
**UNIVERSITY EMPLOYED WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETAL
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR EMPLOYMENT**

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive quantitative research paper attempts to explore how women employees at one of the public universities in province of Sindh perceive their profession and societal attitudes including those of colleagues, family and neighbours towards these professional women and their profession. The target participants of this study were academic and non-academic women who had minimum 5 years work experience. Through random sampling technique 100 women (50 from each category) were selected for taking part in survey questionnaire. Findings suggest a positive shift in societal attitude towards professional women in general and working in universities in particular. Interestingly, non-academic respondents perceived societal attitude more positive and supportive than those of academic.

Keywords: Professional women, perception, profession, workplace environment, societal attitude

INTRODUCTION

With the spread of education, particularly of girls' education and employment, and Information Communication Technology (ICT), the socio-political structure of the society has been changed significantly. No doubt, Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country and religion Islam has a greater influence on the people's living style. Due to social changes in society, there is no uniformity in family patterns and social structure of Pakistani society. Many modes of operating can be witnessed such as capitalist, traditional, religious, tribal, and feudalistic (patriarchal), thus, it is hard to frame Pakistani society in a one mode of operating. This is why the position of women in the society is no more homogenous, in one corner they are suppressed while in other corner of the society they are enjoying equal rights to that of men. Despite all positive changes in Pakistani society, woman's role as an equal citizen in society has not yet been accepted at larger scale and she is socially, politically, culturally and academically discriminated at

various level (Khatwani, 2017, 2016; Khatwani, Abbasi & Pahmwar, 2018)). As past literature reveals that women's education and employment have played a crucial role in changing social status of women in society. Knowing the importance of the two determinants, education and employment, authors in this paper attempt to investigate the perception of university employed women regarding their profession in terms of social status, respectability and decision-making, and about the societal attitude towards women's employment. Thus, it addresses following questions:

1. How do women employees perceive their profession in terms of social status, respectability and decision-making?
2. Do they feel that work place environment is conducive and over all attitude of administration is positive to them?
3. How do they perceive over all societal attitude towards women's employment in general and in education sector in particular?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the globe, suppression of women has been witnessed and still it is continued but the modes of women's subordination have changed due to many social, economic, political and technological changes. Particularly, developing and traditional societies are still far beyond in terms of gender equality and equity. Pakistan being a developing country, has taken substantial efforts for brining women in the mainstreaming either due to pressure of international community or internal public voice for women's equal rights. Previous literature on women's education and employment indicates that a woman's paid work is considered as matter of family's dishonour and shame (Ferdoos 2005; Maqsood *et.al.*, 2005). As majority of urban population is originally migrants from rural areas, hence, they have a legacy of rural norms, values and tradition, which are still putting hindrances in women's education and employment in one or other way.

Rapid urbanization in province of Sindh has significantly changed family patterns and living styles of people. A huge number of people have been reported to migrate to urban areas from rural Sindh due to declining agriculture industry and other livelihood opportunities. Approximately 35 percent of total population of Sindh province lives in Karachi and Hyderabad (Tribune, 2018). These changing family patterns and living styles have provided women with opportunities of schooling and employment. However, local cultural norms and traditions have restricted women to only household chores and caring of children and elderly persons. Culturally, it is emphasized and regulated that women's essential responsibility is caring and rearing of children as 'mothers and nurturers' (Khatwani, 2016). Such cultural notions have not only excluded women from mainstreaming but also

have devalued their social status as an active citizen equal to men (Haque, 2010; Ibraiz, 1993).

In such heterogeneous society, family's attitudes towards job of their daughters/daughters-in-law depend on various socio-cultural factors including, locale, caste, class, education backgrounds, and rural-urban settings (Khatwnai, 2016). Most of the research studies regarding women's education, employment and their participation in political affairs conducted on women in paid-work in Pakistan expose that women in paid work face un-conducive working environment and also face gender discrimination and harassment (Khatwani, Abbasi & Pahnwar, 2018; Khan and Khan, 2009). Moreover, relatives (in-laws) of an employed woman dislike her job/work because they are frightened that her paid work may make her more independent. Consequently, she cannot remain more submissive and she may forget her actual status or role (motherhood) within family (Hafeez, 2002).

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a pure quantitative research which has employed structured questionnaire as research instrument to gather information from targeted research participants. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) suggest that the appropriate instrument of collecting quantitative data is structured questionnaire while liker-type scale (Likert, 1932) questionnaire is believed to be user friendly and easy to understand. Realizing the importance of structured and Likert-type questionnaire, a five-point Likert-type scale structured questionnaire was employed for this study. There were two parts of questionnaire; first one was about respondent's personal information and second one was about actual research questions. The target participants of this study were 100 academic and non-academic women who had minimum of five years' work experience. They were equally selected through random sampling technique. The survey questionnaire was filled in by the respondents in their respective offices during office time.

Social Profile of the Research Participants

There were the two major categories of research participants; academic and non-academic. Academic categories of respondents consisted of five Professors, nine Associate Professors, 16 Assistant Professors and twenty Lecturers while non-academic category of respondents consisted of ten Computer Programmers, three Librarians, twenty-one Clerks and sixteen Library/Laboratory Assistants. The detailed profile of the research participants is presented in the following sub-sections:

Type of Family of the Respondents: Still traditional family system (joint/extended) is predominated in Pakistani society, though there has been witnessed the increasing trends of nuclear and semi-nuclear family trends in Pakistan. 61 percent of the respondents were from joint family while 39 percent belonged to either nuclear or semi-nuclear family system. The figures show that increasing girls' education and their participation in paid-work have changed the family structure in province of Sindh.

Age of the Respondents: 49 percent of the respondents fell in 25-34 years of age category while a very small number of respondents (4 percent) were from the 55 years and above category of age group. This indicates that the employment trend in the University of Sindh has mainly changed in the last one and half decade.

Respondents' Marital Status: Majority of respondents were married and only 31 percent were single. It means professional women in Pakistan are more concerned about their marital life and family, and this could be the result of socio-cultural and religious pressure on women in paid work. Majority of married respondents having 0-2 children clearly indicates that they are in better position to negotiate or motivate their spouse to have a small number of children. It also reveals the acceptance of family planning practices in educated professional women as well as men (upper middle and middle class) in Sindh-Pakistan.

Respondents' Educational Qualifications: Majority of respondents 72 percent were post-graduates, 18 percent were graduates while 10 percent of the respondents possessed degree of doctorate of philosophy (PhD). Thus, the respondents were university educated and serving in the public university. Apparently, being professional women they were sufficiently empowered as compared to literate or illiterate women.

Respondents' Monthly Income: 29 percent (all non-academic) of the total respondents had monthly income under Rs.20,000/= (Pak rupees), 20 percent had Rs.21,000-40,000/=:, 13 percent had Rs.41,000-60,000, 21 percent had between Rs.61,000-80,000/=:, 6 percent had Rs.81,000-100,000 and 11 percent had Rs.100,000/- or above.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses research findings which are presented in two major section (i) perception about profession, and (ii) perception about societal attitude.

Perception about their Profession

In this section we have analyzed how these professional women perceive their profession, working environment and overall attitude they face at the workplace. The detailed analysis and discussion is presented in the following sub-headings:

Education Sector: Ideal Profession for Women: Most of previous studies on women and their employment in the context of traditional and developing societies suggest that the education and medical sectors have been the top priority of women as these sectors culturally and socially are suitable and acceptable for women. The present study reveals that still the education sector has been the most attractive profession for women in Pakistan. Results show that 88 percent of academic and 68 percent of non-academic participants were in favour of statement '*I think my profession an ideal for my sisters/daughters*' (see Table-1).

The research found that 78 percent of academic and 80 percent of non-academic respondents intended to see their sister/daughter to work with educational institutions. Likewise, 46 percent of the academic respondents strongly agreed, 32 percent agreed, while 38 percent of the non-academic respondents strongly agreed, 42 percent agreed to the above statement (see Table-1).

TABLE-1
PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES AGAINST STATEMENTS

Statements	Respondents	SA ⁺ (%)	A ⁺⁺ (%)	N ⁺⁺⁺ (%)	D ^{****} (%)	SD ^{*****} %	Total (%)
My profession has a good public image	Academic n=50)	60	28	12	0	0	100
	Non-Academic n=50)	26	58	12	0	4	100
My profession an ideal for my sisters/daughters	Academic (n=50)	58	30	12	0	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	20	48	24	4	4	100
My sister/daughter should work with educational institutions	Academic n=50)	46	32	20	2	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	38	42	16	2	2	100
Satisfaction with current position	Academic (n=50)	46	34	14	0	6	100
	Non-Academic n=50)	18	26	22	14	20	100
Satisfaction with monthly pay and other benefits	Academic n=50)	26	52	10	4	8	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	12	34	26	16	12	100
I receive the right amount of recognition for my work	Academic n=50)	26	36	24	10	4	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	6	32	22	24	16	100
Intention to change current profession	Academic n=50)	4	10	14	24	30	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	18	26	20	24	12	100
Management at the university is supportive for female employees	Academic n=50)	12	28	36	18	6	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	28	36	18	14	4	100
Attitude of immediate boss was positive/supportive	Academic n=50)	22	56	10	6	6	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	28	48	12	8	4	100
Male colleagues' attitude was positive/supportive	Academic n=50)	18	50	24	4	4	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	24	62	6	4	4	100

Over all societal attitudes towards workingwomen	Academic (n=50)	4	28	34	26	8	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	12	38	24	16	10	100
My family attitude in relation to my professional work.	Academic (n=50)	44	48	8	0	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	28	64	6	2	0	100
My family feels pride of my professional work	Academic (n=50)	56	34	10	0	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	32	34	28	2	4	100
Recognition of contribution to the family's income	Academic (n=50)	38	50	10	2	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	14	64	16	4	2	100
Neighbours' attitude towards women's work	Academic (n=50)	18	40	42	0	0	100
	Non-Academic (n=50)	8	58	28	6	0	100

Source: Own Field Survey August, 2013.

*Strongly Agreed

**Agreed

***Neutral

****Disagree

*****Strongly Disagreed

Public Image of Profession: A huge majority of academic participants perceived their profession had brought them feelings of pride and happiness as teaching is a prophetic profession. 88 percent of academic and 84 percent of non-academic were agreed that education sector is one of the best options for women in Pakistan. Overall 60 percent of the academic respondents strongly agreed, 28 percent agreed to the statement that '*I think my profession has a good public image*'. On the contrary 26 percent of the non-academic respondents were strongly agreed, 58 percent agreed, to the above statement (see Table-1). Thus, these statistics corroborating with Maqsood *et.al.*, (2005) and Ferdoos (2005) suggested that education was not only considered suitable profession for women in nineteen and twenty centuries but still in Pakistan, education sector is priority of women seeking for government employment. The reason could be flexibility of working hours, less public dealing and most importantly cultural and social acceptance of teaching profession.

Job Satisfaction, Recognition and Intention to Change Profession: In this section, we have attempted to analyze that to which extent the research participants are satisfied with their current job position, and also discuss the factors which could have positive or negative effects on job satisfaction. The majority of academic respondents of the survey (80 percent) showed their satisfaction with the nature of their jobs. On the contrary only 44 percent non-academic respondents of survey were satisfied with their current position, 22 percent were neutral and 34 percent were not satisfied with their current position as it did not fit with their qualifications (see Table-1).

Majority of academic respondents 78 percent showed their satisfaction with their monthly pay and benefits, while only 46 percent of non-academic respondents were satisfied with their monthly pay and benefits. Majority of

non-academic survey respondents (54 percent) were either not happy with current monthly pay and benefits or their responses were neutral (See Table-1).

Again majority (62%) of the academic respondents perceived that they were getting the right amount of recognition for their work, while only 38 percent of non-academic respondents believe that their work has been recognized. Noticeable point here is that a great number of academic respondents (24 percent) were neither agreed nor disagreed. On the contrary, 22 percent of non-academic respondents were neutral and 40 percent were disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement (see Table-1). This indicates that the working conditions, pay and other benefits are better for academic staff than non-academic staff at the public universities.

Survey findings show a huge difference of responses between academic and non-academic survey respondents. Conversely, 46 percent of non-academic respondents showed their satisfaction with their jobs and monthly salary, while only 38 percent had right amount of recognition of their professional roles at workplace. The major reason of this difference is that of 'Grading System / Basic Pay Scale'. Faculty members are on higher ranking position while non-academic on lower ranking; therefore, there is a huge difference of salary and other benefits.

The results of the study reveal that only 14 percent of the academic respondents desired to change their current profession, while 44 percent of the non-academic respondents intended to change their current profession and also a sufficient number (20%) of non-academic responses were neutral in their options regarding changing the current position.

Attitudes of the University Management and Colleagues: Available literature suggests that Pakistani society is a traditional and man as the head of family has always remained dominant in family matters as well as outside of family. Similar dominating trends prevail at workplace and organizations either they are public or private. 40 percent of academic women considered that the management at public university is supportive, however, a sufficient number of response were neutral. On the contrary, a slight majority (64 percent) of non-academic expressed that the university management is supportive (see Table-1).

In survey the majority of academic as well as non-academic respectively 78 percent and 76 percent found attitude of their immediate boss positive and supportive (see Table-1). Comparatively, non-academic respondents experienced (86%) more positive and supportive attitudes of the male colleagues than those of academic respondents (68%). Findings of the research showed that the attitude of immediate boss and male colleagues towards women employees was positive and supportive.

Societal Attitudes towards Professional Women: Only 32 percent of academic and 50 percent of non-academic respondent perceived the attitude of society towards professional women was positive and supportive. Interestingly, non-academic respondents perceived attitudes of society more positive and supportive than those of academic respondents (see Table-1). Responses of academic respondents regarding the societal attitude towards working women were mixed-up that means academic respondents found societal attitude neutral towards their profession rather than positive /supportive. Perception of respondents about the attitudes of family, relatives and neighbours towards these women are discussed in the following sections.

Attitudes of Family Members: To knowing the attitude of family towards respondents' work and their contribution for family participants of the survey were asked various statements. 92 percent of academic and non-academic respondents received supportive attitudes from their respective families towards their employment.

Similarly, the majority 90% of academic respondents' family felt pride of their professional work, while 66 percent of non-academic respondents (see Table-1). Here data clearly reveal the influence of higher-ranking job on respondents' families. As non-academic employees mainly belonged to either lower or lower middle class and working in low ranking positions, therefore, the ratio of non-academic responses against 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' was lower as compared to academic responses.

As many previous studies on women in paid work and the impact of women's employment on family's social status have suggested that women's employment not only enhances woman's access to decision making but brings change in socio-economic status of family in society. The present study showed that 88 percent academic and 78 percent of non-academic women employees have contributed in their respective family's income.

The findings of collected data are vivid indications of changing family patterns, traditions and cultural values regarding the women's paid work and parents have widely accepted their daughter's paid work. Findings of this survey have validated the study by Maqsood *et.al.*, (2005) about urban-based professional women (70 doctors, 50 bankers and 30 teachers). According to that study 91 percent of respondents enjoyed favourable or supportive attitude of their parents towards their job while 58 percent of married respondents also enjoyed favourable or supportive attitude of their in-laws.

Attitudes of Relatives and Neighbours: 58 percent of academic respondents perceived that the attitudes of their neighbours towards their paid work were positive and supportive, while 42 percent perceived it neutral. On the contrary, 66 percent of non-academic respondents perceived it positive and supportive while 28 percent were neutral (see Table-1). Thus, a slight a majority of both groups found their neighbours' attitude positive

and supportive. This means, a significant change has taken place in urban localities regarding the women's paid work.

The experiences of respondents about their neighbours were mixed; however, overall they observed very supportive and positive attitude of their neighbours. They were of the opinion that attitude of neighbours depend on the socio-economic class and localities. Most of academic employees were living in University employees' housing society and they observed very positive attitudes of their neighbours.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that professional women perceive their profession as prophetic profession; hence, it has a public image and well reputation in society. Further, because of cultural acceptance and recognition of teaching profession, these professional women feel pride and respected in society in general and family in particular. Despite that they also face gender discrimination and character assassination at workplace because of lack of professionalism and developed mechanism. Overall societal attitudes towards employed women in general and employed in education sector in particular have shifted from a traditional to an egalitarian and supportive. As these employed women contribute to meet with household expenses and families also recognize contributing amount, hence the economic conditions of families of employed women are improved. This improved socio-economic status of families has further created conducive environment for women in paid-work as well as brought a positive shift in society regarding women's employment. However, there is no proper policy to protect women at the work place or no proper enforcement of existing rules and regulations. This is why women are not equally treated at the work place and they face harassment in one or other way. Therefore, there is a need to develop the comprehensive policies to provide conducive environment for women at workplace.

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