

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKING WOMEN

By

S. SULTAN AKHTAR*

D. M. PESTONJEE

and

FARHAT FAROOQI

Working women are becoming a familiar feature of Indian Urban Society. During the last decade there has been a prodigious rise in the number of educated working women. When we analyse the status of women in our old Socio-cultural set up we find that they had a minimal number of rights and an overwhelming number of obligations (Thaper 1963). The traditional cultural milieu enormously limited the avenues of employment of women. The socio-economic and political emancipation of women after the independence of the country coupled with the change in our attitude towards the status of women in general, and employment of women in particular, and increased employment opportunities for them have tremendously encouraged them to pervade institutions, offices and factories in search of jobs. The contention of Roe (1956), "To work because of economic necessity is almost everywhere considered respectable for a woman, if unfortunate., but there are many communities still where women who work because they want to and not because they have to are subject to some social or other penalties" is prophetic in our case. The 'penalties' in our country are strong resentments and disapprovals expressed against such women. There are scores of people who firmly believe that her economic assistance to the family budget can only be had at the cost of a paralysed home life. She (the Working

woman) remains a freak in the eyes of the majority of men, society in general, and ironically enough, in the eyes of the rest of the women who on their side remain only housewives. It is also claimed that they by their physiological limitations cannot become as effective and efficient workers as men. Then there are others who hold diametrically opposite views. Scientific inventions, according to adherents of such views, have placed women at par with men in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Also, women should have economic independence by earning their livelihood, at least, for the sake of social and psychological security. The present thinking of educated women is forcefully reflected by Subharwal (1963) in these words: "No existence is as degrading as an existence that is unearned."

The present investigation was undertaken to empirically study the attitudes of present generation (students) towards working women.

Mohanty and Singh (1967) used Semantic Differential technique to study attitude of government servants towards working ladies. Some of the bipolar adjectives (such as calming-exciting; genuine-artificial; high-class; low-class; rich-poor; rough-delicate; usual-unusual; young-old; etc.) used by them are vague, if not frivolous, as far as measurement of attitudes are concerned.

Mr. Akhtar is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Dr. Pestonjee is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Mr. Farooqi is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

METHODOLOGY

In the present investigation, we used a likert-type scale prepared by Akhtar (1966). It consists of three broad areas, namely, home and family, personal and social relations, and work and efficiency. The reliability coefficients calculated by the split-half technique (N=100) ranged between .72 to .89 for the above mentioned areas. The items included in the scale were those which yielded significant value of y_i (Tetrachoric Coefficient of correlation computed between item and total scores) at 1% level, and also their corresponding "discriminative values" were positive and high. The discriminative value or item validity, according to Anastasi (1954). "is the degree to which as item detects individual differences in the characteristics which the test is designed to measure." The scale items are reproduced below.

*SAMPLE

The present investigation was conducted on the postgraduate men and women students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The sample comprises 85 women and 111 men students of the Faculties of Arts and Science. The names of the students were noted down from the Roll's Register and 50% of the enrolled students of the various departments were randomly selected. Each form was filled individually by the respondents who were not allowed to discuss the statements with one another during the course of administration. Names of students who showed lack of interest in the investigation were removed from the list and they were not required to fill in the form.

The returns were scored with the help of punched scoring keys. All those responses which represented favourable attitudes towards working women were given a score of 2. The negative responses were assigned

no score and the responses eliciting indecisions were given a score of 1. But it was made clear at the time of administration that they have to

*Scale for Measuring Attitudes toward Working Women.

1. Woman was made by God to be a custodian of home and not a wage-earner.
2. A working wife can give the desired love and affection to her husband.
3. Working women are neglectful of their social obligations.
4. Women, in our country, should be encouraged to think seriously in terms of having a vocation.
5. Working women do not find time to attend to their domestic duties.
6. Working women develop suspicions and jealousies.
7. Working women hold high social position in society.
8. Women should stay at home to take care of their family.
9. Women impress as efficient workers.
10. Working women generally lead a happy married life.
11. Working women are suspected to have a doubtful morality.
12. Working women who have children feel guilty of neglecting them.
13. Working women enjoy as much prestige in our society as do the non-working women.
14. It is not possible for women to work with full devotion.
15. Working women are deprived of the freedom which they have as a housewife.
16. Working women usually prove to be good housewives.

17. Working women develop a realistic approach to life.
18. Employment of women creates many problems for the employer.
19. It is not difficulty for a working woman to divide her time between home and work.
20. I think that most of the employed women are frustrated in life.

That they have to choose the alternative 'undecided' only when they were unable to make a choice between "agreement" and "disagreement".

Analysis.—Frequency distributions for all the three areas as well as for total score were

prepared separately for men and women students. Then for the two groups mean, S.D. and C.V. were computed separately for each area as well as for total score.

The null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of men and women students towards educated working women was tested by Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-tailed test (Seigel 1956).

Frequency distribution of both the groups with the same step intervals was prepared. Cumulative frequency proportions were separately found out for each group. The maximum difference between the cumulative frequency proportions (D) of the two groups was determined and substituted in the formula given below:

TABLE 1

Groups	Cumulative Frequency Proportions							
	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-24	25-28	29-32	33-36	37-40
Women N ₁ = 85	.02	.03	.07	.17	.34	.69	.89	1.00
Men N ₁ = 111	.09	.03	.12	.38	.61	.86	.95	1.00
Difference	.07	0	.05	.21	.27	.17	.06	0

D = .27

$$X_2 = \frac{4D_2 (n_1 n_2)}{n_1 + n_2} = \frac{4 (.27)_2 (85) (111)}{196}$$

The value of X² with 2 df at 1% level of significance = 9.21 The obtained value of X² with 2 df = 14.03.

The obtained value is much higher than the tabulated value. Thus the Ho is rejected. In other words, men and women students differ significantly in their attitude towards working women.

TABLE 2

Group of students	Mean	S.D.	C.V.
Women	29.55	2.8	9.4
Men	26.53	2.8	10.5

From table 2 we find that, on an average, women students have more favourable attitude towards working women than their male counterparts. When we compare the S.D. and C.V. of the two groups we come to the conclusion that these groups do not differ much from each other as far as the extent of variability is concerned.

The three areas were tested separately for significance of difference. Results are reproduced in table 3 on next page.

TABLE 3

Areas	K.S. Value	Remarks
Home and family	8.48	Insignificant at 1% level
Personal and social relations	17.32	Significant at 1% level
Work and efficiency	6.94	Insignificant at 1% level

We note that men and women students do not differ significantly in their attitudes towards working women as far as "home and family" and "work and efficiency" are concerned. But they differ significantly in their attitudes with respect to personal and social relations of working women. The mean, S.D., and C.V., values of the three areas for the two groups are contained in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Areas	Groups	Mean	S.D.	C.V.
Home and family	Women	12.90	3.10	24.03
	Men	11.95	3.34	27.94
Personal and social relations	Women	12.61	3.04	24.00
	Men	10.91	1.90	17.40
Work and efficiency	Women	4.30	1.38	31.50
	Men	3.89	1.50	38.56

The averages of attitude Scores of men and women students towards working women with respect to 'Home and family' are 11.95 and 12.90 respectively. The difference in the averages is found to be only marginal. Again, no significant difference in the attitudes of men and women students was revealed by the K-S test with regard to "work and efficiency". But the two groups differ significantly in their attitudes towards working women with respect to their personal and social aspects of life. From Table.4 we note that the extent of variability as well as the mean score of women students is higher than that of men students. We may conclude that women

students have more favourable attitude towards the personal and social aspects of life of working women than their male counterparts. But we should not lose sight of the fact that the men students are comparatively more homogeneous in their attitude towards working women, as far as their personal and social relations are concerned.

DISCUSSION

If men and women students do not differ in their attitudes with respect to "work and efficiency" of working women, it is not surprising. Scientific and technological developments have equated biological differences of the two sexes. There is hardly any sphere of activity which women have not 'stooped to conquer'. Opportunities of education and training are equally available to both the sexes. Thus it is no wonder that the subjects of both the groups perceive them to be equally efficient or inefficient.

We have noted that men and women students do not significantly differ in their attitudes towards working women with respect to "home and family". But it is interesting to note that 60% women students as compared to only 44% men students endorsed the statement that "working women generally lead a happy married life." 62% women students expressed their disagreement with the statement that "woman was made by God to be a custodian of home and not a wage-earner", whereas only 34% male students disagreed with the above statement. 60% women and 59% men students expressed that "working women do not find time to attend to their domestic duties". Then, 53% women and 63% men students claimed that "working women are deprived of the freedom which they have as a housewife". Men (55%) as well as women (59%) students consider that "Working women who have children feel guilty of neglecting them".

Thus it is clearly evident that both the groups fully realise the significance of the roles played by women in the home. The responses seem to be in the socially desirable directions.

72% women students as compared to only 53% men students were found to be in agreement with the statement that "women, in our country, should be encouraged to think seriously in terms of having a vocation" the majority of the members of both the groups (60% women and 57% men) were of the view that "working women hold high social positions in society". Again, 77% women students as compared to 60% men students stated that "working women develop a realistic approach towards life". The majority of the men students (66%) stated that "working women are suspected to have a doubtful morality", whereas only 39% women students expressed their agreement.

Thus we can conclude that the basic difference between the attitudes of men and women students towards working women is with respect to their personal and social aspects of life. Working women are

considered to be job-snatchers by men and are a challenge to their long established superiority over women.

Since, in the recent past only, women have come out of the four-walls of their homes to take up employment, their potential abilities as workers is generally perceived to be in direct conflict with the long-held notions of their loyalties to their home and family. They have taken up employment by defying the traditional value scheme of Indian society and family obligations, which is resented, consciously or unconsciously, by the majority of men students.

The old values and ways of living are getting integrated with the new, the emerging ones are still in the phase of transition, so the unfavourable attitude of men students towards working women is more a resistance to change than anything else. If we have to motivate women to work we will have to minimise their home responsibilities and change their, as well as our own, attitude towards work, home and such other social responsibilities.

REFERENCES

- Akhtar, S.S. (1966) A Study of Men and Women, Students Towards Working Women, (reported by F. Farooqui). (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of Psychology Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.)
- Anastasi, A. (1954) Psychological Testing. Macmillan, N.Y.: p. 152.
- Mohanty, G.S. 1967 & Singh, I. (1967) A Study of Reaction of Government Servants Towards Working Ladies by Semantic Differential Technique. Ind. Psychol. Rev., Vol. 4 No. 1, 51-54
- Roe, A. (1956) The Psychology of Occupation. Wiley, N.Y., p. 104.
- Siegal, S. (1956) Non-parametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences. McGraw-Hill. N.Y.:p. 127
- Subharwal, M. (1963) Motherhood, Seminar (Dec.) 50, p. 29.
- Thaper. R. (1963) Through the Ages. Seminar (Dec.), 52, p. 17.