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# The Double Burden: A Study on Women's Dual Roles in the Workplace and Household Responsibilities in Kerala

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***Abstract:*** ***This study examines the dual roles of women in Kerala, India, balancing professional responsibilities with traditional household duties using Work-Family Conflict theory. Despite Kerala's educational advancements and higher sex ratio, cultural expectations impose significant pressures on women, causing self-doubt, anxiety, and mental fatigue. The research reveals that while some women receive spousal support, the unequal division of household chores exacerbates work-family conflicts. A descriptive research design with convenience sampling was used to select respondents, and Chi-square tests assessed the impact of gender on beliefs about societal norms causing emotional and mental conflicts. Pearson's Correlation evaluated the relationship between spousal support and job pressure among women. Despite the crucial role of economic contributions from both partners, traditional gender roles continue to impede women's career progression and overall well-being. The study highlights the need for supportive workplace policies and societal changes to ease the dual burden on women, enhance gender equality, and improve mental health.***

***Keywords: Chi-Square Test, Correlation Test, Dual Responsibilities, Gender Roles, Kerala, Socioeconomic Factors, Spousal Support, Work-Family Conflict.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Deep cultural change is under process in Kerala's lush landscapes, where modernity and tradition blend to redefine women's responsibilities and expectations in the home and at work. Even while Kerala is frequently praised for its high literacy rates and progressive social indices, the state nevertheless struggles with the complex dynamics of gender roles, especially when it comes to the double burden that women bear. The research paper illuminates the complex

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network of issues that women in this dynamic southern Indian state face. This study explores the competing demands placed on women as they balance their household and professional goals within the framework of Kerala's distinctive cultural, social, and economic fabric. Kerala, a state well-known for its matrilineal heritage and historically advantageous educational circumstances for women offers a paradoxical environment in which women's empowerment and deeply ingrained gender conventions coexist. In light of changing family dynamics and rising female labour market involvement, the study highlights the complex challenges encountered by women attempting to strike a balance between their responsibilities as carers and earners. The study reveals the psychological toll of balancing career and personal life on women in various fields, marked by self-doubt and anxiety. It highlights the crucial role of spousal support in alleviating stress. The report also suggests reforms for creating supportive, flexible work environments in Kerala, emphasizing the need for gender equality amidst economic and social change. In this paper, as Kerala moves towards a more just and empowered future for all of its residents, we examine the implications of the groundbreaking study's findings for policy, practice, and future research.

### 1.1 Statement of The Problem

Despite advancements in gender equality, women in Kerala face challenges balancing professional and caregiving duties due to cultural norms and systemic injustices. This study examines the dual burden within Kerala's sociocultural context, focusing on women's experiences, causes of the burden, societal expectations, and potential solutions involving workplace policies and marital support.

### 1.2 Scope of the Study

This study explores the dual roles of women in Kerala, India, balancing household and professional duties. It examines individual experiences, socio-economic factors, and cultural standards across diverse regions and professions. Participants of all genders, ages, and marital statuses will provide insights into the challenges and opportunities in work-family balance.

### 1.3 Importance of Study

This study examines how gender, age, and marital status in Kerala affect women's professional and domestic roles, highlighting cultural norms and emotional tolls. It emphasizes the need for supportive environments and organizational reforms to advance gender parity and work-life balance through improved workplace policies.

### 1.4 Objective of the Study:

The study aims to offer a well-defined framework for research activities, guaranteeing that the inquiry is targeted, methodical, and intentional. The following are the study's goals in relation to examining the dual burden that men and women in Kerala, India:1) To investigate the challenges faced by women balancing their double burden of family and professional life 2) To investigate the association between Gender and the belief that societal norms and expectations contribute to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professiona and homemakers 3) To test the relationship between Spousal Support and Pressure to Quit Jobs by woman.

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### 1.5 Theoretical Framework:

Over the decades, masculine and feminine behaviour has been linked to the qualities and behaviour expected from them. Failure to fulfill those roles has put pressure on these genders according to the gender role strain paradigm. Women experience higher levels of psychological distress due to greater exposure and vulnerability to role-related stress. This research paper has used the theory of work-family conflict to study the dual role and the pressures suffered by women in Kerala.

#### 1.5.1 Work-Family Conflict Theory

Over the years, there has been multiple references to different concepts of conflict theory proposed in research. The work-family conflict concept has been a significant focus in academic research [26]. This theory's origin is rooted from role theory in literature during the fifties and sixties. The modern concept of work-family conflict was sighted by works of [12]. For many years, it was a tradition that men were responsible for generating income for the family while women were restricted to domestic duties and caregiving of the family. But the past decades have witnessed the uprise of women in work roles overtaking men [35]. The rising participation of women in the labor force has intensified work-family conflict, as many employed individuals now manage dual-income households and caregiving responsibilities while maintaining the traditional need to support family chores.

#### 1.5.2 Challenges Faced by Women

Work-family conflict theory highlights the double burden many women face managing both work and family responsibilities [24]. Unlike men, who often have continuous career trajectories, women frequently shift focus to family needs [20]. This leads to greater professional and personal challenges, increasing conflict and turnover intentions due to diminished work engagement [14][19].

#### 1.5.3 Gender and Societal Norms

Women often opt for part-time work to reduce work-family conflict, but this can exacerbate family-work conflict and harm their health [3]. Cultural and gender traditions consistently pressure women, intensifying work-family conflict globally [37].

#### 1.5.4 Spousal Support and Job Pressure

Work-family conflict theory underscores the importance of spousal support in alleviating work-family conflict. Supportive spouses help with housework and childcare, reducing time-based conflicts, and offer emotional encouragement. Studies show spousal support is crucial for reducing work-family conflict and enabling married women's success [11][39]. Though lack of spousal support affects men's work-family conflict more, emotional support for women significantly reduces their conflict [38].

#### 1.5.5 Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis ($H_{01}$): There is no significant association between gender and beliefs about societal norms contributing to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers. Null Hypothesis ($H_{02}$): There is no significant association

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between the support provided by male spouses/partners in managing household responsibilities and the pressure felt by women to quit their jobs due to societal expectations in present-day Kerala.

## 2. RELATED WORKS

According to [32], men earn more money than women even when working the same amount. Married men benefit from their wives managing the home and providing essential support, aiding their careers directly or indirectly [22]. However, men's support for their wives varies significantly [5], with research identifying a range of spousal support behaviours, from behavioural to emotional assistance. A supportive spouse can reduce work-family conflict and serve as an effective coping mechanism for women [33]. Women receiving marital support in interpersonal matters, household management, family finances, and career support are better equipped to balance work and life [17]. Traditional gender roles position men as leaders and providers and women as caregivers and domestic workers, with a woman's nationality significantly affecting her professional life [15]. In India, educated women often face career disruptions post-marriage, hindering professional growth [5]. Women spend more time on household tasks, particularly low-control ones, than men, indicating a gender disparity [13]. The 2017 Ipsos Global Trends Survey revealed that 64% of Indians view a woman's primary role as being a good wife and mother, promoting a housewife culture that hampers careers. Consequently, Indian men have greater access to benefits, opportunities, and power positions [3], with men being chosen for six out of ten jobs, while women are selected for lower-quality, informal, and low-paying jobs [31]. Despite multitasking as wives, mothers, workers, and carers, modern Indian women face a glass ceiling and make career sacrifices due to marital realities [6].

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A descriptive research design was utilized to survey the dual roles engaged by women in fulfilling their professional and household responsibilities. This approach was chosen to provide an accurate portrayal of the participants' experiences and challenges. A structured questionnaire was employed in the data collection process, allowing for a systematic gathering of information from the respondents. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling, a method that involves choosing individuals who are readily accessible and willing to participate. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the practical constraints related to time and resources.
The structured questionnaire was designed to capture detailed information about the respondents' professional and household roles. It included both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was divided into sections, each targeting specific aspects of the dual roles. The first section collected demographic data, including age, education, occupation, and marital status. Subsequent sections focused on the extent of professional responsibilities, household duties, the support system available, and the perceived challenges in balancing these roles. The structured format ensured that the data collected was comprehensive and could be easily analyzed statistically.

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Population of the Study: The target population for this study comprised women from various regions across Kerala. Kerala was chosen due to its unique demographic profile, where females outnumber males, as reported in 2024. This demographic characteristic provided a rich context for exploring the dual roles of women. The study aimed to include a diverse group of respondents to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives. To achieve this, an online questionnaire was disseminated, which allowed for broad geographic coverage and convenience for the respondents.

The data collection process involved sending the online questionnaire to 203 candidates, ensuring a representative sample of the population. The respondents were contacted through various channels, including email and social media, to maximize reach and participation. The choice of an online questionnaire facilitated quick and efficient data collection, reducing the logistical challenges associated with traditional survey methods. This approach also allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, potentially leading to more thoughtful and accurate responses.

Data Collection: The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaires on respondents' demographics and challenges in balancing professional and household responsibilities. Secondary data came from literature, reports, and statistical records on Kerala's demographic and socio-economic conditions. The questionnaire included quantitative Likert scale items to measure satisfaction and stress, and qualitative questions for deeper insights into personal experiences and coping strategies. Designed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaire encouraged candid participation and addressed the coping mechanisms and support systems women use to manage their dual roles effectively.

Statistical Tools and Techniques Used for Analysis: The data analysis used Google Forms for initial data collection and SPSS for detailed statistical analysis. Proportionate analysis in Excel and Chi-square tests identified demographic relationships, while multivariate correlation tests in SPSS v23 explored factors influencing women's dual roles, ensuring thorough, reliable conclusions.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics and General Survey of the Conditions of Women

The demographic information of the population was summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristic

| **Age Group** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Under 25 | 84 | 41% |
| 25-34 | 77 | 37.9 |
| 35-44 | 25 | 12.3 |
| 45 and above | 17 | 8.4 |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 97 | 48% |
| Female | 106 | 50% |

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| **Marital status** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Single, never married | 111 | 55% |
| Married | 89 | 44% |
| Divorced | 3 | 2% |
| Note: Sample size N=203 | | |

Table 1 shows that most participants were under 25 (41%) or 25-34 (37.9%), with a nearly equal gender distribution (males 48%, females 50%). Including a significant number of men allows for gender comparisons. The largest group was single (55%), followed by married (44%) and divorced individuals (2%), with marital status potentially influencing the double burden, as married women may have more household responsibilities.

Table 2: Do the respondents believe that societal norms and expectations contribute to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers?

| **Option** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 174 | 92.1 |
| No | 15 | 7.9 |
| **Note:** Sample size , N= 203 | | |

Table 2 of the survey showed that there was an overwhelming majority of respondents (174/203, 92.1%) indicated that societal norms and expectations contribute to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their professional and homemaker roles. Only a small minority (15/203, 7.9%) disagreed.

Table 3: Do you believe women experience feelings of self-doubt or guilt for not being able to give their best in their role as a homemaker while managing work responsibilities?

| **Frequency** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Frequently | 42 | 21% |
| Sometimes | 142 | 70% |
| Rarely | 13 | 6% |
| Never | 6 | 3% |
| **Note:** Sample size, N= 203 | | |

Table 3 showed that seventy percent of respondents reported occasional self-doubt or guilt in managing work and home responsibilities, indicating significant internal conflict. A smaller proportion felt this frequently (21%), rarely (6%), or never (3%), highlighting the varied experiences of women in balancing work and family life.

Table 4: Do you think women experience anxiety or mental exhaustion while managing the dual roles of worker and caregiver?

| **Level of Agreement** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 53 | 26% |
| Agree | 115 | 57% |
| Neutral | 32 | 16% |
| Disagree | 2 | 1% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | <1% |
| **Note:** Sample size, N= 203 | | |

Eighty-three percent of respondents believe women experience anxiety or mental exhaustion from balancing dual roles, indicating significant perceived mental strain according to Table 4. A smaller portion chose neutral, suggesting some think women can manage both roles without significant anxiety or exhaustion.

Table 5: To what extent do you think a male spouse/partner provides support in managing household responsibilities in present-day Kerala?

| **Option** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| A great deal | 37 | 18% |
| Somewhat | 143 | 70% |
| Not at all | 23 | 11% |
| **Note:** Sample size, N= 203 | | |

Interestingly, Table 5 results showed that many of the respondents have sighted that there was some support (70%) or in some cases extreme support (18%) from the male spouse or partner in the management of the household and sharing the responsibilities while a minority did not feel any kind of support in these matters from their counterparts.

Table 6: Do you think economic contributions and household roles should be evaluated equally regardless of gender?

| **Option** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 170 | 89.7 |
| No | 19 | 10.3 |
| **Note:** Sample size , N= 203 | | |

Regarding the question of evaluation of contribution to economic and household duties, there is strong support among the respondents that there is a need for equal distribution of these responsibilities among the genders as per the summary of Table 6.

Table 7: How effective do you think current workplace policies are in supporting women's work-life balance and career advancement in Kerala?

| **Level of Agreement** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Not effective at all | 6 | 3% |
| Not very effective | 54 | 27% |
| Somewhat effective | 107 | 53% |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Very effective | 36 | 18% |
| **Note:** Sample size , N= 203 | | |

From Table 7, data collected revealed that 30% of respondents (6% "Not effective at all" + 24% "Not very effective") felt current policies inadequately support working women. This indicates that existing policies may not sufficiently address the challenges women face in balancing work and personal lives.

Table 8: Have you noticed an increase in families where both spouses or partners work either full- or part-time in Kerala?

| **Option** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 171 | 90.6 |
| No | 18 | 9.4 |
| **Note:** Sample size , N= 203 | | |

Table Table 8 shows that more families now depend on both partners to work which is evident with respondents supporting this (90.6%) while a small group are of the opinion that only one partner needs to work.

**Have you or other women you know felt pressured to QUIT their jobs despite excelling in their professional lives due to societal and familial expectations to maintain a certain image as both a good woman and a successful professional?**

Table 9: Have you or other women you know felt pressured to QUIT their jobs despite excelling in their professional lives due to societal and familial expectations to maintain a certain image as both a good woman and a successful professional?

| **Option** | **n** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 140 | 73.9 |
| No | 49 | 26.1 |
| **Note:** Sample size , N= 203 | | |

Majority of the woman (73.9%) felt more pressured to quit their jobs to family or related expectation and to sustain the image of an ideal partner as per Table 9. But there is still the opposition to this idea of quitting their professional life to become the role model as expected by the society.

**4.2 Chi-Square Test:**

Relationship between gender and beliefs about societal norms contributing to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers Null Hypothesis ($H_{01}$): There is no significant association between gender and beliefs about societal norms contributing to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers. Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$): There is a significant association between gender and beliefs about societal norms contributing to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers.

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Table 10: Gender: * Do you believe that societal norms and expectations contribute to emotional and mental conflicts for women between their roles as professionals and homemakers?

| Gender | Yes | No | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 95 | 6 | 101 |
| Female | 92 | 10 | 102 |
| **Note:** Sample Size =203 | | | |

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests

| Test | $\chi^2$ | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.043 | 1 | 0.307 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.054 | 1 | 0.305 |
| **Note:** Sample Size =203. p <.05. df stands for degree of freedom. | | | |

There's no statistically significant evidence to suggest a link between a person's gender and their belief about societal pressures affecting women who manage work and caregiving duties from Table 11. Men and women in the survey responded similarly regarding whether they believe societal norms create mental health challenges for working women according to Table 10.

### 4.3 Correlation Test:

Relationship between Spousal Support and Pressure to Quit Jobs Null Hypothesis ($H_{02}$): There is no significant association between the support provided by male spouses/partners in managing household responsibilities and the pressure felt by women to quit their jobs due to societal expectations in present-day Kerala. Alternative Hypothesis ($H_2$): There is a significant association between the support provided by male spouses/partners in managing household responsibilities and the pressure felt by women to quit their jobs due to societal expectations in present-day Kerala.

Table 12: Correlation Test between Spousal Support and Pressure to Quit Jobs

| | n | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Male Spouse support in managing household responsibilities | 203 | 1 | .734** |
| | | | 0 |
| 2. Pressure to quit the job despite excelling in their professional lives due to societal and familial expectations | 203 | .734** | 1 |
| | | 0 | |
| Note: n represents the number of valid cases. ** indicate p<.05. | | | |

Male spouse support and pressure to quit the job were moderately positively correlated, r(203) = .734, p = .0000 (Table 12). Women need support in household responsibilities to succeed professionally, as traditional expectations and societal pressures can lead to depression. The paper explores how modern women in Kerala, Southern India, manage both economic and household responsibilities. In 2024, Kerala's sex ratio favoured women [1]. This research was framed on the line of the Work-family conflict theory which has been popular in past and recent times in research literature [16], [25],[14]. In developing India, both spouses in middle and

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lower-income families must work, especially in Kerala, where many educated women struggle to find full-time employment, impacting family well-being. This research found that many respondents felt self-doubt about managing work and family roles, adding pressure on working women [34]. Societal expectations often push women to prioritize homemaking over their careers [36]. Women experience anxiety or guilt in balancing these roles [18]. However, literature shows that in some countries, women reduce this guilt by taking on more caregiver tasks [9]. This research found most respondents received some spousal support with household chores. Contrarily, other studies link a lack of spousal support to depression among women and work-family conflict when chores are unequally shared [7][8]. Respondents also strongly believed in the importance of economic contribution by both genders, aligning with the literature that women find satisfaction in contributing to household earnings [23]. Better work-life balance, crucial for women's career progress, also mitigates work-family conflict [10]. Workplace policies play a significant role in career advancement for women, as supported by previous literature [27]. Traditional gender roles designate men as breadwinners and women as caregivers [21]. Economic pressures now require both genders to work. The Chi-square test showed no significant link between gender and beliefs about societal norms causing emotional conflicts for women balancing professional and homemaker roles. However, previous literature highlights gender inequality issues leading to work-family conflict [4]. Cultural scripts intensify identity conflicts for women, affecting their self-perceptions and work hours as they strive to excel both as mothers and professionals [28], underscoring tradition and societal norms' influence. The correlation test in this research found a strong link between spousal support and reduced pressure to quit jobs among women. Literature over the decades highlights the importance of spousal support in mitigating pressure and reducing work-family conflict, especially when caring for family members with special needs [29][30].

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study explores the dual roles of modern women in Kerala, emphasizing their struggle to balance professional and household responsibilities. Despite educational advancements, traditional gender roles and societal expectations impose significant pressures, leading to self-doubt, anxiety, and emotional conflicts. The unequal division of household chores exacerbates work-family conflict, despite some spousal support. Economic contributions from both partners are crucial, yet traditional role pressures persist. The study highlights the need for supportive workplace policies and societal changes to promote gender equality and well-being, underscoring the broader need for systemic support in developing economies like India.

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