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Introduction
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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally women in India were not supposed to work for gainful employment outside the home. Working for wages in the past was generally associated with low economic status of a family. The advent of industrialization, urbanism, modernization and science and technology in the recent decades has created a favourable situation for modern education and employment for women. These changes in a society motivated women to entered in various occupational avenue. As Desai and Anantaram\(^1\) (1985) have observed, middle class women’s outside work participation is not merely an economic activity, but it affects the norms regarding the proper sphere of life, their status viz-a-vis their husbands, values underlying patriarchal family structure, redefinition of the roles of family members, care of children, mixing with other men and remaining outside the house for long hours.

Status is a term used to designate the comparative degrees of prestige, deference, or respect accorded to persons in society. Status refers to rights, power, authority and privileges accorded to persons and groups in society. According to Maclver, Status is the social position that determines for its possessor, apart from his personal attribute if social services are regarded to be regarded as a degree of respect, prestige and influence. (Shanta. B Astige, 2006)\(^2\) The definition points out that status as position
has its own values, norms and prestige, irrespective of the incumbent’s personal merits.

In the early matriarchal society, woman enjoyed dignified and respectful status. By and laze there developed some superiority of man over woman. Biological construction of man gave him economic dominance and women became dependent on man so as to be relegated to the position of bondage. The real self of woman turned and restricted to the four walls of their home and domestic affairs. By realizing this, our Father of Nation stated that “Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minute at details of the activities of man and she has the right of freedom and liberty as he; she is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his”. Women working in the unorganized sector of the labour force, which constitute 95 per cent of working women in India “are the most vulnerable” of the working people (Director of ILO, Herman Van Der Laan).³

The definition of ‘women’ has been coloured, painted, drawn and represented with the prevailing systems of each age as and when times and systems have painted them. The hand that painted her was never her own. It painted her at the whims and fancies of the painter. A woman has never had a voice or the power or freedom to define herself. She has always been a non-person. She has never been thinking, decision making, responsible, individual. She was perceived to be so weak that she needed the crutch of
man in various roles to get her though life. She was deemed incapable of living her own life. Marriage, cultural laws, societal laws and religion all have been made by man to cater to his needs alone. As long as a woman is dependent on man for sustenance, her condition will remain the same.4
(Sailja Nandini, 2008)

1.1 Psycho Social Approach

Psychosocial development refers to one's psychological development in interaction with social environment. The individual is not necessarily to fully aware of this relationship with his or her environment. It was first commonly used by psychologist Erik Erikson in his stages of social development. Contrasted with social psychology, which attempts to explain social patterns of behaviour in a general sense, the term "psychosocial" can be used to describe the unique internal processes that occur within the individual. It is usually used in the context of "psychosocial intervention," which is commonly used alongside psychoeducational or psychopharmacological interventions and points toward solutions for individual challenges in interacting with an element of the social environment.

Problems that occur in one's psychosocial functioning can be referred to as "psychosocial dysfunction" or "psychosocial morbidity." This refers to the lack of development or atrophy of the psychosocial self, often occurring
alongsides other dysfunctions that may be physical, emotional, or cognitive in nature.\textsuperscript{5} (Mukhopadhyay 1997)

Psycho-social problems, which can greatly affect one's life, one's work, family and one's domestic life; can be mild to most severe in terms of how pervasive and to what extent a person exhibits the features of a personality disorder. Those with a psycho-social problem possess several distinct features including disturbances in self-image; inability to have successful interpersonal relationship; inappropriateness of range of emotions and ways of perceiving themselves, others and the world and differently possessing improper impulse control. Modern scientific and technological development has created a lot of exposure in man's life. Today, human life is full of numerous hardships, conflicts and problems related to satisfaction of basic needs and psychological needs. Traditionally, it had been perceived that men are more subject to psycho-social problems because of varied responsibilities being the provider of the family. But in recent times, this perception has changed. Women face more psycho-social problems now as a result of her changing roles and bearing dual responsibilities, one in family and other at job. Various psycho-social problems like anxiety, frustration, mental illness, distress, depression, stress, anger, phobias and other various social and emotional distresses are likely to disappoint her. A careful and sensitive peep into mind and psyche of women reveals beyond doubt how her fears, anxieties, stress and strains warp and dampen her morale, courage and retard her march to excellence, progress and glory. She
has to trudge a weary and difficult terrain all her life because of her dual responsibilities at home and at the job. Despite all her resilience, patience, fortitude and tolerance, sometime her spirits give way under the dreary and cumbersome obligation of their home and official duties. All the psycho-social problems prey upon her mental, moral, social, official and familial sphere. We can have a glance at the withering and decaying impact of the psycho-social problems on her outer and inner potential. With the passage of time, the wounds may heal but the scars remain and these scars with her aging process become more marked and more pronounced and manifest themselves in her attitude and self-conduct. 6 (Website)

The main types of stressful situation faced by most of women can be listed as follows:

1.1.1 **Economic** Stress: Inadequate food for family, inadequate financial resources for other basic needs like shelter, health and clothing.

1.1.2 Social Stress: Low status in family and society; dowry system

1.1.3 Occupational **Stress:** Insufficient wages and earning opportunity exploitation at work in all forms like economic, physical, sexual, overwork, ignored occupational hazards and insecurity of employment.

Individual and society are complementary to each other. A group of individuals form a society. If the individual is not good then the society also will be the same. In order to make a better society we must make a good individual. Gender discrimination with a difference of degree, is a worldwide phenomenon. Women have been neglected and are being neglected. Several of those of the 700 million people who suffer due to malnutrition in the world today, 460 million are woman and 900 million illiterates. More than 600 millions are women and 75 per cent of the populations below the poverty line are women. Women are victims of the deadly disease like AIDS etc.

For many years, much has been done on women’s empowerment both at the global level and at the national levels. Women have gained access to the political structure across the world. Socially, women have made huge strides yet there is still a lot more that can be achieved. In the development sector, there has been a realization that development would be incomplete and ineffective unless the equal participation of women is ensured.8 (Women on Earth, 2007)

From generations, women have mostly occupied themselves with reproductive work and domestic care of children and aged, which had been undervalued and unpaid. An important aspect of empowerment is economic empowerment. Women have over the past couple of decades entered the workplace making their presence felt. But, the increased and continued
participation would only be possible if the workplace has a conductive and enabling environment founded on principles of equity and equality. For both men and women to work together, the workplace needs to have rules, which favour both.

Today is the age of ‘information and information is power’⁵. Unless we keep ourselves updated with the latest developments in the field of every profession we will be professionally doomed.

1.2 Educational Status of Women

Education is one of the important indicators of development. This indicator amongst the labouring women is very low. Household responsibilities, especially looking after younger sisters, brothers and assisting the mother in the working situation wherever possible prevents a girl child from getting education. Even though education is free up to the secondary level, the gap between male and female education is wide. Through education women should be in a better position to receive the message of developmental programmes. Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family.
1.3 Role of Women.

"Womanhood is not restricted to the kitchen", Gandhi opined and felt that "Only when the woman is liberated from the slavery of the kitchen, that her true spirit may be discovered". It does not mean that women should not cook, but only that household responsibilities be shared among men, women and children. He wanted women to outgrow the traditional responsibilities and participate in the affairs of nation. He criticized Indian’s passion for male progeny. He said that as long as we don’t consider girls as natural as our boys our nation will be in a dark eclipse. *(Sailja Nandini, Social Welfare, Violence against women in Orissa’ -Vol. 54, No, Feb - March 2008).*

1.4 Sexual Harassment

According to the Protection of Human Right Act, 1993 "human rights" means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International covenant and enforceable by courts in India. It is necessary and expedient for employers in work places as well as other responsible persons or institutions to observe certain guidelines to ensure the prevention of sexual harassment of women as to live with dignity is a human right guaranteed by our constitution.

It has been laid down by the Supreme Court that it is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the Commission of acts of sexual harassment and to
provide the procedure for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of acts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required.

Women who draw a regular salary, receive an honorarium, or work in a voluntary capacity - in the government; private sector or unorganized sector come under the purview of these guidelines.

1.4.1 What amounts to sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) as: Physical contact and advances, a demand or request for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature. Where any of these acts is committed in circumstances where under the victim of such conduct has a reasonable apprehension that in relation to the victim's employment or work whether she is drawing salary, or honorarium or voluntary service, whether in government, public or private enterprise such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem it amounts to sexual harassment.

It is discriminatory for instance when the woman has reasonable grounds to believe that her objection would disadvantage her in connection with her employment or work including recruiting or promotion or when it creates a hostile work environment. Adverse consequences might be visited
if the victim does not consent to the conduct in question or raises any objection thereto.\textsuperscript{10} (Rajneesh Sharma and Renu Sharma, 2008)

1.4.2 Sexual harassment and the law in India

There are several provisions in the Indian Penal Code that refer to women’s chastity and modesty. These provisions include section 354 (assault or criminal force against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and section 509 (words, gestures or acts intended to insult the modesty of woman). Judgements of Supreme Court disclose that sexual harassment is any unwelcome

> Physical contact and advances
> Demand or request for sexual favours
> Sexually coloured remarks
> Display of pornography

Any other unwelcome, physical, verbal or non-verbal conducts of a sexual nature. \textsuperscript{11} (Rajneesh Sharma and Renu Sharma, 2008)

1.5 Empowerment

The concept of women empowerment originates from the idea of the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire. Empowerment as a form of developmental change is brought about by local problemsolving efforts and techniques. The term empowerment is frequently used to describe a process where the powerless gain greater share of control over resources and
decision making and women are generally accepted as being the most powerless members of the oppressed classes. Empowerment has been described as nurturing, liberating, energizing the un-affluent and the less-powerful people. Empowerment is a process and at the same time, the result of the process. It is the process of challenging the existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the source of power.

Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women’s empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and do gain ‘power’. According to the Country Report of Government of India, ”empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of Power” (Suguna B, 2009).

The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. Tamil Nadu has a glorious tradition of recognizing the importance of empowering women over several centuries now. The contribution of writers and social reformers has been well documented. The Government of India has made Empowerment of Women as one of the principal objectives of the Ninth Year Plan (1997-2002) and also declared 2001 as “the Year of Women Empowerment”
1.5.1 Need for Empowerment of Women

Our constitution, in its fundamental rights, has provisions for equality, social justice and protection. These goals are yet to be realized. Women continue to be discriminated, exploited and exposed to inequalities at various levels. By empowerment, women would be able to develop self-esteem, confidence, realize their potential and enhance their collective bargaining power. Women’s empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several inter-related and mutually reinforcing components. Awareness building about women’s situation discrimination, rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality. Capacity building and skill development, especially the ability to plan, make decisions, organize, manage and carry out activities, to deal with people and institutions in the world around them.

13 (Women on Earth, 2007)

1.6 Women Health Status

The status of women health varies widely both within and among countries because of such factors as local disease prevalence, health related behaviours and women educational attainment, exposure to health information, influence or decision making and access to health care, poverty, environmental degradation, civil conflict and migration all their influence women’s health.
1.6.1 Global Trends in Women’s Health Status

In the developing world, women’s health status is changing in response to several emerging trends as indicated below:

i. More Education: Educated girls are more likely to delay marriage and child bearing, have smaller families and use health care facilities.

ii. Late Marriage: In most countries women get married late leading to postponed childbearing.

iii. Emergence of HIV/AIDS: The rate of HIV/AIDS infection is accelerating more rapidly among women than men.

iv. Smaller families: Women bear children over increasingly short periods of their lives.

v. Longer life expectancy: Life expectancy at birth has increased primarily because of improved survival of infants and young children. Women constitute a majority of the elderly.

vi. Increased labour force participation: Women live longer than men; the common belief is that they are healthier. In reality women are more likely to experience poor health.

1.6.2 Health and Nutritional Status of Women

Women’s discrimination is clearly seen with regard to their health and nutrition. Their health is intrinsically associated with their socio-economic conditions. Many women, belonging to low and middle class families both in urban and rural areas, do not have hygienic environment. Degradation of
environment had resulted in the lack of clean water, lack of sewerage facilities, lack of water drainage facilities and improper dwelling places.

The health of married women is bound to suffer due to frequent pregnancies as their husbands wanted to have, male issues and the unevenly spaced pregnancies often causes risks for the mother. Poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, traditional way of medical treatment and careless family planning operations and lack of post-operation care all contribute to the susceptibility of the women to illness. Generally, women’s illnesses are initially ignored, while medical help is restored to when the illness turn to be acute and serious.

Domestic air pollution, firewood method of cooking in rural areas and unclean atmosphere are cause chronic lung diseases, respiratory problems and even cancer among the women. Disabled and aged women experience greater humiliation both at home and in society and for them health care happen to be unreachable one.

Rural women workers in spinning mills, textile mills, ginning factories, brickwork’s and similar occupations are vulnerable to environmental pollution’s breathing troubles due to inhaling of dusts, fibers and chemicals. This obviously affects their physical and mental health. The fear of insecure position in life naturally makes women psychologically damaged. 14 (Mukhopadhyay 1997)
1.7 **Access and control over income and participation in decision-making**

Although many families can only survive through the contributions made by women to the family income, women generally have little control over family income and expenditure decisions. As a rule, men consider their wages as their own income and they give only a certain part to the women for family needs. Wages for agricultural work, even when paid to women, are usually taken over and controlled by the household men. The squandering of income by the men on drink, etc. is a major concern of many women, who criticize the fact that the so-called breadwinners consider their income to be private property whilst they are left to manage the household as best they may. However, where the women have some control over the money they earn, they usually spend the bulk of it on the family's basic needs, especially food. Hence, the issue of control over household income is a crucial factor affecting nutritional levels of women and children.

The prevailing attitude to women is still conditioned by religious symbolism which highlights the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and the preferred role of a woman as a faithful wife and devout mother, whilst at the same time emphasizing the subordination of women, i.e., a daughter or wife is a commodity or possession. Subservience of women is precisely summed up in the famous injunction of the Manu's code, where it is stated that a woman should never be independent. As a daughter she is under the surveillance of her father, as a wife, of her
husband and as a widow, of her son or parents or male relative. A woman is always viewed as someone’s sister, daughter, wife or mother - never as a citizen in her own right who also needs to live with dignity and self-respect.

1.8 Welfare Legislation for Working Women

In a developing country like India, there is a lot of exploitation of workers through payment of low wages, over work and disregard to the needs of labour. This is because Indian labour is not well organized and its bargaining power is very weak. Overlooking the needs and concerns of sweated labour, leads to severe frustration and unrest among them.  

(Reshma Arora, 2000)

In 1994, the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Government of India to collect data relating to wages and earnings, employment, housing and social condition of labour sent a memorandum and general questionnaire to the AIWC (All Indian Women Commission). From these questions that would vitally affect women labour were extracted some questions and circulated to the Standing Committee members as it was felt that a statement prepared by the AIWC ought to be placed before the Labour Investigation Committee. The circular dealt with labour legislation and contained a questionnaire regarding Women’s Compensation Act, employment, working conditions, housing, welfare activities and social security schemes.
I. **Minimum Wages:** The AIWC recommended that each branch should investigate and set the standard of living for women in its respective area. They urged the Central, Provincial and State Governments to appoint Special Investigation Committees with adequate female representation, including working women, to fix a national minimum wage for all labour.

**ii. Maternity Benefits Scheme:** The AIWC was of the opinion that the maternity benefit scheme would ensure more equality for women if money was obtained by Government legislation from employers according to the total number of men and women employed. They appealed to the Governments and States where the maternity benefit was not in force to take immediate steps towards legislation in this direction and to compulsorily provide creche facilities. They also recommended that the Act be applied to women in mines and to other wage earning women.

**iii. Social Legislation:** The AIWC also felt that until such time as India attained a high level of industrial organization and efficiency, women should be guaranteed adequate safety during night duty and in dangerous occupations.

**iv. Women and Children in Unregulated Industries:** The AIWC condemned the exploitation of women and children in unregulated industries and recommended that, on the basis of a detailed survey of prevailing conditions, the Factory Act be extended to places where five or more workers were employed and mechanical power may not be used. Until
this could be effected, all industrial concerns, however small, should be registered and given permission that it would be withdrawn if conditions safeguarding the workers were not fulfilled. Special inspectors were to be appointed to supervise unregulated industries and look into complaints. All forms of labour were to be included and brought within the ambit of future legislation. The need for good housing with proper sanitation and drainage was also underlined (Ashine Roy, 2003).

Thus, this aspect of Industrial sector is still virgin field for systematic study based on field work. These may be taken as justification for undertaking this study of psychosocial status of women labourers in textile and non-textile industries in Coimbatore and Dindigul Districts, Tamil Nadu. Since no such study has been undertaken the present study may be regarded as relevant and justified. In this regard, the necessity for reviewing more number of studies which are directly or indirectly related to the present one is fulfilled in the next chapter.
REFERENCES


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