Constraints faced by Working and Non-working Women in their Families

A.M. Sultana

Department of Social Studies and Citizenship, Faculty of Human Science, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Abstract: The main objective of this study is to examine constraints faced by working and non-working women in their families. The study also analyzed the difference between working and non-working women’s challenges in their families. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. The results showed that most of working mothers encountered a number of difficulties in balancing between family and job responsibility. They are facing constraints related to personal affairs and family management compared to non-working mothers. These results show that working mothers have limited social contact as they are mostly busy with their heavy work schedule. On the other hand, non-working mothers have enough time to make visits to their friends and relatives frequently. However, majority of the working mothers (37.1% & 38.6% agree and strongly) are facing extreme difficulties when their children fall ill in sickness whereas a small number of non-working mothers (12.9% & 3.4% strongly agree & agree) are facing similar constraints. In Malaysia, women participation in labor force is increasing which is highly important for countries’ economic and social development as women labor force participations are contributing to rapid economic growth. Given the importance and demands of women work, the study suggests the implication of family friendly policy and its practice to support women involvement in the employment. The study also found that working women’ constraints depend on the nature and type of employment they are involved. Women who are involved in part-time or short working hours are facing fewer constraints in their families. The present study, therefore, suggests to policy makers to employ the policy of reducing working hours for the women so that it may reduce working women’s constraints that they face in their families.

Key words: Working women; Non-working women; Labor force participation; Social visits; Personal affairs

INTRODUCTION

This study addresses constraints faced by working and non-working women in their families in a developing country context. Emphasizes has been given on the aspects of women increased participation in the labor force that might bring significance difference between the constraints faced by working and non-working in their families. Today, nearly 50 percent of women around the world are in the labor force (Zafiris T, 2005). In the developing countries, there have been an increasing proportion of women participating in the labor force which enable them to contribute to the family income and to achieve economic independence. Similarly, one of the developing countries like in Malaysia, the participation of women in the labor force has been increased since its independence in 1957. The trend has been continued to increase in the late 1980s. The female labour force participation rate had increased from 39.3 percent in 1980 to 46.1 percent in 2010 (Irwan N M & Nor A A., 2011).

In Malaysia, women participation in labor force is highly important for country’s economic and social development as women labor force participations are contributing to rapid economic growth. Although women’s increased labor force participation are contributing to economic and social development of the country, they are facing numbers of difficulties in managing family as well as their job profession. According to Aminah (1995), married working women in Malaysia are experienced by work-family conflict which was shown to lead significantly to lower job satisfaction as well as life satisfaction. Moreover, the government of Malaysia has recently implemented economic plans that emphasize building an equitable society, developing a knowledge-based economy, and focusing on HR development which promote greater participation of women in the labor market (Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009). However, these changes provide increased opportunities for Malaysian women. On the other hand, social attitudes of working women may be a greater challenge in this country (Omar, 2009). The study, therefore, attempts to identify related to personal affairs and family management. Most of studies focus on serious constraints faced by the working women related to threat to job security, sexual harassment, wage discrimination, child care, and so on (Eswari., M 2009; Gavin E, Andy B and Tia K 2009). There has been very little research on the constraints faced by working women when they perform dual responsibilities such as domestic work and the office work.
2.0 Objectives and Methodology:

The objectives of this article are (1) to examine constraints faced by working and non-working women in their families (2) to analyze the difference between working and non-working women’s challenges in their families. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. The article uses structured survey data from the selected study areas. The findings presented in this study are based on survey research in two universities and two residential areas in Malaysia. A total of 140 married women (working 70 and 70 non-working women) were interviewed. In this article, a Likert scale has been used to examine constraints faced by working and non-working women in their families. The variables were measured using 10 items on a four point Likert format. In this format the responses were carried out in term of disagree, strongly disagree, either agree or disagree, agree and strongly agree are presented the values of 1-5 respectively. In response to each of the items, respondents made their ratings on a five point scale, pointing whether they (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) agree and (5) strongly agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Constraints Related to Personal Affairs and Family Management:

This section examines constraints faced by working and non-working mothers related to personal affairs and family management. Results presented in Table 1 revealed that majority of the working (35.7% & 27.1 agree and strongly agree) mothers expressed about time constraints for leisure, personal care and entertainment while majority of non-working mothers disagree and strongly disagree that they do not get enough time for the similar aspects. Similarly, in the second statement, more than half of working mothers (24.3% &40 % agree and strongly agree) are facing constraints about social visit whereas a small number of non-working mothers are facing such type of constraints.

These results show that working mothers have limited social contact as they are mostly busy with their heavy work schedule. On the other, non-working mothers have enough time to make visits to their friends and relatives frequently. Although working mothers are facing constraints related to social visit, they are able to spend time with their husbands. Results for the third statement related to the constraints of spending time with husbands, a small percentage of respondents from both groups (working & non-working mothers) are facing constraints.

There is no significance difference observed between two groups. On the other hand, it is noted that a large number of working mothers (45.7 & 18.6%) agree and strongly agree) are feeling fatigued after work. A small number of non-working mothers said (33 % agree and strongly agree) that they always feel tired due to long hours of work. Working mothers’ fatigue is caused by long hours of work without proper rest. They are having excessive fatigue caused by trying to balance between work, family and social life. Due to imbalance of work, family and social life, working mothers are stressful. Stress and anxiety may cause them to be tired and lack energy. Thus, working mothers are facing more constraints related to feeling fatigue compared to non-working mothers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Constraints Faced by Working and Non-working Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not get enough time for leisure, sleep personal care and entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have time for attending social gathering, marriage ceremonies and birthday parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always get complain from my husband for not spending much time with him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel tired due to long hours of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could not perform my domestic role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although working mothers expressed that they are feeling fatigue after long hours of work, they are able to perform their domestic role properly in taking care of the children and family members as well as managing household. Results are presented in Table 1 shows that a higher percentage of non-working mothers (28.6 agree & 13.4 strongly agree) expressed that they could not perform their domestic role properly in taking care of the children and family members as well as managing household. These results indicate that non-working mothers are facing more constraints in family management than working mothers. This might be potential reason that working mothers follow discipline and develop better family management strategy, which assist them to deal with the challenges they are facing.

However, majority of the working mothers are facing the constraint when their children fall in sick. Table 1 highlights that about (37.1& 38.6%) working mothers agree and strongly agree that they are facing big problem when their children fall sick whereas a small number of non-working mothers (12.9 & 3.4%) are facing similar constraints. Previous studies also support that the major problems come about when children fall sick as the responsibility of taking care of sick children is on mother. Due to professional workload, most working mothers are stressful for neglecting this responsibility. In some cases, they depend on informal arrangements, which may have negative effect on children’s health (Therese D and Jenny H, 2009).

### 3.2 Constraints faced by Working Women in their Families: Qualitative Findings:

For deeper understanding working and non-working women challenges were measured based on their perception through the in-depth interview. Respondents were asked whether they face any constraints in family management. Through the in depth interview , it was noted that some working women is facing major difficulties to manage family when their children fall in sick. Even some respondents stated that they stopped working as it was difficult for them to manage household chores as well as job responsibility. The following statements described how working women were facing challenges while their children fall in sick.

“That is one of the problems that I am facing. Sometimes I have many things to do in the office. There are urgent matters at work, which cannot be avoided. At the same time my child falls sick. In this situation, I need to go to work first to settle everything, and then I bring my child to the clinic. In the case of my children’s serious sickness, I need to apply for emergency leave (Interview with Anizan).

“My child has tonsil problem. Every three months I need to send him for check up. Sometimes he gets fever. Thank God my boss is kind and understanding. When I request usually it is granted. I cannot concentrate on my work if my children are sick. My boss understands my situation.” (Interview with Nurin)

“Last time my child was sick. He needed to undergo for a surgery, which was done on Friday. So I could manage time to look after him on Saturday and Sunday. I started working on Monday, so there was no problem. So, thanks to Allah it did not affect my work. I have to be ready all the time for this situation since I’m working (Interview with Yana)”

Based on th above interview findings, it can be noted that working women are encountering difficulties in their children’s sickness. Although they are able to manage these problems with some advantages provided by their organization and favorable situation arises, in most cases working mothers have to face number of problems to deal with during their children’s sickness. It is essential for mothers to be with their children when they fall sick. On the other hand, they have many things to do at office that cannot be avoided. In that case, working mothers are forced to apply for emergency leave. Moreover, they are in stress whether this unexpected leave might affect on their employment. Thus, working mothers as the child bearing employees encounter number of challenges in their children’s sickness.

However, it was noted that some working women are facing challenges when they are overloaded involving themselves in many things. These working women are unable to meet the family commitment as well as professional responsibility. Thus, it becomes major challenges for them. It was also noted that working mother challenges depend on the type of job they involve and working hours they spend. Some of the professions do not require many tasks to be done and flexible working hours but some are opposite. Thus, it can be said that working mother challenges depend on the nature of the work they involved.
Conclusion:

The study examines constraints faced by working and non-working mothers related to personal affairs and family management. The results show that there was significant difference between two groups. It was noted that most of working mothers are facing constraints related to social visits, personal affairs, feeling fatigue and children sickness compared to non-working mothers. Most of working women have limited social contact as they are mostly busy with their heavy work schedule. The results also show that most of working women were facing big problem when their children fall in sick whereas a small number of non-working women were facing similar constraints.

Although working mothers face various constraints in managing their families compared to non-working women, there is a great importance of women work especially in low income families. In Malaysia, most of the families are low income group where both husband and wife’s incomes are necessary for survival. Given the importance and demands of women work, especially among low-income families, the study suggests the implication of family friendly policy and its practice to supports the working women who are facing constraints in their families.

The study found that working women’ constraints depend on the nature and type of employment they are involved. Women who are involved in part-time or short working hours are facing fewer constraints in their families. Thus, the present study suggests policy makers to employ the policy of reducing working hours for the women especially who have young children.

REFERENCES