

## Challenges Faced by Married Female Students in Higher Education

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### Abstract:

The importance of education has been recognized by every civilization. Prior to the twentieth century, only a few females were granted access to education. Despite of the recognition of the significance of female education, there are many barriers in their way to higher education to give their cent percent input for the betterment of society in Indian context. Married females are expected to prioritize looking after domestic work and children then education. Females who enroll for higher education after marriage have to perform multiple roles and are also faced with multiple problems too. For this study, researchers have used primary as well as secondary data. Researchers found that most women face the problem of unable to concentrate on academic work due to domestic work. They are expected to perform each and every ritual of all the festivals, even the guests need to be attended and attendance in various ceremonies is a must. If the woman is working then she is overburdened with all the three responsibilities. As a researcher, we suggest that, socialization of both boys and girls should be the same, scholarships or fellowships beneficiaries should be increased and minimum age of marriage should be increased.

**Keywords:** Female students, higher education, socio-economic challenges.

### Introduction:

Education has been long recognized as a vital key for the development of the nations. It is one of the major instruments for bringing about social, political, economic, scientific and technological development of any country. For this simple reason, both developing and advanced nations invest a larger proportion of their annual budget in educational sector of their economy.

Education is a key that provides opportunities for self-awareness and self-fulfillment to every individual. Importance of education has been recognized by every civilization. It is a fundamental right and contributes significantly in achieving equality, peace and development. It provides equal opportunities to human beings to play a vital role in society. It is believed to provide knowledge and resources that hold capacities for economic empowerment, for better livelihood and social development. It is one of the most far-reaching requirements for development, alleviating poverty, improving health and quality life, reducing gender disparities and enhancing economic productivity.

Prior to the twentieth century, only a few females were granted access to education. The number of illiterate women were naturally more as they have never been sent to school or they had no access to education. It was at this time; women were victims of all types of discrimination and were

marginalized by social and cultural practices especially in traditional Indian society. They were the victims of all forms of socio-cultural constraints. Indian society which was male dominated patriarchal society denied access to women's education as the fortunate male members of the family were to be educated.

Thanks to the efforts of Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Phule to initiate female education. It is rightly said by Mahatma Phule "if you educate a boy, you educate a single person but if you educate a girl, you educate whole family". Women's education is a must for progress and prosperity of a nation. The present scenario depicts that women in the entire world have established themselves as managers, bankers, teachers, doctors, pilots and so on. According to Chowdhary and Rahman (2009) through higher education women are able to internalize the particular culture of their society in which they are expected to be a good wife and wise mother.

Despite of the recognition about the significance of female education, there are many barriers in their way to higher education to give their cent percent input for the betterment of society in Indian context. The mind set of society hampers the attitudes of higher education, for females specifically. Females after marriage are given less opportunities for higher education. Married females are expected to prioritize to look after domestic work and children then education. Females who enroll for higher education after marriage have to perform multiple roles and are also faced with multiple problems too.

The involvement of females in higher education is increasing but the proportion is very small. With this background the study is designed to explore social, cultural, economic and domestic problems of married females.

#### **Review of Literature:**

- 1) Chigona and Chetty (2007), their research paper deals with the student mothers, who face a lot of challenges in pursuing higher education. The paper identified that lack of time to study and do academic home assignments is one of the major challenges confronting a student-mother. They face challenge to balance their child care and academic work. The cause of the challenge was financial problems which made young mothers to neglect quality child care services since they cannot pay the fees for it. On the other hand, the paper also revealed that there were mothers who were able to deal with the situation and were able to blend their course work with their family life without any breaks.
- 2) C. Gopalakrishnan and K.Shunmuga Priya (2014) this research paper deals with average age at marriage of the girls. In the paper there were 1/4<sup>th</sup> respondents who were pregnant and about 40 percent had undergone an abortion. The paper also reveals that the educational performance has decreased after marriage the reason being obvious not able to concentrate in their studies. The

counseling of students in their institutions.

- 3) Patricia Mawusi and Esther Manieson (2015) their research study has made an attempt to identify the domestic and academic issues that a married woman faces in tertiary institutions. The research paper observed that taking care of family members was difficult due to school related activities and this was a major domestic challenge and their major academic challenge. The effects of these challenges were low concentration in lectures and low performance. The suggestions of the research paper were if the pressure from households should be minimized and even reducing the number of programs which have to be covered at the university can help them to handle the situation.
- 4) Dr. Malik Ghulam Behlon, Dr. Najeebullah and Iqra Irfan (2016) in their paper researchers try explain the problems of married women education in Pakistan: Academic, Social and Cultural Context, focuses to explore the social, cultural, financial, academic problems of married women in higher education. The paper concluded that women particularly married women are denied of education due to socio-economic, religious, and cultural factors. It is believed by certain conservative families that think that higher education will bring moral deprivation, grant unrestricted freedom, and unnecessary delay in marriages. The research paper recommends that seminars and focus group discussions are needed to change the perceptions of society about female education, especially among married women.

**Objectives of the Study:**

- 1) To study the socio-economic background of the married female students.
- 2) To find out the challenges faced by married female students in higher education.
- 3) To explore the solutions for the problems faced by the married female students.

**Research Methodology:**

The present study is descriptive in nature. The study is based on both Primary as well as secondary data. Primary data is obtained using an interview schedule and informal discussion with the respondents. The secondary data is collected through book, e-journals, magazines, and websites etc. or any other authentic source. The universe of the study is students studying in Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra. The respondents pursuing Master's degree, PG Diplomas or M.Phil./Ph.D. degrees were interviewed virtually. The respondents studying in social sciences, law, commerce and management are the sample for the study. The sample size comprises 35 respondents who are married since at least 1 year to obtain a mature response. Snowball sampling technique was used for the collecting primary data.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation:**

**Socio-Economic status of the respondents:**

Here researchers tried to find out social and economic status or background of respondents.

- 1) Maximum respondents are from the age group of 26-35, that is 68.57%.
- 2) Out of 35 respondents 57.14% women are completed 4-9 years of their marriage. This reveals that they have good marital experience and they can make a balance between academic and domestic work.

**Table No. 1: Family Monthly Income**

Sr. No.	Income in Rupees	No. of Respondents	%
1	Below 10,000	3	8.57
2	10,000-20,000	8	22.86
3	20,000-30,000	11	31.43
4	More than 30,000	13	37.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Above table no. 1 shows that 31.43% respondents belong to Rs. 20,000- 30,000 per month and 37.14% belong to more than Rs. 30,000 per month family income.

3) Out of 35 respondents 22 are pursuing M.Phil. or Ph.D., 11 are pursuing master's and only 2 respondents are engaged in other courses like PG diploma.

4) Researchers found that almost 46% husbands have completed graduation, 28.57% have completed post-graduation while 5.71% having doctorate degree. So, this data shows that, though husbands who have completed their graduation inspire their wife for enrolling for masters or doctorate degrees.

5) Out of 35 respondents 77% respondents are residing in joint family while 23% are residing in nuclear family. Maybe respondents residing in joint families having difficulty to maintain a balance between domestic and academic works.

6) Around 80% respondents having 4 to 6 family members in their family. Where 43% women are having two children, and 28% are single child women.

7) 23% respondents are working and maximum women are of the opinion that, their job negatively affects their academic performance.

8) Only 18% respondents are availing the facility of scholarship or fellowship.

**Challenges faced by married female students:**

1) As a married female student, the respondents are facing the following major problems while she is engaged in higher education.

Table No. 2: Problem faced by married woman

Sr. No.	Problems	%
1	Financial Problem	17.14
2	Ignoring domestic work due to academic work	60.00
3	Lack of time to look after husband & family members	40.00
4	Problems in child-rearing responsibility	51.43
5	Lack of support from husband and in laws	31.43
6	Spending more time out due to academic work	42.86
7	Family planning	8.57

Source: Primary Data

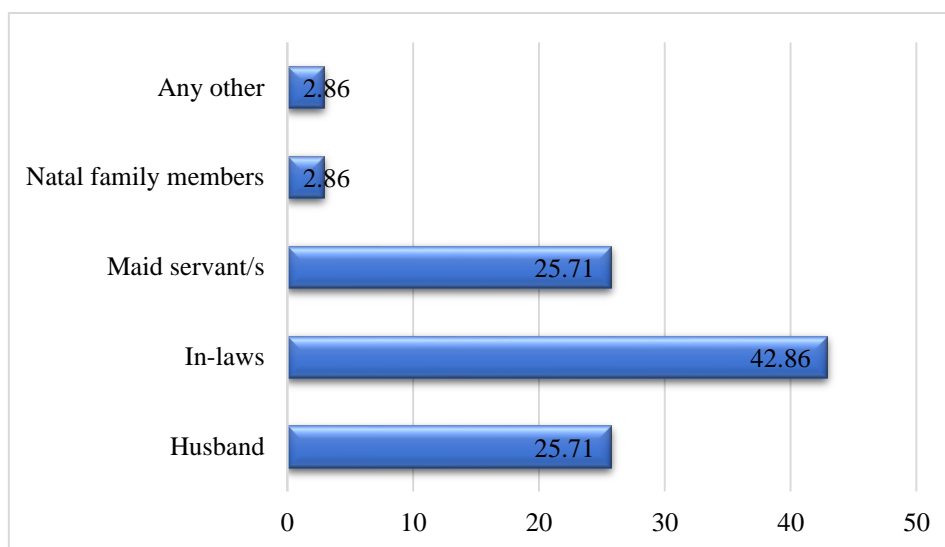
Maximum (60%) respondents do not give proper time for domestic work due to academic work. And 9% women are facing a family planning problem which can ultimately result into reproductive health issues.

2) In-laws of 43% respondents having favorable attitudes while in-laws of 29% respondents having neutral attitudes towards higher education.

3) Only 14% are victims of sexual harassment and from these 11.43% are harassed by their classmates or fellow students.

4) Out of total respondents 80% say that different socio-cultural activities like festivals, ceremonies, guests, other rites and rituals have negative consequences on their academic performance.

Graph No. 1: Help in Domestic Work



Source: Primary Data

5) 43% respondents are major helped by their in-law in their domestic work. And 26% are helped by their husband and maid servant/s respectively.

Table No. 3: Financial support for education

Sr. No.	Financially Support	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Husband	32	91.43
2	Yourself	1	2.86
3	Your parents/ Natal family	2	5.71
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Maximum respondents were financially supported by their husbands, that is around 92%.

### Conclusion and Suggestions:

It can be concluded that, the problems faced by married women are varied. Most women face the problem of unable to concentrate in academic work due to domestic work. The dual role expected from a woman is in a way very demanding. Women should be freed to a certain extent from the household responsibilities. In the process of virtual interviews one of the points raised was married women were unable to attend the workshops or any such kind of training programs which are held out of town, due to their homely responsibilities. The attitudes of in-laws include that the women can pursue her higher education but not at the cost of household responsibilities. They are expected to perform each and every ritual of all the festivals, even the guests need to be attended and even the attendance in various ceremonies is a must. So, all this, needless to say has an impact on her academic performance as well as academic work. Again, if the woman is working then she is overburdened with all the three responsibilities.

The following are the suggestions on the basis of the study-

- 1) Minimum age of marriage should be increased: - the minimum age of marriage which is 18 for girls should be increased as one cannot complete the higher education at such a young age. The minimum age should be extended to 25 years for girls and 27 years for boys respectively. If this minimum age will be extended then we can expect a rise in higher education for girls which again will help the females to be economic independent and will ultimately increase the national income of the country.
- 2) Socialization of both boys and girls should be the same. In today's time both boys and girls should be trained in domestic work as girls are expected to. Husbands should contribute in household work equally. So that, the women taking education and working are helped and supported by the husbands. Henceforth, domestic work will not negatively affect the academic performance of the women.
- 3) Certain social policies should be formulated by the government for the betterment of women.
- 4) Scholarships or fellowships beneficiaries should be increased and women should be encouraged to pursue higher education through such schemes, and if women are supported with fellowships, then women would be self-reliant and be able to engage a helper for her domestic work which will ultimately positively affect her academic performance.

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