls are intellectually equal but most of the girls were unable to continue further studies.

“The share of women teachers is lower at the post-primary levels of education. Similarly in the majority of south Asia countries including India, women’s share was less than half.”¹⁹² Hence, Separate quota should be provided for women teachers in schools especially in rural areas to promote girl child education.

Women teachers should be given equal opportunity to participate in in-service training program which ensures career advancement.

Strict Legal measures should be made to compete against gender discrimination and promote gender equality.

Women should be treated as equals in the society and considered in the decision making process in public spheres to attain gender sensitive society.

¹⁹² UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html>.

Conclusion

The present study on “The Woman Professional: Problems and Prospects-With specific Reference to Teachers in the Puducherry Region,” is carried out with the objective to understand the empowerment of women teachers, their problems and prospects and the gender sensitivity of women teachers.

The sample consisted of women teachers who are working in the Government higher and secondary schools. The size of the sample was 302. Feminist research methodology was applied which enabled the researcher to give a deeper understanding and insights to the given problem.

Education and changes in the family system has lead women to seek employment. Employment enables them to supplement their family income, to fulfil their career goals, to maintain standard of living, and also to have social mobility. It also enables them to make a choice of their career. Majority of women chose the teaching profession because of personal enthusiasm and also because of the stereotypical view that it is suitable for women.

The employment of women has made them economically independent, and also raised their status to the level of decision makers. The women teachers play an important role in taking decisions regarding children education, in buying a house, in buying a vehicle, in buying house hold articles. Women are encouraged into the teaching profession by the family members.

Educationally advantaged and socially aware women know their choice of career, and strive to fulfil their career aspirations so as to enable a ‘professional life’. The Constitution of India provides legal rights for women, in terms of equality, protection and empowerment. But very often women are devalued, marginalized and discriminated at the work place. Working women encounter a number of problems at the work place. They are often marginalized and discriminated at multiple levels which include unequal pay, conferring promotions and career progression. When the potential of women is not limited by gender bias at home, in their communities, and in their workplaces, the

socioeconomic benefits can be far-reaching and can even magnify the development impact and gender equality beyond the economic gains.

The empowerment and autonomy of women teachers in the political, social, economic and health status is highly essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work.

Gender based violence is a critical problem that women encounter at home and at workplace. Sexual harassment is the major concern of multitudes of women working all over the world. Taking note of the increased reporting of crimes against women from all over India, the National Commission for Women, identified the issue as a moral, social, ethical decline in the society. It was also realized that an inter-sectoral, cross sectional, multi-dimensional intervention at all levels of education system as well as societal awakening is the need of the hour.

Women teachers are empowered and still give importance to mothering and hence, majority of the women take the responsibility related to the childcare like feeding, giving bath, putting them to sleep and in study hours. From the study we can conclude that there is no change in the women's traditional roles like cooking, household work, childcare and children's education. They get support from the family members but they are the core performers of these duties. Because of multiple roles they get exhausted at the work place resulting in health problems. Working mothers not only need support from the family members but they also need encouragement from the family and also at the work place.

Day care centres play an important role in helping the women teachers in child care. In the absence of these care centres women teachers seek help from family members like parents and in-laws and sometimes from paid helpers.

Therefore the women teachers continued to play a pivotal role in the family, child care and their education, decisions regarding purchase of various things that are directly useful for the family. They enjoy the decision making power linked with economic independence which enables the women teachers to perform dual roles at home and at the workplace.

The presence of women teachers in schools promotes girls' participation and their continuity in education. At the school policy level, women teachers act as advocates for girls, representing their perspectives and needs, and promoting more girl-friendly learning. In terms of menstruation, puberty, sex and reproductive health education, women teachers have an important role to play in providing girls in school with accurate information about their own bodies and how to look after them. The presence of women teachers in the school along with the men teachers promotes gender equality.

The study concludes that women teachers act as change agents in the society to promote gender equality, to empower women and girls and to achieve a gender sensitive society.