

# Body Image, Mental Health and Quality of Life of Married Working Women in India

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**Abstract:** *With major changes in our society like globalization, modernization, industrialization, and many others, the role of women in our society has also changed because of better education, mindset and morals. The status of women in our society has become of much more importance than the medieval or the independence period. Therefore the ever-increasing duties that a women has today are not only concerned with usual tasks of a housewife but further of a working women too and with all this burden of heavy work on their head one major thing that they still suffer and which has been the same all these years is the fixed attitude of the society which demands that a women has to take care of the family needs in all situations despite of the fact that she also have a professional work life. A married working women in our country goes through a lot of stress because of the never ending struggle of balancing work life and personal life. Therefore, within this paper I will analyze how this dual responsibility on married working women adversely effects them and creates so much stress that it tends to effect the body image, mental health as well as quality of life of these women.*

**Keywords:** *Body Image, Mental Health, Quality of Life, Working Women, Work-Life Balance*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian women today have great opportunities specially with their empowered status they are provided with appropriate education, best job opportunities and lots of responsibilities to perform and when a girl in India gets married this responsibility doubles up which also include the duties that are associated with being a good home maker, to take care of the whole family and to ensure that there is a proper work and life balance because there are certain mindsets as well as norms associated with the status of women in our country that can never change and so this is the key reason why females/women despite of being in a 9 to 5 or a 12 hour job are expected to perform the marital duties too so as to make their in-laws as well as spouse happy.

In India, over the past few centuries, the status of women has been changed a lot. In India, the history of women has been consequential. In modern India, women have reached several high offices, such as in Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha and also served as Leader of several political parties. However, in general women are still exposed to numerous social issues. Thomson Reuters conducted a global study in which he concluded that India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women.

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Working mothers have been proved to be beneficial for a child's overall development, especially cognitive development. Working women does dual role in office and home. She plays a major role in development of children and contribute an important part in the betterment of the family. Children become smarter and active in comparison to those having non-working mothers. They become independent and more responsible. Working women can also provide financial help to their families and also help in raising their living standards. Thus to lead a comfortable life and to attain self satisfaction, women are working real hard. Continuous support from their families and friends will help them in gaining the balance between their personal and professional responsibilities.

There is no doubt about the fact that women are very strong and that they can pull off a lot of work burden be it related to their personal or professional life but at times these working married women in the rush of handling everything forget to take care of themselves and this leads to high levels of stress that can further lead to severe health problems in them. As per a recent research health problems in women are mainly attributed to conflict in duties that they perform at home as well as at workspace. According to WHO health is defined as a state of 'complete physical, mental and social well-being, therefore 3 main factors related to a women health which are effected by her aforementioned expanded role are Body Image, Mental Health and Overall Quality of Life.

### Impact of Dual Role on Body Image:

"Idealized images of beautiful women are a major factor affecting young women's personal ideas and body image; other influential factors include peers and family and the perceived preference of the opposite sex" (Casanova, 2004).

According to Naomi Wolf, "beauty is a currency system like the gold standard...in assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relation"

According to a research conducted in Delhi in 2014 it was found that 33 percent of working married women have high levels of physical stress and suffer from neglected body image mainly because they don't get time to pay attention towards themselves and this causes their body image and physical health to deteriorate. Findings of another research, married Indian women ranging from 24 to 30 -, stress related to weight and body image are higher as they hardly are able to take out enough time to treat themselves with a proper fitness routine (K. Healy, 2010) .



In the case of married women, their husbands play an important role in helping them not to pay attention at body they are having. Those women who are working in cinema and television industry are constantly judged by the public for their looks and body. Vidhya Balan has won several hearts for turning down the media person who tried to body shame her during the promotion of her film "Tumhari Sulu". Also she is not the only celebrities who was body shamed and fend off the attackers.

"The portrayal of women in Indian Cinema, in Hindi Cinema is definitely changing and I have been fortunate to have been part of a lot of films that have contributed to that change. So people see me as a face of that change, and yes, that is because of the choices I've made, but there are lots of people who are working towards effecting this change"  
VIDHYA BALAN (Bollywood Actress)

### Impact of Dual Role on Mental Health:

Mental health can be defined as an ability to make suitable social and emotional adjustments to the environment. Balancing life between family and work place is more stressful for working women as they have to merge their lives in order to fulfill their responsibilities which further leads to stress and affects mental health. Rastogi and Kashyap (2001) reported that significant negative relationship existed between occupational stress and mental health among married women employed in teaching, nursing and clerical jobs.

Mental health is significant factor and shall be present within an individual as it affects various aspects of a person's life mainly:

1. Behaviors,
2. Actions,
3. Happiness and
4. Physical well-being.

Amongst married working women, the amount of mental pressure that they go through each day of their life is high because of their dual duties, which is the main reason behind a depleting mental health level. In a woman's life a fairly good mental health leads to better work as well as personal life but that is rare because the whole process of navigating through personal and professional life is absolutely difficult considering today's family expectation and corporate responsibilities are both very high and this leads to high levels of mental stress and subsequently mental illness which is harmful as being mentally weak means going into depression, developing anxiety and losing out on the connection that a woman usually will have with her family.

If a woman is mentally strong then she can perform all the tasks whether household or at their work place. In other words it is the ability to face and accept the realities of life. Stress and family responsibilities always have a negative relationship with mental health amongst Indian married and employed women irrespective of them being in teaching, medical, nursing or clerical jobs.

Status of a woman has been continuously changing due to multiple aspects such as media influence, increased level of education, urbanization etc. In order to contribute financially to their families, most of the women prefer to be engaged in some kind of employment. But attitude towards married women has remained same and they are considered

as the care taker of their families and children which in turn increases their stress level and leads to several psychological problems which gradually affects their mental status.

A survey recently conducted in various cities of India revealed that the major sources that cause mental stress in working women are long working hours, lack of support from family and friends, as well as heavy workload ("Patriarchal Society contribution to mental health issues in Indian women", 2017).

### Quality of Life and Work-Life Balance:

Quality of life for a woman means to have a proper work life balance and achieving this balance is indeed the most difficult thing for a woman in the present scenario. Therefore, imbalance in the work and family of a woman can affect the quality of life and cause high levels of stress, mental illness and ultimately reduce her efficiency at work and happiness at home (Bhola & Nigade, 2015). From various researches it has been proved that a woman can gain highest level of quality of life only by maintaining a substantial amount of balance between work and life and the very need of the hour, in order to maintain such balance are the Work-Life Balance Programs (WLBP) developed specially for working married women and so these programs can substantially help a woman in optimally allocating time to work and allowing her to do more work in less time and dedicate more time to family too. Henceforth an employer shall design such programs specially for women employees since they have more than just professional work load and so a little help from both the family, as well as the employer can help a woman gain a perfect life balance which she always wanted to have (Bhola & Nigade, 2015).

## II. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above study, it's quite clear that a married working woman in India tends to face a lot of challenges in her life and this affects her mental health, deteriorates body image and reduces her quality of life. I truly believe that today's working women definitely have a higher status in the society and are empowered to achieve greatest heights but sometimes too much responsibilities can be stressful and so all a woman required is to achieve these heights, support from her family and some adjustment from their part so that she is not overburdened with excessive work or family expectations (Reddy, Vranda, Ahmed, Nirmala & Siddaramu, 2010).

From last two decades, women's participation has been increased in several activities outside their homes which lead to the increase in the number of multiple role women. Generally leading the dual career role, women face the dilemma of work family conflict and thus put down her own interest over the family happiness.

Companies should adapt Work-Life balance policies which help in the improvement of employee morale and job satisfaction.



Awareness about the stressors and the stress busters among the working women, their families, their organizations and community will make the world a better place to live in. Carlson *et al* (2006) found that experience of work demands negatively influenced family responsibilities in more instances than family demands that influenced work responsibilities.

And so I will, hereby, conclude this paper by stating that the major factor that can increase the quality of life of a married working women is the trust and backing from her family, friends, and society, because sometimes the negative attitude of the society towards a working women can be a complete drawback for her mental health and this can additionally affect her quality of life because no or less support demotivates and reduces her ability to perform better in the various challenges that she gets to face in her day to day life.

Thus we can conclude that working women is a blessing to the family and a compliment to the society with little support, respect & love from near and dear ones.

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