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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROFESSIONAL PERCEPTION: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MARRIED WOMEN AND SINGLE WOMEN (WIDOW) IN TAMILNADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores why women in India experiences of impact of partners presence and absence in their professional perception. Two focus groups were conducted in Tamil and English language with working high profile (class-I level) women of Institutions and other organizations. 50 married and 50 single women (widow) participated with a mean age of 42 years (range 29–52 years). Normative survey method was adopted in this study. The study was carried out with five dimensions are 1) Professional competency 2) Professional qualities 3) Professional attitude. 4) Professional psychology. 5) Concern to the society. The appropriate statistical techniques were applied to draw the results. The findings are interpreted in light of participants' professional perception in the presence of husband and absence made much affect on professional perception. But the study revealed that their partners really helped in improving their skill by the way of suggestion and the ability of partner they reached the present position without much difficulty.

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INTRODUCTION

Generally in Indian context Husband, wife and child are common phenomena in the family in which husband plays more role in shaping the family. Besides women alone would face the difficulties and society also gives due importance of the couple in the Indian society. The traditional family married working women were compared with single and widows were taken in this study. The variables of inner directedness, self-actualizing values, existentiality, self-regard, and self acceptance. Also, comparisons between the two sets of data were made on woman living with husband and single or widow woman. There are a number of reasons for the greatly increased attention on women Professional growth and professional perception. First and quite obviously, there are proportionately more women than ever before in the labor force of this country, and the record of the past years indicates a trend in female employment that will in all probability, continue indefinitely into the future (Ray, 1972). More women want to work and are preparing themselves for careers in anticipation of such employment. Roby (1972) reports that 40.4% of all bachelor's or first professional degrees in higher education and 33.8% of all master's degrees go to women. A number of studies have established that a higher level of education among women leads to a higher level of commitment to work (Hubback, 1957; Myrdal and Klein, 1968). With the societal expectation that the wife raise the children, keep the home clean and comfortable, and feed the family, it is obviously difficult for a women to be

single-minded about a career. This dilemma is intensified by the lack of child-care centers, the isolation of the nuclear family, unwillingness on the part of employers to hire less than full-time personnel, the tendency of universities to favor full-time students in professional training, etc. Indeed, many professional positions require that the husband have a wife whose time and energy are devoted to the job as well, as for example with political figures, high executives in companies, and presidents of universities. Many researchers over the years have made comparative studies of employed and unemployed women on various psychological variables. There have been contradictory results. It is therefore doubtful if the replication of such studies done abroad will yield similar results in Tamilnadu with different social, cultural and political set-up. Therefore, there is a need of such a study in the local set-up and culture.

Review of literature

After examining past literature from the different sources the appropriate and relevant literatures are chosen for this study. An attempt of Oppong and Abu (1985) reveals that women's role in modern society from a theoretical and scientific standpoint reveals that women's roles are defined by the social and cultural values of the society they live in. Most women play several roles in their adult lives. These roles mix with their private (mother, wife, and housewife) or professional (employee, manager, or director) lives. A study of 'Women Employees and Rural Development by Anuradha Bhoite, 1987, explores the problems of women employees who were

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involved in Community Development programme meant for the upliftment of rural masses. These problems cannot be viewed in isolation as they have arisen from various social factors, in particular the prevailing socio-economic situation in rural areas, the constraints of the social structure and the bureaucratic framework in which they have to work. Stevenson, (1988), Ufuk and Özgen, (2001) their study says, Businesswomen often suffer due to conflicts arising from the different roles they play as professionals and within their families. If they have to choose between different roles, they more often spend time on their family and work, leaving less time for themselves and relaxation. Stoltz-Loike (1992) identified four factors that influence women's careers: the husband's view of his wife's job, financial prospects, household work, and the woman's character. During their careers, both men and women can climb the corporate ladder; higher positions offer more positive opportunities for women: promotion, a sense of responsibility, self-respect, and financial independence. At the same time, such positions positively affect women's roles in their social, economic, and private lives (Ufuk *Eva Boštjančič* 283 and Özgen, 2001). According to Powell and Mainiero (1992), women continuously pay attention to career building and family relations, but their focus shifts over time. However, under present circumstances lifecycles are diverging from the ones described, given that the childbearing age is increasingly shifting towards the mid-thirties. Moreover, an increasing number of women are choosing career over family, thus consciously giving up the latter.

According to Alexander (1993). There are gender differences in the lifecycle. There are many life patterns (work, marriage, family). The first pattern starts with primary education, followed by the opportunity to pursue vocational or high school education. Women choose their vocations, find their first jobs, and get pregnant. After pregnancy, some additional training is often necessary in order to return to work, where they remain until retirement. The second pattern takes women to college after high school, followed by their first jobs and initial career building. The near future entails a pregnancy, followed by training to return to work. After training, women usually set out to build their career until retirement. Weinbaum and Rogers (1995) describe contextual learning as a process by which "knowledge is socially shared, thinking is shaped by engagement with tools, learning is engaged with objects and events, and learning is situation specific". The emphasis is on application of knowledge and skills in the context of real-life experiences, problems, and events (Brown 1998). Learning occurs as students attempt to make sense of the situations with which they are presented and develop strategies for confronting barriers typically encountered in the workplace to arrive at a course of action that they can test for viability. Teamwork, negotiation, leadership, and conflict resolution are encouraged. The study of Barnett, (1998), Greenhaus and Parasuraman, (1999) and Haas (1999) reveals that modern society sees women as part of their families, which is also their most important role; on the other hand, they are expected to work and earn a living. This can lead to overload or a role conflict. In the past, the relations between roles have mostly been studied through the prism of negative consequences. Marriage is a great source of life satisfaction among adults (Argyle, 1999), and so divorce could worsen women's situations. Changes in professional roles

exert a stronger influence on the mental health of women without families (Barnett *et al.*, 1992). Similarly, women with preschool children face less stress if they are employed (cf. a study by Kessler and McRae, as cited in Barnett and Hyde, 2001). Some studies (Schoon, Hansson and Salmela-Aro, 2005) point out that being a parent does not significantly correlate with life satisfaction. However, for divorced women the combination of parenthood and employment correlates with low life satisfaction. Divorced women tend to be more satisfied when childless. Most couples are more satisfied than divorced persons, and the employed are more satisfied than the unemployed. The following are the objectives of the study. To study the professional perception of Married women and Single women with respect to different personal variables; To assess the professional perception of married women; To assess the professional perception of single women; To find out the correlation between professional perception of married women and single women.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Method

Normative survey method was adopted in this study.

Sample

Two focus groups were conducted in Tamil and English language with working high profile (class-I level) women of Institutions and other organizations. 50 married women and 50 single women (widow) participated with a mean age of 42 years (range 29–52 years).

Tools

Scale of profession perception: The personal data sheet was used to collect information about No. of family members, Age, Type of family, Years of experience, Qualifications, Type of Organization and Type of Management

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample with reference to the variables taken for the study. In differential analysis, the significance of difference between groups was studied using 't' test. Product moment correlation was used to study the correlation between the variables.

Scale

Scale of profession perception: The professional perception scale was constructed by investigator for his doctoral study (S.Tamilenthil and K.Mohansundram, 2010) to assess the professional perception of women, based on 5 dimensions. This Scale of professional perception constructed and validated by the investigator: The dimensions are given below.

- 1) Professional competency
- 2) Professional qualities
- 3) Professional attitude
- 4) Professional psychology
- 5) Concern to the society

The investigator constructed 10 objective type questions with the responses of Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Always. The

scale has 10 items with 4 point scale, ranging from 1 to 4. Responses to all the 10 items have to be summed up to yield the final composite score with a range from 10 to 40. The items were subjected to jury opinion consisting of research guide, Professors of education in the Universities, Head masters and experienced teachers of Geography working in Government, Aided and private High schools. The judges were requested to review each item as to their validity with reference to factors of profession perception, correctness of structure, phrasing of items and the suitability to the high school geography teachers. The suggestions given by them were incorporated. Some items were omitted and suitable modifications were made. It was confirmed that the tool was almost in order, covered all area and suitable for final study.

RESULTS

Professional perception of married women with reference to No. of family members, age, type of family, experience, qualifications, type of organization and type of management.

The study reveals that married women with 3 family members and above 3 family members and the married women with below 40 years and above 40 years of age differ in their profession perception. This also shows married women with below 10 years and above 10 years of experience and the married women working in women organization, and general organization differ of their profession differ in their profession perception (Table 1). It also reveals that living in separate and nuclear family for the married woman and the married women holding Master degree and Doctorial degree do not differ do not differ in their profession perception. It is also concluded that the married women working Government and private management do not differ in their profession perception

Table 1. Professional perception of married women

Group	Category	N	Mean	SD	t	P(Level of significance)
No. of family members	1-3	21	11.5060	2.796	2.32	0.05
	Above 3	29	10.2069	2.680		
Age	Below 40 years	36	11.808	3.847	2.90	0.01
	Above 40 years	14	9.667	3.038		
Type of family	Separate	37	10.883	3.616	1.60	NS
	Nuclear	13	12.391	4.053		
Years of experience	Below 10 years	34	7.739	2.56	4.07	0.01
	Above 10 years	16	5.963	1.652		
Qualifications	Master degree	26	7.155	2.540	0.5	NS
	Doctorial degree	24	7.404	2.400		
Type of organization	Women organisation	14	9.296	1.652	3.27	0.01
	General organisation	36	11.28	2.561		
Type of Management	Government	31	7.282	2.475	0.17	NS
	Private	19	7.181	2.519		

Table 2. Professional perception of single women (widow)

Group	Category	N	Mean	SD	t	P(Level of significance)
No. of family members	1-3	36	11.500	4.169	0.59	NS
	Above 3	14	11.034	3.44		
Age	Below 40 years	16	11.506	2.796	2.32	0.05
	Above 40 years	34	10.206	2.680		
Type of family	Separate	31	7.739	2.561	4.07	0.01
	Nuclear	19	5.963	1.652		
Years of experience	Below 10 years	37	11.808	3.847	2.90	0.01
	Above 10 years	13	9.666	3.038		
Qualifications	Master degree	39	11.034	3.449	0.59	NS
	Doctorial degree	11	11.500	4.169		
Type of organization	Women organisation	28	10.041	3.281	1.87	NS
	General organisation	22	9.0370	1.951		
Type of Management	Government	37	7.404	2.400	0.50	NS
	Private	13	7.155	2.540		

Professional perception of single women(widow) with reference to No. of family members, age, type of family, experience, qualifications, type of organization and type of management

The result shows that No. of family members i.e the single women (widow) with 3 family members and above 3 family members, the single women holding Master degree and Doctorial degree do not differ in their profession perception. This also reveals that the single women working in women organization and general organization, the single women working Government and private management do not differ in their profession perception. The study also reveals that the single women with below 40 years and above 40 years of age, living in separate and nuclear family for the single woman and the single women with below 10 years and above 10 years of experience differ in their profession perception (Table 2).

Table 3. Correlation between the profession perception of Married women and single women

Variable	N	r	p
Married women	50	0.692 **	0.00
Single women.	50		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

The Pearson correlation is significant at 0.01 levels for the perception of Married women and single women. Hence there is a positive, significant relationship between the perception of Married women and single women (Table 3).

Findings of the study

There is a significant difference among the married women between the number of family members, Age, years of experience and the type organization where they work.

It is also found that significant difference among the single women between the Age, type of family and years of experience. It is noticed that there is no significant difference among the married women between the type of family, qualifications and type of management. This study also found that there is no significant difference among the single women between the number of family members, qualifications, the type organization where they work and type of management. It is quit clear the study there no significant difference between the married and single women for the qualifications, type of management and age in respect to professional perception. Finally the study notices that there is a positive significant correlation between the Married and Single women in their professional perception.

Implications from the Study

The acceptance by the society of the married woman and single women are capable persons who can equally perform as her male colleague in organizations and thus need to be trusted, supported and recognized is of relevance to her career development. This observation provides learning on the impact of the inflow of socio-cultural dynamics into a gender-oriented organizational life and the complexities that it generates in understanding the constraints to the professional career development of women society. The woman thus signifies the universal material product of culture, whose quest for career professional development is constrained by socio cultural norms and ethics.

Recommendations

- 1) More research institutions to be established and which will be managed by women community so that they could develop the managerial skills and encouragement too. Every university should start the department of women studies to eradicate regional problems besides the national and global problems.
- 2) Arranging the periodical professional development programs, awareness programmes especially for women should be conducted and pooling the staff with experts for the seminar and workshops will help them to acquire the new skills and new technique to adopt.
- 3) Recommended and proposed gender reservations and equality should be followed in all sectors including private to eradicate male domination so that women's skills could be utilized.
- 4) Women counselors should be selected and made available in each working place as full time availability.
- 5) Financial assistance may be given to the women researchers to undertake women related in the working place problems and single working women protection related.

Conclusion

Indian women who are to face variety of challenges that tends to constrain their professional development in organizations in which they function. What appears evident in the analysis is that Tamil women desire to balance their multiple roles of keeping both family and career. The women in this study also perceive themselves as possessing the capability of exercising genuine practical freedom in their efforts towards developing

their professional career. But their marital environment and single women environment also impact negatively on their professional perception and professional development. In this regard therefore they reported that they relate strongly to their socio cultural norms as against their organizational norms. The married women believe that there is strong environmental support to the career advancement of the professional. Yet still, for most married professional women who cherish family and career lives, professional development is perceived as quite a daunting task to achieve. The sense here is that married women perceive marriage as very meaningful in relation to their professional development, because, they value marriage as a way of life, and thus expected it to contribute positively towards their professional development. Though most of these professional married women have practical freedom in developing themselves, they still believe that there are organizational, situational, individual and socio cultural (i.e. environmental) barriers to their career advancement. The consequence of their attempt to manage such a characteristic is the emergence of conflict between their transformation-oriented psyches as married women and their conservative-oriented socio cultural values. It is as a result of this that their talents are underutilized due to the socio cultural notion that they exist to support males (i.e. husbands or workmates), despite they also having equal abilities as men, with the capability to rise to top management positions in organizations. Wherein the impact of such a single women - held view about women's capability is the introduction of functional limitations in organization design which impact negatively on their quest for career developments because of cultural barriers in Indian women culture context.

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