

Womans triple role within the family sociology essay



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Work and family are central part of family life and society. All over the world, women and children are entering and staying in the workforce in greater numbers than before and Mauritius is no exception. Despite the cultural norms and traditions, most women work outside the family to maintain a certain quality of life. For some, work can be a source of employment and creative opportunity as well as income. For others it is a personal satisfaction, status and for integration.

Traditional family structures have prevented women from enjoying meaningful work experiences. Their labour was mostly confined to their home and family rather than enjoying the rewards of paid employment. Thus, women's primary responsibilities were childcare, the preparation of food and clothing for the family and general household tasks. But nowadays, with the changing social and economic forces, there has been a dramatic increase in women's labour force participation rate.

The factors which has lead a greater proportion of women in Mauritius in paid employment are due to educational opportunities and it has become socially acceptable for married women to work. Modern age women's tasks have been facilitated with the provisions of child-care services and labour saving electrical devices in the home. However, all these have not lessened the burden of inequality within the family. Even the World Bank (2001) report states that gender inequality in various forms is still prevalent around the world.

1. 2 Woman's triple role within the family

Women play a very important role within the family and the society. They are the pillar of the house and they play a crucial role in sustaining the family. They have to take charge of the order, the matter and the health of all the family. Thus, Women are associated with the triple roles of reproductive, productive and community. In the same context, Dunscombe and Marsden (1995) parted that women in paid employment bear the burden of working a 'triple shift'. In addition to their paid employment, they are engaged in domestic and 'emotion work' and mother in a male dominated society.

Even though they go out to work in order to contribute to the family budget, they still have to take care of the household which, most of time are inequitably shared.

1. 3 Changing functions of the family

Modernisation and industrialisation have brought about the breakdown of the extended family to the emergence of the nuclear family, where family are more independent and there is less contact with kins. Nowadays, another form of family which is becoming very popular with the rising rate of divorce is the single-parent family. The past two- decades have brought a great increase in the number of families with responsibilities both at work and at home. Nowadays, single-parents, working women and dual-earner couples are heavily involved in parenting (Carnier et al., 2004). Therefore, today families are stressed by the pressure of work, family and community demands.

It is argued that the family in industrial society is losing many of its functions. Sociologist Ronald Fletcher (2000) claims that, the family's functions have increased in 'detail and importance'. The role of the family has changed from a producer to a consumer. Goods and services are increasingly being bought and consumed - houses, cars, furniture and education. Hence, the highly materialistic world demands that both husband and wife go out to work. The controversy is that women would then contribute to the family budget while men would not contribute to the household work.

The result is that less time is spent in the family. At times, children are unattended and social problems crop up leading to instability and turbulence in the family.

1. 4 Changing status of women across times

There has been a gradual improvement in the status of women. They have achieved more political equality with men and they have equal rights in education. Most types of job are suitable for women today. Equal opportunity act has helped discard discrimination.

The 'Economic Miracle' of Mauritius is largely dependent on the growth of the manufacturing sector which was introduced in 1970s. It has been the main engine of economic development in Mauritius and has absorbed large numbers of unemployed labour. The traditional women who were uneducated represented an important pool of labour for the industrialists. The new 'economic leverage' has welcomed the earning of second salary amidst the family.

Everyone at all levels of society is becoming aware of the stress families face these days so as to struggle to balance their responsibilities at home and at work. Too often families have to choose between the demands of work and family, elderly parents and relatives. In Mauritius the two demographic trends in the increase participation rates for working mothers and dual-career couples have a profound effect on the spheres of work and family. It is generally recognized that the extensive pressure arising from work environment and from family environment can produce high-levels of work-family conflict for many employees.

Development is good for any country but at the same time it has added extra burden on women particularly balancing the conflicting demands of family life and career.

1. 5 Functionalist perspectives on work and family

According to functionalist, family are living in a post modern way of living which is very good for the society as they prefer not to have children because of their career and some prefer to stay-single and they are going according to the needs of the society. P and B Bergers argue that the bourgeois family already teaches children what the society want that is, strict moral values and value economic success. E. Leach (1996) argues that the Nuclear family is stressed. They are exploited by the capitalist and they are alienated; they work because they have no choice. Family are nowadays privatized, they do not want people to know what is happening in their yard. Parents also inculcate fear and suspicious in children that they fear to revolt with the actual system.

1. 6 Problem statement

According to the Honourable Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, in a workshop on ' A sensitisation programme on strengthening Family ties' organised in 19 May 2007, the Mauritian society is being affected by the ageing population, changes in the structure of the family and the erosion of family values. She rightly pointed out that the family has an important role to play in terms of addressing the emotional, material, social and economic needs of its members.

It is principally through the family that social values and knowledge are transmitted from generation to generation and hence this reinforces the social fabrics. Like any other country, the Mauritian's Government is playing an important role in trying to maintain the balance between work and family life. If the family is stable, this will have a direct impact on the society and hence on the country.

On one hand, the family life in Mauritius is being eroded in the face of the demands of work and increasingly long hours in at work. Practically, many members of the Mauritian family return home after work at different times and the traditional family meals that were customary in the past, are now reserved for weekends. Many parents strive to find time to spend with their children during the working week. The twin pressures of work and family life are raising stress levels within the home and creating much pressure. Parents are struggling to fit all their chores into shorter time frames because of lack of time. Due, to the constraint of time imposed by work schedule, various social problems have cropped up. There is increasing divorce rate (0.

47 per 1000 people) and children are having recourse to drug, alcohol and cigarette smoking.

On the other hand, despite the so called equality of sexes advocated by feminists, it is seen that the responsibility of looking after the family relies mostly on women. Hence, housework and looking after children remain predominantly “ women’s work”. Women’s works have been marginalised throughout the history. Women are more likely to concentrate on their work than family. Therefore, family being an important institution it is very important to know what is causing the breakdown of the family, how children are able cope with it and its negative effects on children especially adolescents.

1. 7 Research aim and objectives

This project aims to make an assessment as to whether the impact of the relationship between work and the situation of children within the modern family really affects children and does work leads to the breakdown of the family. Thus, the objectives of this study are to:

Probe into different occupational sectors in Mauritius to measure the impact of work on family life balance;

To see whether women are able to handle their triple role within the modern family;

To see whether the notion of family being functional in the society as advocated by functionalist really stand in the Mauritian society,

To see whether children belonging the middle class family or upper class family who are more affected;

Find out respondents views on does social problems like Juvenile Delinquencies are occurring due to lack of supervision of parents in the modern family; and

Propose findings and solutions.

2. 0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. 0 WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

2. 1 Introduction

This part opens up with:

The family acts as a primary socialization of children whereby the child first learns the basic values and norms of the culture they will grow up in. A child needs to be carefully nurtured, cherished and moulded into responsible individuals with good values and strong ethics. Therefore, it is important to provide them the best childcare so that they grow up to be physically, mentally and emotionally strong individuals.

2. 1. 1 Definition of the Family

According to Sociologists, the family is an intimate domestic group of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties. It has been a very resilient social unit that has survived and adapted through time. So, the element of time referred to above, is again present here.

Similarly, The United States Census Bureau (2007) defines the family as a relatively permanent group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption and who live under the same roof.

Stephen (1999) defines the family as a social arrangement based on marriage including recognition of rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children are reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.

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The family is seen as the main pillar block of a community; family structure and upbringing influence the social character and personality of any given society. Family is where everybody learns to love, to care, to be compassionate, to be ethical, to be honest, to be fair, to have common sense, to use reasoning etc., values which are essential for living in a community. Yet, there are ongoing debates that families' values are in decline.

George Peter Murdock (1949) defines the family as a universal institution. According to him, the family is a ' social group characterised by common residence, economic corporation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children owned or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults'. However, K. Gough (1959) criticises Murdock definition and argues

that the family is not universal. The critics were founded in the Nayar society.

2. 1. 2 Women and the Family

The main role of women according to John Bowlby (1953) is particularly to act as mothers and as such their places are at home to take care of their children in their tender age. He states that juvenile delinquencies among young children are the result of psychological separation from mothers. The mental stability of children rests solely on their mothers. Therefore there is a need for a close and intimate mother and child relationship.

However, Oakley (1974) uses the example of Alor, an island in Indonesia to refute Bowlby statement. In 'small-scale horticultural societies, women are not tied to their offspring', and there is no apparent side effect to it'.

Moreover, she does not see the 'intimate and close relationship' necessary. Research has proved that mothers return to work after childbirth and that the children of working mothers are 'less likely to be delinquent' than non-working mothers.

Crouch (1999) describes the benefits gained by wives and mothers as the 'mid century social compromise'. Duncan et al. (1998) argue that women who define themselves as 'primarily mothers' are located at all points on the social spectrum.

Patricia Day Hookoomsing (2002) states that, plans and projects are designed and implemented by men. It is assumed that if men as heads of the family will reap the benefit from projects designed, automatically women and children will benefit.

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2. 1. 3 The Darker Side of the Family / Erosion of Family Life

Earlier in this review of literature, it is shown that the family is warm and supportive. However, many writers have questioned the 'darker side of the family'. The fact that women spend most of their time either at work or doing household chores can lead to emotional stress in the family. The twentieth century family is mostly nucleus and thus children at times feel isolated and lacking the support of their extended kins: grandparents, aunts, cousins etc. They become introvert and their stress level rise to such an extent that when 'explosion' occurs, it can have dramatic results. This may lead to violence, psychological damage, mental illness, drug intake, crime etc.

The breakdown of children may lead to quarrel between parents. In the long run, marriages may fail and consequently lead to divorce. Incidence that may appear trivial can blow out of proportions and cause drastic consequence within the family. The mass media is increasingly bringing to people attention the sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children through neglect. Similarly, The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (2000) parts that around 10% of children suffering from serious abuse or neglect at home by natural parents.

2. 1. 4 Conception about Family and Work

Families and work have often been illustrated as separate entities, with women being linked to the home and men to the workplace. This separation unfortunately emanated by the sociology of the family being carried out as a separate domain from the sociology of work and occupations. However this

assumption does not stand good in view of the increased participation of married women in the workplace.

Early work by Rhona Raraport and Robert N. Raraport (1969) on dual-career families has talked about the benefits and strains of families with dual-earners. There are, however, many questions still to be answered concerning the interaction of family and work.

Harkness and Waldfogel (1999) advocate that the formation of a family touches mostly female rather than male labour force behaviour. The withdrawal from labour after childbirth may lead to a 'depreciation of human capital'. This may affect career commitment to employers and affect career progression.

There are changes in family arrangements which prompt changes in production arrangements (Zaretsky 1976). Consumption was favoured to production within the household. 'Market relation became overruled by a capitalist market society and instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system' (Polanyi 1957). Dapne Johnson (1982) relates that the hours of work and schooling are organized at such time that it has become difficult to single-parent and dual-worker family. Moreover, school holidays add up to the problems of who will look after the child.

Full-time married or cohabiting women generally have less time for leisure, as they are often expected to do two jobs - their paid work and unpaid housework inside the family, Ken Brown (2008).

2. 2. 0 PART II – WOMEN AND WORK

2. 2. 1 Definition of Work

According to Ken Brown (2008), work is the production of goods and services that usually earns a wage or salary or provides other rewards. The work may be effected in the formal or informal economy. He argues that work is an ‘ important element in occupying, directing and structuring the individual’s time - the demands of working life involve a high degree of self discipline if jobs are to be kept. It is, for most people, the single biggest commitment of time in any week, and it is perhaps one of the most important experiences affecting people’s entire lives.’ Work affects the amount of time and money available for family life.

Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd (1998) refer to work as a distinctive and clear cut activity. Work refers to the job or occupation undertaken. Work is both the place where one goes in order to do one’s job and the activity that one’s does.

Sociologies increasingly recognise however that it is not easy to define work. The definitions concentrate solely on paid employment and are too narrow. Keith Grint (1991) also states the same thing and even presents a number of definitions to prove what he says:-

Work can be seen as ‘ that which ensures individual and societal survival by engaging in nature’. The problem is that many activities which cannot be seen are often regarded as work.

Work cannot be defined simply as employment. Activities in which people are employed are also performed by people who are not employed.

Examples include washing, ironing.

Work cannot be defined as ' something which can be done' whether it is liked or not.

Work can finally not be seen as non-leisure activities. Activities may be leisure for some but work for others. Work and leisure would be hard to separate if it goes together.

The changing nature of workforce and the increasing proportion of employees with family responsibilities suggest that employees, especially working women might demand more family-friendly benefits or policies to assist them in dealing with family demand beyond their paid work (Hon 2002; Hin, 2001; Yu, 1999). The societal and economic changes brought about by women's increasing participation in the paid workforce have placed pressure on Governments to legislate on work-family benefits and organization to provide them.

2. 2. 2 Reasons for working in paid employment

Women work in paid employment for a number of reasons. These are as follows:

Job satisfaction

Money

Company and friendship

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Status and identity

To get out of the home and feel free

To be independent

2. 2. 3 The Impact of Development on women and their participation in different sectors

Women account for an increasing proportion of the workforce and today more women are resuming work after having children than 2 decades ago.

Despite various legislations in favour of women, women's and men's positions on the labour market remain different.

Hakim (2000) stated that contemporary changes in women's employment arose mainly because of the difference which arose out of work 'choices'.

The author states that there are three categories of women: home/family centred, work centred and adaptive drifters. 'Home centred women give priority to their families, work centred women give priority to their employment careers, and adaptive women shift their priorities between family and career over their life cycles. Because the proportion of home centred and work centred individuals is higher amongst women than men, women's employment patterns are different'.

The EPZ sector has profound impacts upon the structure of the Mauritian Society. Industrialization has enable women to take a much active role in society. The traditional house wives were liberated to go out to work. Men were no more the sole breadwinners in the house. Thousands of women left their houses and took employment in factories. This new 'economic leverage

of women' had beneficial effect and raised their standard of living. The docile dependent housewife thus was transformed into an independent income earner.

2. 3. 0 PART II- WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

2. 3. 1 Defining work-family conflict

Work and family represent two spheres in adult's social life. Howard (2008) in summarizing the definition put forth by prior scholars (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Boyar, Maertz, Pearson, & Keough, 2003) conceptualized work-family conflict as a type of interrole conflict where both work and family issues exert pressures on individual.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, as cited in Dealen Willemsen & Sanders, 2006) also define WFC as conflict " in which the role pressure from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". Just like (Greenhaus, 2002) has said that WFC is bio-directional it thus, create conflict where compliance with family matters the difficulty of complying with work matters.

Conflict is understood to arise when an individual has to perform multiple roles such as worker, spouse and parents. Each of these roles imposes demands of their incumbents, requiring time, energy and commitment. Conflict occurs when the demands from one of these domains (home, work, personal and family) interferes with each other and causes imbalance (Frone et al., 1992, 1997).

In today's hectic society, home and work are two colliding forces (Greenhaus and Powell, 2003) that has often lead to an imbalance, where women lives to achieve fulfillment and satisfaction (Auster, 2001, Chalofsky, 2003).

Moreover, (Zedeck, 1992) also suggests that a person's work experience influence his or her behavior at home, influencing basic behaviors towards self and family members.

WFC has also been shown to be related to negative work outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, job burnout and turnover (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Collins, 2001, Howard, Donofrio & Boles, 2004), as well as to outcomes related to psychological distress and marital dissatisfaction (Kinnuen & Mauno 1998, Aryee et al., 1999)

2. 3. 2 Types of work-family conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three major types of work-family conflict:

Time-based,

Strain-based and

Behavior-based conflict

Time-based conflict occurs when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in another for example, when mothers have to do overtime at work with little notice might make it difficult for them to meet family obligations, like picking up children from school. Time-based conflict, is also the most common types of work-family conflict when multiple roles reduce

the time energy available to meet all role demands, thus creating strain (Goode, 1960) and WFC (Marks, 1977).

Strain-based conflict arises when strain or fatigue is experienced in one role and therefore, hinders performance or exploits resources which would be otherwise available for another role (Bryon, 2005; Carlson, 1999 as cited in Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2006). For instance, negative emotional reactions to workplace stresses may lead to expression of irritability towards family members or withdrawal from family interaction in order to recuperate (O'Driscall, 1999 as cited in Jones, Burke & Westman, 2006)

Behavior-based conflict occurs when specific behaviors required in one role are incompatible with behavior expectations in another role (Carlson et al., 2000). It has been suggested for example, that the male managerial stereotype emphasize self-reliance, emotional stability, aggressiveness and objectivity (Schein, 1973). Family members may thus, expect a person to be warm, nurturing and vulnerable in his interaction with them.

(Carlson et al., 2000) also argue that another form of work/ family conflict is the Worry-based conflict in modern industrial society. On the other hand, increasing living cost, marital distress and parental stress may erode the stability of the family life (Lu, in press), causing worries which interfere with work. (Carlson et al., 2000) thus, defined worry-based conflict in terms of pervasive and generalized worries experienced in one role into and interfering with participation in another role.

In a study, Fu and Shaffer (2001) identified several family and work specific determinants of FWC and WFC conflict, respectively. Testing these across the <https://assignbuster.com/womans-triple-role-within-the-family-sociology-essay/>

three forms of conflict-time, strain, behavior-based they found that the family-specific variables were only effective in predicting time-based FWC conflict. As a group, the work-specific variables had much stronger effects and role conflict, role overload and hours spent on paid work were especially influential in explaining both time-based and strain-based forms of WFC conflict. Family conflicts were to be strong risk factor for the onset of elevated need for necessary need for recovery from work and fatigue.

2. 4. 0 CAUSES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

2. 4. 1 Hours of work

Time is an important aspect that has been associated with work-family. As time is a limited resource (Frone et al., 1997b) argues that working more hours means that the employee is at work for more hours and may have more work duties and has less time for other activities. Hence, work hours have been consistently, linked to difficulties in balancing work and personal lives (Mohen and Yu, 2000; Guerts et al., 1999; Batt and Valcour, 2003; Tausing and Fenwick, 2001).

Time pressure can be measured by the number of hours worked. Arora et al's, 1990 study (cited by Kim & Ling, 2001) examined the effect of the time pressure on WFC of women entrepreneur and the majority of the women entrepreneurs agreed that their long hours deprived them of the time they would have liked to spend with their families.

Long hours of work may also relate to parents feelings of time inadequacy with children. However, regardless of hours spent or the kinds of activities engaged in with children, because of the intense conflict or spillover between

worker and parent roles. Employment makes parent less able to be spontaneously available and make them miss certain events that are scheduled during work times (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Moreover, children may also notice when parents bring conflict work conflicts home, and may feel that parents' pre-occupation with work makes them less psychologically accessible (Galinsky, 1999).

Reynolds and Aletraris (2005) conducted a research on work hours and work-family issues by examining whether WFC is associated with a desire for more or fewer hours of work and whether the relationship is moderated by age of children in the home. Their survey revealed that family-to-work conflict does not make people to change their work hours. Work-to-family conflict however, is associated with a desire to fewer hours of work. They also find out that work-to-family conflict is more likely to make women want fewer hours when there is a young child at home.

Moreover, Barnett (2004) in a study of work hours as predictor of stress outcomes, it was mentioned that long hours of work is associated with:

High experienced job demand,

High emotional exhaustion,

High marital tension and

High work-family conflict

In a research published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology (vol. 5, No. 1, 2002), Gerzywacz and Nadine Marks found that employees who

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work more than 45 hours a week report more work-to-family conflict.

However, participants who work less than 20 hours per week were less likely to report that their work benefited their family life.

On the contrary Ganster and Bates (2003) conducted a study on the effect of the number of hours worked on WFC and general well-being. They found that work hours had no significant associations with job stress and WFC.

Similarly the findings of Haar (2001) indicate that the number of hours worked, as a conflict source, may not be the current work demands of organizations, families are now more forgiving of the time burden associated with working long hours.

2. 4. 2 Dual-earner family

The dual-career phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent worldwide. For couples juggling multiple demands, this lifestyle often generates stressors and strains at home and at work, which can have negative consequences for organizations (Elloy & Smith, 2004).

On one hand, in dual-earner families husband are more likely to care for children when their wives are at work during non regular shifts (Presser, 1988). On the other hand women who earn more are likely to hire domestic help, since their time is more valuable (Goldscheider and waite, 1991).

(Elloy and smith 2004) study, based on data from an Australian sample of 62 Lawyers and accountants, analyzed the antecedents of WFC among dual-earner couples. The results confirm that overload, role conflict significantly effect WFC. Similarly Flosehan and Gillbert, 1979 study (cited in Kim & Ling,

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2001) on dual career couples found a positive relationship between the number of hours worked and job spouse conflict as well as job-parent conflict.

Moreover, Voydanoff (1994) interviewed married dual-earner parents of children age 10-17 from the 1992-1997 National Survey Children of Families and Households to examine relationships between work and community resources and family demands. In this study, marital quality was conceptualized in three dimensions: activities with spouse, marital disagreements and marital happiness. The problem is therefore, one of overworked couples rather than overworked individuals.

2. 4. 3 Work overload

Major et al., (2002) suggest that overload occurs when the perceived magnitude of work overwhelms an individual's perceived ability to cope. An empirical evidence suggests that the growing sense of overwork in the United States is relates to the increases in the working hours of couples (Clarkberg and Mohen, 2001; Jacobs and Gerson, 2000). Since, women perform a larger share of household labour than men (Coltrane, 2000), family responsibilities should be more likely to create a desire for fewer hours among women than men.

On one hand, Godbey (1977) argued that Americans had not increased the amount of time devoted to work, but that the pace of their lives had quickened, with the results that many felt overworked. On the other hand, Hochschild (1977) argued that for many workers, work had become home

and home had become work with the result that workers were putting in increasingly long hours in the workplace as a way to avoid family time.

Lu, Gilmour Kao and Huang (2006) have conducted a cross-cultural study of work/family demands, work/family conflict and well-being outcomes and to contrast employees from individualistic (UK) and a collectivist (Taiwan) society. Their findings show that work demands such as hours of work and work load were positively related to WFC, whereas family demands were positively related to family work conflict. Both WFC and FWC were negatively related to well being (job satisfaction and life satisfaction) for employees in the two countries. More important findings was that for British, there was a stronger positive relation between workload and WFC,