

## A STUDY ON CAREER RESILIENCE IN WORKING WOMEN OF INDIA

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**Abstract:** Resilience is capability to bend and bounce back when facing significant amount of challenge. It is how fast one can adapt and recover from setbacks. As the careers today become less predictable and more demanding, employee's resilience becomes more important. Women represent only a very low percentage of our workforce. This low representation may be due to the social, cultural and familial role expectation from women in different phases of their life, especially after marriage. This paper studies the impact that marriage, a major life event may have on the career resilience in working women in India.

**Keywords:** Life stages, Marriage, Resilience, Role demand.

“The Woman Who Follows The Crowd Will Usually Go No Further Than The Crowd. The Woman Who Walks Alone Is Likely To Find Herself In Places Where No One Has Ever Been Before”. – Albert Einstein

**Introduction:** According to a survey done by International Labour Organization in 2013, the Female Labour Force Participation [FLFP] in India is quite low and stands at only 22.5% in 2011-12. In fact the National Sample Survey Organization [NSSO] data reveals a falling FLFP from over 40% in the mid 1990s to 29% in 2004-05, to 22.5% in 2011-12. This is a big concern for a developing nation like India and reflects on the lack of a social support system where working women in some point of their lives are often forced to choose between career and family and cannot enjoy both.

Like many other countries Indian society has also defined the role of women primarily as the care takers and care givers to their family. Their roles are primarily confined within the house. Though in recent times we get to see more and more women getting higher education and opting to be self reliant and economically independent, the change in their life positions impact this pursuit of their career much more than it affects their male counterparts.

For long Social researchers have been fascinated by the quest of how changes in the life position impacts the performance of employees in the organization. In case of Indian women the role demands, especially after marriage becomes very high. Many talented women leave their rewarding professions and put an end to their career just to fulfill their roles as wives or mothers after their marriage. Sometimes this choice is self-initiated by these women to make up for the lost time to their families, sometimes it is imposed upon them by the familial, social and cultural make up. Whether they have to leave their jobs or not, the fact remains that all working women have to take extra care, impart lot of efforts and work extra hard to balance and juggle between the professional and familial role demands.

### **Role of Resilience in A Women's Life**

There are, according to the legendary corporate personality, Mr. Jack Welch, three keys to success and they are: authenticity, resilience and the ability to see around the corner. With the pace of changes in the nature of work and workplaces accelerating everyday, the observation of Mr. Welch becomes more relevant than ever. A survey carried out in 2010 by Accenture in medium and large companies in twenty countries reveal

that around two third of all decision making authorities in these companies rate career resilience as one of the major determinant of their retention decisions.

Resilience is capability to bend and bounce back when facing significant amount of challenge. It is how fast one can adapt and recover from setbacks. Collard et al. [1996] present several definitions of career resilience. One of these is "the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when the circumstances are discouraging or disruptive".

To a large extent, an employee's career choices are influenced by his or her life position changes, familial commitments etc. In our patriarchal country the perceived role demand from a married female is more inclined towards rearing her family rather than undermining the family commitments to fulfill her career aspirations. Even if we consider the typical learning organizations like the IT, ITES organizations, the male female employee ratio reduces significantly from entry level to the higher levels a clear indication of female workers quitting their professions when the professional demands become too high.

Thus one can understand that to balance the dual and apparently opposing demands of a profession and a family life, woman needs resilience. This construct is reflected in a person's self reliance, adaptability, flexible and positive attitude, motivation for continuous learning, willingness to take risks and a continuous commitment to personal excellence.

The job world is ruled today by technological, procedural and skill superiority. The old and traditional concepts like job security, life long employability etc are becoming illusive. Employees are constantly being exposed to an unspoken doctrine of "either perform or perish" by the employers. Thus it's a continuous rat race through the highway where even a little slow down might throw a perfectly well performing employee out of gear and then into oblivion. In this situation any working professional, and more so for women professionals, career resilience happens to be a life savior.

### **Objective and Scope of the Study**

Though women are naturally capable of multitasking, and this holds truer for the modern day women, the fact

remains that with the change in life position, the social role expectation from women changes a lot. Accordingly many women sacrifice their careers owing to familial, social and traditional role demands. Thus with marriage, the career orientation and career related preferences of women are quitelike to get changed. But does marriage, which is considered as a major life event in our country, especially for women, also affect the career resilience of women? Or resilience is an innate, unique to individual construct that is not so affected by the marital status of an individual, especially a woman?

The objective of this paper is to find out whether married female employees vary significantly in their career resilience than their unmarried counterparts?

This study has been conducted on working women in India, both married and unmarried, predominantly residing in Kolkata and other metropolitan cities, engaged in IT, ITES, Retail and Education sectors. These women are actively engaged in their profession, are graduate and above by educational qualification and above twenty one years by age. Data is collected through a cross sectional design and data analyzed for results.

**Hypothesis:**

Since many women either opt to reduce the work –time by either choosing the temporary work or other such modes or they opt to take a career break at least for few years after marriage, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**Hypothesis:** Unmarried women are more resilient in their career than married women.

**Literature Review**

The changes in organizational structure, business processes have gone fundamental changes since the 1980s as a result of rapid changes in technology, global competition and restructuring within the organization. [Collard et al,1996]. This adoption of superior technology and organizational restructuring often involves delayering of jobs. This is primarily responsible for the transient nature of the jobs. Hall and associates (1996) identified how the psychological contract between employers and employees has changed over time. These exogenous forces as well as factors like family commitments etc demand flexibility, coping skills and resilience amongst employees. “The term Career Resilience” originated from London’s Career Motivation Theory (1983) where he tried to explain what motivates managers to meet up their role demands.

He studied three variables namely individual characteristics, situational conditions and career decisions and tried to establish how these variables influenced the career motivation. Career resilience, defined by him as “how one resists career disruptions in less than optimal environment”.Birchall and Lyons (1995), Bridges (1995), Waterman et al. [1994] supported the notion of the career resilience as one of the principal concerns for facilitating the shift to a new career paradigm. Gordon (1995) has most comprehensively described resilience as “the ability to thrive, mature and increase competence in the face of adverse

circumstances.” Career resilience, therefore signifies low fear of failure, low need for security and high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity (Bridges, 1995; London and Mone, 1987). London (1993) also identified the behavioural components of career resilience as the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, welcome job and organizational changes, embrace working with new and different people, and exhibitself confidence and exhibit willingness to take risks. Such Career resilient employees are described by Waterman and Waterman in their Harvard Business Review article as “a group of employees who are dedicated to the idea of continuous learning but also stand ready to reinvent themselves to keep pace with change; who take responsibility for their own career management and last but not the least who are committed to the company’s success.

**Methodology**

**Sample:**The sample for this study were working women in the age group of 25 years to 50 years engaged mainly in teaching profession, retail industry and also in software industry. Majority of the samples were between 30 – 40 years of age. The sample had a very marginal leaning towards married women [57 %]. Educational level of all the samples was graduates and above. Questionnaires were either mailed to the sample or they were approached directly. Of the 300 working women approached, 90 women responded back.

**Data Collection:**The study has been made based on both primary and secondary data. Primary Data is collected from both married and unmarried working women through validated structured career resilience questionnaire.

**Instrument:** a pre validated 60 item Career Resilience Questionnaire by Fourie and Vuuren of which 23 are reversed scored was administered. The item response scale is a seven point scale ranging from “not at all” (1) to “to a great extent” (7). The first part of the questionnaire consisted of the biographical details of the participant. The construct of career resilience is measured in the questionnaire under the following sub construct: Self discipline; self resilience, learning motivation and acceptance and tolerance of change

**Data Analysis**

The mean and the standard deviation of the resilience scores of the two groups are computed. The mean values are compared through the t –test and conclusion made on the basis of statistical finding.

**Finding**

Table 1: mean and standard deviation of the sample data

MEAN	75.9	76.5
VARIANCE	74.1	104.4
STD DEVIATION	8.6	10.2
N= 90	T probability= 0.9	df= 1

N= 90, Number of married women: 52, Number of unmarried women = 48

As the t value is less than the critical value the t is not significant. Thus there is no significant difference between the two means. Which means that married and unmarried women do not vary significantly as far as their career resilience is concerned.

**Discussion:** Surprisingly analysis of the results in this study does not show any significant difference between the career resilience score of married women as against the unmarried women. This may point towards career resilience as an innate construct of individuals like the personality or the attitude. With progress in the

education level of women, their self efficacy is bound to go up. This coupled with the women friendly policies and initiatives taken by many progressive organizations today are helping women to overcome the problems and concerns in their careers. The test results are encouraging not only in terms of academic interests but also with regard to practical applications in organizations. The findings may add a positive value towards the hiring decisions regarding women, especially the married women and also towards their career management and career advancements.

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