

Career Challenges Experienced by Women Scientists & Coping Strategies

Kuntamalla Sujatha*, Gudimalla Prashanthi

Department of Sericulture, Kakatiya University, Warangal, Telangana, India

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***For Correspondence:** Kuntamalla Sujatha, Department of Sericulture, Kakatiya University, Warangal, Telangana, India;

E-mail: k.sujatha8900@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The career challenges and coping strategies that women scientists confront while demonstrating their duties and commitments at different career stages to obtain professional recognition are discussed in this article.

In this paper we have discussed the challenges they face within and outside the family in their career and coping strategies in the process of expanding her professional perspectives.

Keywords: Women scientists; Challenges; Career; Coping strategies; Family

INTRODUCTION

In ancient Indian society women were worshiped as goddess, while in medieval she was considered to perform duties like bring up children, looking after the family members and taking up household activities. But today she has been breaking all

social issues and barriers. She is playing an important role in the progress and sustainability of the country when empowered to education and employment opportunities in science, technology, engineering and medicine. (In India the number of PhD holders in science was 80 in 1950 but it has increased it to more than 8,000 holders) As women are more interested in exploring solutions for problems rarer than arriving at the results while men in gaining public recognition and quantified measures of productivity. Contribution of women scientists is only important in enriching the life but also towards the well-being of community and nation. Though gender parity is achieved at primary education levels but the gender gaps has increased at University levels [1].

On research basis it is found that women can be categorized as instrumentals and balancers, in the former, here are women who follow their male counterparts while in others women are those who balance between the work and private life [2]. In recent years the women increase in women scientists is attributed to wealth creation, quality of life and sustained development [3].

DESCRIPTION

A scientist is a person who is specialized and well-trained in a narrow field of any research with a special aptitude and creativity. Someone who systematically gathers research evidence, tests them, makes hypothesis and formulates conclusion based on the evidence and publishes the same through reputed journals [4].

Challenges faced by women scientists is work life imbalance which is a major issue experienced by a female scientist throughout her career. It so happens that this is a traditional obligation which men tend to deviate as the responsibility is looked after or attended by their wives [5]. In Indian society, workload at both home and research center affect women mentally and physically due to the double burden of unpaid and paid work [6]. A successful women need to openly acknowledge that she capable to manage her personal life on par with her professional career [7]. Self-motivation and hard work can help the women scientists to overcome challenges like work life balance. Flexible working conditions in workplace can allow women to attend to her family issues whenever needed. It is also found that the majority of women scientists also face additional criticism from her own family members when she is neglecting her important duties when she belongs to nuclear family [8]. This challenge can be overcome by reorganizing her work schedule, work out a separate part for her personal life. For example, half the time can be spending for her career and the rest for individual needs for a better work productivity [9].

Another most common coping strategy are self-confidence, dedication, commitment, hard work, women friendly management can reduce the work related stress for women [10]. Coping strategies also include recreation activities and relaxing by engaging in hobbies like doing exercises, listening to music, talking to someone and doing something in which she is interested. Though paid maternal and child care leaves allow a woman to return to work after a certain period for the same she need a support from her own family members and childcare centers that are near to her child workplace to cope up with the challenges improving her physical health and productivity [11]. It always happens that women have to take up the traditional obligation of pregnancy, looking after children, breastfeeding of young ones, taking care of the small children for a certain period can disturb a woman's career. For most of the women, there is a break in the career because of the difficulties to return back to work when the children are small and also due to family attitude. Sometimes available servants or caretakers do not perform their work in a satisfactory manner which creates a stress on her mind [12].

It is also found that women scientists have to work longer hours to demonstrate commitment but due to her work life balance and childcare she is not able to spend much time which are recorded as being less dedicated. This she can do better by giving better quality time that can compensate for short working hours. Workplace attached child care centers is another coping strategy employed by women scientists to continue her research work [14].

Another challenge experience by most of the women scientists is that they are very less assertive than men. Hence thought fullness tolerance projects one's potentiality. It is also reported by few female scientists that they have experienced sexual harassment (verbal or physical) at their workplace and few reported about men asking them too many personal questions about their life. Women are against speaking against sexual harassment because in research centers they will be regular disruption of work manipulation of performance report granting of low grades and denying assistant opportunities which can hinder her research [15].

Lack of role models in universities is another biggest challenge faced by scientists as she advances in scientific career. This can be coped up by discussing with a colleague about her experience. She can have discussion with women who faced similar problems in her career.

It was found that women who face breaks in the career due to various reasons have been encouraged by DST who came up with innovative women scientists that aims at providing opportunities to women in the area of science and technology. It is found that women scientist who starts the career realizes that what is learnt in the colleges cannot be applied in a particular job. Hence they found the skills and knowledge are to be updated by attending conferences and gaining specialized training for research. But they are unable to travel long distance except unlimited distance when compared to men. This is because of family responsibilities, well advanced planning for conference difficulty in obtaining sponsorships for expenses.

Sexual harassment can be dealt by strong policies gender balance among staff and training, strict punishment and setting of grievance box at work places. It is also found that women scientist is also limited to the geographical mobility because of their husband job and children's and do not feel secure to travel alone. This is the reason why women report high job satisfaction even when their expectations are very high. A strong successful female scientist can be a role model when she shows leadership qualities. But this can also be a negative label for a woman hence attitude of people should undergo our change. Mentoring plays a significant role in a female scientist career. This is needed to free herself from sexual harassment, pay gaps and gaps in funding opportunities.

Work related stress: Increased stress is created for the women scientist from the appointment to promotion, to achieve a work life balance there is a need for financial support from family flexible working timings support from family members, work hold management support for fellow researchers safe and secure child care facility are needed.

CONCLUSION

Intrinsic factors like self-motivation, confidence and dedication and extrinsic institutional factors like flexible working conditions and time friendly management policies mentorship can help us to cope up with the most of the challenges faced by female scientists and their by increase their productivity.

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