

Juggernaut of Modernity and its Consequence on Life Style Management of Women Professionals

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Abstract: The changing scenario of technology coupled with market driven force makes an indelible impact on life style of all sections of society. It affects the economy as well as other aspects of social stratification, family and self image either consciously or unconsciously. This reconstitution of life style as a result of modernity gives rise to a different reflexive action quite deviated from traditionally accepted norms. This affects working women in particular leading to a risk society trying to tread a new path of balancing act. The present study is an attempt to find out the changing working scenario vis a vis family life of highly educated women professionals of Mumbai Metropolitan region and the challenges they face to balance both, for a positive growth. The researcher has taken both qualitative and quantitative approach to conduct the study based on established theory and primary information collected through structured questionnaire. The study also tries to find the effect of modernity on changing perception of life style, stress and physical health of women and possible remedial measure for the same.

Key words: *Juggernaut of modernity, Work life balance and Reflexive action*

I. INTRODUCTION

The changing industrial scenario with the emergence of Just in Time system of operation is accompanied by flexibilisation of labour and increased mobility of financial and human resources. The networked production and operation system with the diffusion of modern telecom and computer technologies restructured global capitalism in post industrial economy. In this modernized working scenario space is progressively torn from place. Relationships with those who are physically absent and increasingly distant become more and more likely.

This gives rise to negative consequences of modernity. However, the term modernity refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about seventeenth century onwards and subsequently became more or less world wide in their influences (Giddens, 1990).

Today, with the continual expansion of modernity, there is emergence of new type of social system, such as 'information society' or 'knowledge society', post-industrial society and post modern society. These concepts are closely linked to world wide development.

In light of the aforementioned modernity, the type of work culture is accompanied with stretchable working hours, deadline accomplishment and stressful working environment. Despatialization work became more rampant through ICT; blurring temporal and spatial boundaries. The new information economy transforms the labour market and generates demand for specific skills world wide. The nature of labour undergoes a shift from manual labour to intellectual labor. This changing industrial scenario gives an impetus to women in realizing their potential in a rational manner in the form of greater job opportunity and better economic realization.

Modernization has brought about a series of major changes in the social structure. One of its strongest influences was the awakening of women's consciousness. With rapid economic development and the advent of women's movement, the changing status of women receives much attention around the world. The role of women began to change from the submissive dependant and the childbearing traditional woman to the modern woman demanding for equal rights, sovereignty and freedom assuming equal career responsibilities.

The modern work force is highly educated, well paid, mobile and closely linked to the global service economy. Moreover working of modern industry is distinctive as it operates in virtuality giving rise to new kind of work places, work culture and employment issues. This is reflected in significant transformation of the urban middle class and cultural milieu of the Indian cities

II. BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT STUDY

For many social theorists, these changes in the structure of global economy and in the organization of production with the spread of the new Information and Communication Technology have initiated a

fundamental social transformation; that is understood as a new phase or type of modernity; better termed as ‘the risk society’, ‘second modernity’, ‘reflexive modernity’, or the ‘network society’.

Giddens(1990) observed that with the advent of network society(as a fallout of IT revolution) the linkage between time and space has broken. He proposed two types of disembedding mechanism; one is money (wealth creation), which allows transactions with others who are widely separate from us by time and space. The other being expert systems defined as systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of material and social environments in present day society. Expert system guarantees (but not without risk) performance across time and space. Giddens opined reflexivity with a special meaning where social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.

According to **Beck (1997)** “The risk always depends on decisions i.e. a risk is predicted for every decision that has been taken”. The idea of risk society is bound up with development of instrumental rational control. This type of risk promotes in all spheres of life in the process of modernization. This may vary from individual risk of accidents, illness to export risk and risk of conflict particularly in global working environment. As a result a person has to follow a pattern and life style that is more rational, which compliments with self, with the body, relationship, gender norms and with work. This characteristic change prompted the need for continuous upgradation of skills in order to be marketable and thwart the risk of joblessness; because collective identity among today’s professionals is virtually absent. All these career risk affects lifestyle. According to Beck this is the subjective backdrop of risk society. Beck’s idea of rationalistic and instrumental calculative model of risk in micro and macro social worlds is perceptual and differs from person to person.

In urban India it has become necessary to obtain a profession to support the family. There is a trend among couples to earn together to manage household chores. The increasing standard of living, privatization, demanding quality of life and consumerism are a few factors that have created a forced situation for urban couples mainly living in cities to earn together. The impact of breaking down of joint or extended family (as an outcome of large scale migration) is one of the major factors that has further initiated the necessity and compulsion for such forced situation of independent and individualized livelihood (This is in addition to replacement of the earlier defined values, based on socio-economic relations with cash and commodity relation; this in turn endangers social cohesion and kinship bond).As a result in a globalised era as a result, the women have to take up the added responsibility of managing both-their family and work front. **Harper and Leicht** in *Exploring Social Change: America and the World*, 2007, states that, the most pressing problem of dual-income families is not money, but the problem of managing ‘ragged’ family schedules and adjusting husband/wife roles(p. 91). Women are currently juggling full-time careers, managing household chores, child rearing duties, as well as taking care of aging parents, thus greatly increasing their level of daily stress compared to women of previous generations. Family relationships have also been shifting in dual-income families from patriarchal authority and “from fixed ‘role scripts’ toward more flexible ‘role negotiation’ and equalitarian relationships (p. 93).The fair demand to have shared responsibilities from their spouse in domestic chores and child care tasks yet remains a neglected dimension by patriarchal ideology.

Study of **Grzywacz , Almedia and McDonald (2002:29)** indicated that work stress affects the family lives of employees as stress is transferred to the home environment and the transmission of stress from work to family and vice versa (i.e. work and family barrier like job pressure and family disagreement) is one observable manifestation of negative spill over.

Another pressing problem due to the increase in number of women working is access to quality child care, which **Harper and Leicht** (2007), states “is in short supply and expensive(p-92).” Women who work full-time have busier schedules and less time to spend with their children. “One third of all school age children in the United States are, for some part of the week, latch key kids; that is, they go home to an empty house or apartment” (**Alston, 2007**). Indian scenario in urban areas is no better.For not so well off parents, the struggle can be even worse because “childcare eats a terrifying proportion of the family budget...but quitting work to look after the children can mean financial disaster” (**The Economist, 2010**). As *The Economist* article warns, “Even well-off parents worry that they spend too little time with their children, thanks to crowded schedules and the ever-buzzing Blackberry,(p.2).”

.With this backdrop of aforementioned literature being reviewed, the present study is an attempt to analyse the influence of modernization on educated working women.

3.OBJECTIVE

1. To study the work and family life of educated women professionals
2. To find out the impact of modernization on the changing perception of life of working women

4.SCOPE

This study has covered the issues of work commitment and family obligation of working women in modernized global economy. How those elements affect the various aspects of our life in general and educated women in particular. Along with positive consequence of modernity the research has also highlighted the risk of modernity in various aspects of life.

5.METHODOLOGY

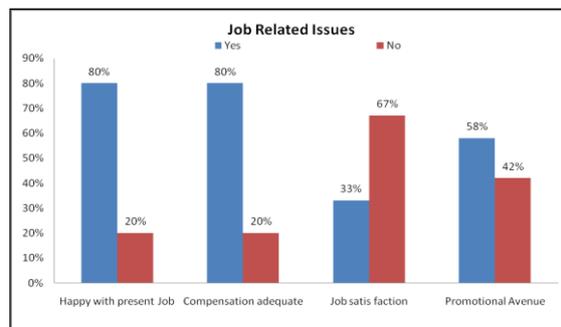
The research has been conducted by using interview and questionnaire method through a structured questionnaire from 50 conveniently selected women professionals working in Mumbai metropolitan region in various sectors like academic, corporate and banks.

Qualitative as well as relative nature of information has been collected. Each attribute has been quantified with standard weighing factor to understand their relative importance.

6.OBSERVATION

The research carried out among working women involved in middle level women executives working in the areas of IT, banking, academic and corporate. The total sample size is 50 and the data was collected randomly through convenient sampling technique. Sixty percent of the respondents are married. Fifty percent of respondents are having experience 10 years or more in identical profession.

The commuting time in an average for these respondents is 4 hours (both way) in an average and working time varies from 7 hours to 9 hours. To summarize we can conclude that an executive spends around 12 hours of day in job related activities. The observations were made on the basis of following structure.



6.1 Job related Issues

67% of respondents indicated that their level of job satisfaction is just normal; for remaining 33% respondents this level of satisfaction is quite high. However most of them are satisfied with existing job solely due to financial benefits (Figure.1).

Figure 1

6.2 Family and Profession

83% of respondents indicated that they get support from family (Figure 2). But it is observed that majority of respondents feel that family commitment is affecting professional efficiency and

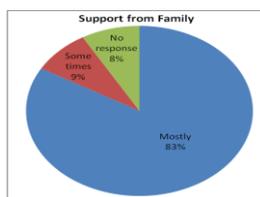


Figure 2

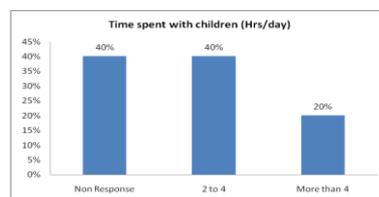


Figure.3

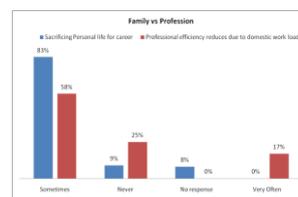


Figure. 4

vice versa (Figure 3).When it comes to child’s upbringing it has been observed that 40 percent respondents do not have any information regarding this and identical proportion of population spend around 2 to 4 hours per day with their children. Only 20 percent of respondents are spending more than four hours per day with their children (Figure 4).

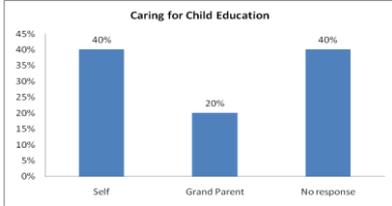


Figure. 5



Figure.6

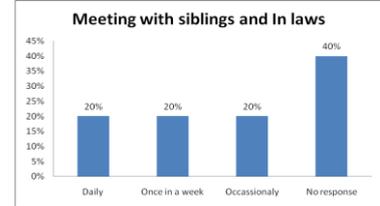


Figure.7

Like wise 40% of respondents are unable to pinpoint the onus of child’s education.40% of them used to take care of child’s education by themselves. For remaining 20% the assistance comes from grand parents (Figure.5).Further 40% of working parent’s are not in position to figure out when they use to meet the child’s teacher (Figure.6).When it comes to be in contact with siblings and in laws 40% of respondents were on responsive and 20% each remain in touch with them either daily or weekly or occasionally.

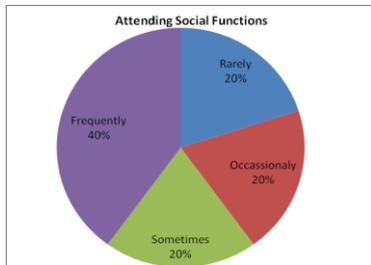


Figure. 8

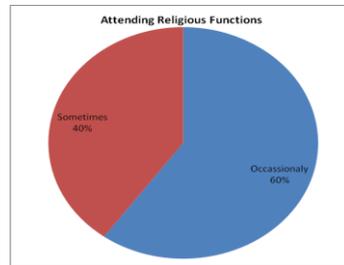


Figure. 9

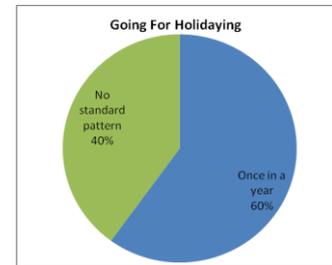


Figure .10

60% of respondents are not so frequent in attending social function and in case of religious function it takes a back seat(Figure.8 and Figure.9).And in case of holidaying 60% of respondents are making it once in a year whereas remaining 40% does not have any fixed pattern.

6.3 Gender Issues

80% of the respondents opined that male female is treated at par in the professional life(Figure. 11).60% of respondent opined that some form of affair develops among male and female colleagues.80% of respondents observed live in relationship among colleagues. And 40% of respondents indicated some form of sexual harassment (Figure.12). 60% of respondents feel that

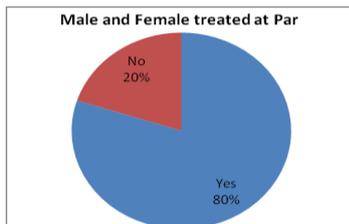


Figure.11

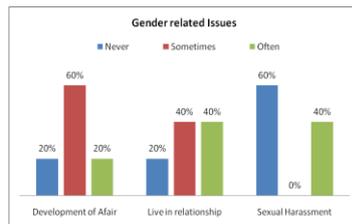


Figure 12

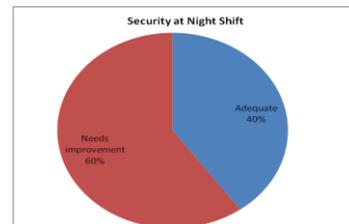
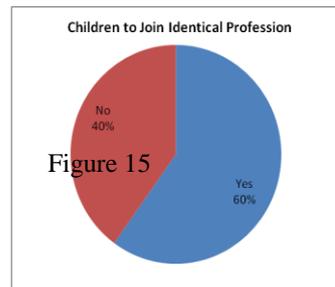
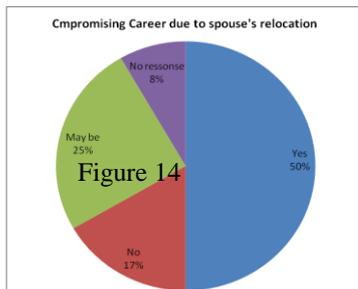


Figure 13

the security at night shift needs improvement(Figure.13).60% of respondents willing to encourage their children to join the identical profession(Figure.14). And most importantly 50% of respondents are willing to relocated and sacrifice the existing career if there is substantial growth in spouse’s career due to relocation (Figure.15).



6.4 Stress

92% of respondents are experiencing some form of stress and more than one third of them are

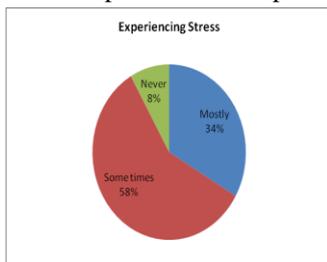


Figure. 16

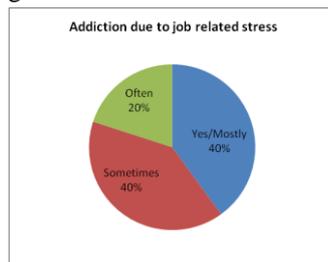


Figure.17

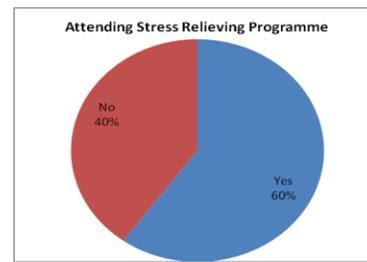


Figure.18

experiencing this on a regular basis(Figure.16).80% of respondents agree that some form addiction has been developed due to stress and half of them in an acute form(Figure.17).Though 60% of respondents attends some stress relieving programme a substantial 40% of them do not attend it(Figure.18).

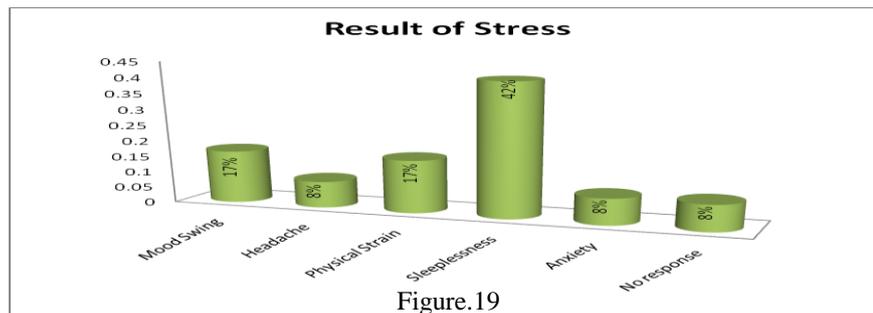


Figure.19

As a result of stress 42% of respondents suffer from sleeplessness followed by mood swing & physical strain followed by headache and anxiety (Figure.19).

6.5 Critical Personal opinion

50% of respondents are having either housing or vehicle loan.60% of respondents still depends upon their spouse’s job for their economic security. And most of the reason for job switching is job satisfaction(Figure.20).

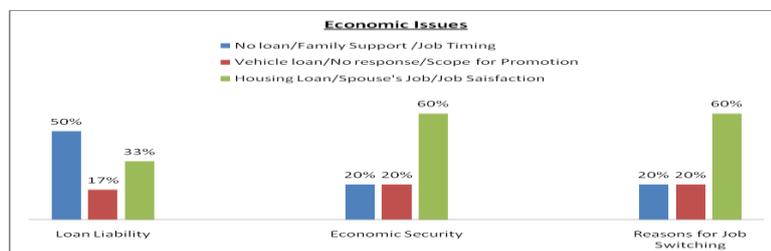


Figure.20

When it comes to life style preferences the unmarried girls prefer career first followed by health and marriage comes third (Figure.21). In case of married women kid comes as first criteria followed by spouse's career and then marriage (Figure.22). If we analyse both critically it can be concluded that all of them want to have a normal life with strong back up of economic stability.

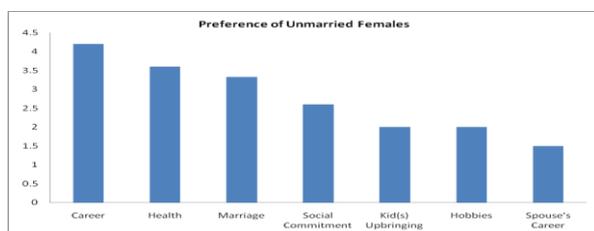


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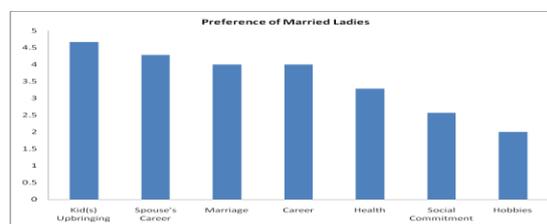


Figure.22

III. ANALYSIS

Today's work scenario is mostly driven by money earning capacity; hence quite a good number of working executives doing their profession without getting any job satisfaction. There is certain amount of work life imbalance existing even with a substantial family back up. This is leading to stress and inefficiency both in domestic as well as professional front. Modernity has given rise to consciousness of economic security and self esteem; but still every woman gives a high priority to marriage and family. Even in city dwelling women population husband is being considered as bread earner for family.

However due to this type of imbalance in profile of operation some type of unwanted issues like live in relationship, extra marital affair are being cropped up.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is not practically possible to stop the wind of change that is making a paradigm shift in lifestyle of urban working women. This shift is leading to some positive change and also some negative change. It is required to understand the cause of negativity and make necessary rectification in our approach to life.

V. FURTHER RESEARCH

This research is restricted to urban middle class working women of metro city like Mumbai. The research can be broadened by taking into account the change observed by housewives, women entrepreneurs, women worker of unorganized sector. This can be further broadened by taking identical women population of tier one and tier two urban cluster. This would give a broader outlook of change witnessed by urban women in a pan national basis.

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