

CHAPTER – VI

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SUMMARY AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Introduction :

Women's entry into the professions began with the professions like academics and Medicine followed by almost all the professions, even the so-called male-dominated professions such as Law, Engineering, Management, Accountancy etc. They have established themselves successfully in these professions and many of them occupy positions of power and prestige, as heads of university departments, managers in Banks, judges in the courts and also as police officers.

But this is just one side of the picture. Although the numerical graph of the Indian professional women seems to be quite impressive, the graph of their professional development is far from satisfactory. "Higher the fewer" very appropriately describes the position of women in the professions. Only a few women are able to reach up to the highest ranks in the professions, the rest of them stagnate at middle or lower level doing the repetitive types of jobs. Moreover, people still doubt their legitimacy as professionals. There are charges leveled against them that are lacking in professional commitment and give only second priority to their work, first priority being their families.

Some of the research findings also support the underachievement of women professionals. Qureshi (1978)

refers to "a lower need felt by women for professional competence and advancement". Gurnani and Sheth (1983) in their study on women in scientific professions have come out with the finding, "their (women's) choice of science as a profession is yet restricted to its use value, as an instrument for making living more convenient. They continue to consider their family roles more important than their professional roles". Ahmed Farooq (1974) in another study talks about, "women not setting high career targets." Krishnaraj (1977) has arrived at the conclusion in a study related to women in occupations requiring higher education that women were in lower positions relative to men and relative to their qualifications. In a study exploring unequal participation of men and women in scientific professions, Cole and Cole (1975) reveal that women scientists, regardless of their marital status or size of their families, simply produce fewer scientific papers or papers of lesser impact. He further writes that women are not as frequently promoted to senior positions as are men who come from the same doctoral departments.

The above mentioned and some more attempts have been made to gain insight into the nature and reasons of the underschivement of women as professionals. From all such attempts, it becomes very clear that women in the professions are put in a unique position, quite different from men in the professions. Considering the late entry

of women into professions, the masculine ethos prevalent in most of the professions and the male-derived concepts like professional commitment, professional excellence and male-oriented professional culture of most of the professions, it seems that women may be finding it rather difficult to make their way into the professions and rise up to higher levels of professional hierarchy. The prescribed definitions of a profession and professionalism spell out high demands of professions. A profession demands from its practitioners, a high level of commitment, accountability, pursuit of excellence, adherence to ethical code of conduct and exercise of their discretion and judgment in critical situations. But when one considers the social reality of Indian women, one wonders whether women professionals are able to fulfill such high demands of professions.

Unlike men, Indian professional women do not enjoy facilities to pursue their careers single-mindedly, even if they want to. They face several problems which can be categorised into three categories.

- (a) Socio-cultural Problems
- (b) Psychological Problems
- (c) Problems arising out of the structuring and ethos of the professions.

These problems come in their way of functioning as professionals. These problems are also bound to colour their perceptions with regard to their professions and other

related concepts like commitment, accountability, pursuit of excellence, autonomy etc. It is in this context that the present inquiry tries to study the perceptions of professional women with regard to professionalism and the problems faced by them within their professional set-ups.

The researches conducted so far have dealt with one or two dimensions of professionalism but few researches have attempted to study professionalism of professional women in a broader sense. The present inquiry is an attempt to study professionalism in a comprehensive manner, taking into consideration its various dimensions such as, professional commitment, accountability, pursuit of excellence, professional culture, autonomy and professional ethics. In case of the problems, however, the study focuses mainly on their professional problems. Moreover, the researches conducted so far have been mainly of comparative in nature, wherein gender has been included either as a variable or as a correlate in order to find out differences between men and women professionals with regard to different dimensions of professionalism. The present inquiry, although comparative in nature, is different. It tries to compare the perceptions of women professionals in the professions of Academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media with regard to professionalism and professional problems faced by them in order to find out whether their perceptions regarding professionalism and their problems differ significantly as a

result of differential structures, work ethos and professional culture of the five professions selected for the study.

This kind of knowledge will provide an insight into the nature of the problems women professionals face and how within the patriarchal professional set-ups, women perceive professionalism. This can also help us in redefining and restructuring the profession, in a gender-free way, so as to accommodate women fully.

The Title of the Study

The present study is entitled as "A Study of the Perceptions of Professional Women with Regard to Professionalism and Professional Problems, with a Special Focus on Women Teachers in Higher Education".

Operational Definitions of the Terms.

1. Professionalism

In this study professionalism means the manner in which the professional women function, adhering to professional values such as commitment, accountability, pursuit of excellence, sincerity, ethical conduct and autonomy.

2. Professional Women

Professional Women in this study mean

- Women teachers in Higher Education which includes women teachers who are working in the universities and affiliated colleges of Gujarat as lecturers Readers and Professors.

- Women doctors in government and Private hospitals as well as having private practice.
- Women lawyers in courts of Gujarat or working as legal officers in different departments.
- Women administrators working as class I and class II officers in different government department and nationalised Banks.
- Women professionals associated with All India Radio, Television and Press.

3. Perceptions

Perceptions in this study means the understanding or awareness of external objects, qualities and relations. It is a process by which an individual organises and makes sense of his/her experiences.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To study the perceptions of women teachers in Academics (Higher Education) with regards to professionalism.
- (2) To study the perceptions of women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration, Law and Media with regard to professionalism.
- (3) To study the differences in the perceptions of women professionals in the professions of Academics (Higher Education), Medicine, Administration, Law and Media with regard to professionalism.
- (4) To study the professional problems of women in Academics (Higher Education).
- (5) To study the professional problems of women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration, Law and Media.
- (6) To study the differences in the professional problems of women professionals in the professions of Academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media.
- (7) To prepare profiles of selected women professionals with outstanding achievements in their respective professions.

Sampling

The sample of the study consisted of professional women belonging to the five professions - viz - Academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media from the state of Gujarat. The cities included were Ahmedabad, Vadodra, Surat, Jamnagar and Rajkot.

The technique used for sampling was purposive or judgment sampling. The main reason for selecting this technique was its feasibility in terms of time and cost. This method of sampling also rendered it easy for the investigator to include such subjects in the sample who were judged to be most appropriate for the study.

Instruments

1. Ranking Scale for Professionalism

This instrument was constructed by the investigator herself. It contained 22 statements related to various components of professionalism such as commitment, accountability, adherence to professional code of ethics, professional culture, pursuit of excellence, sincerity and autonomy. Each statement was followed by four alternatives, describing varied perceptions which the professionals could have regarding that particular dimension of professionalism. A respondent had to rank these

alternatives on the basis of her own personal preferences and priorities which she attaches to these alternatives while functioning as a professional).

2. Questionnaire for Studying Professional Problems of Professional Women

This instrument was also prepared by the investigator. This was an open-ended questionnaire which contained 23 questions related to the problems faced by women professionals such as opposition from their family members while joining the profession, reluctance of the employers in selecting women professionals, physical mobility, not getting equal opportunities for professional growth, resentment shown by male subordinates in carrying out orders and instructions given by senior women professionals, differential treatment meted out to them, harassment of women professionals, their competence being questioned by their clients, expectation of higher level of performance from them, their family commitments leading to absenteeism, tensions and conflicts arising in family life as a result of professional roles, dissatisfaction from the economic rewards offered by the profession, their physical appearance influencing the assessment their of professional competence and the adjustments visualised by them at personal, familial and professional and societal level to enhance their professionalism.

Both the instruments were validated by consulting the experts and by administering them on a small sample.

3. Interview Schedule

This interview schedule was designed to prepare profiles of selected outstanding women professionals. It was a semi-structured interview schedule based on the following dimensions of the professional careers of professional women.

- (a) Personal bio-data and family back ground
- (b) Pre-planning of the professional career
- (c) Milestones in the career
- (d) Influence of Role-models, professional images and mentors in their career choices and in attaining professional success
- (e) Facilitators and barriers encountered by them in attaining professional success
- (f) Involvement in professional organisations and need felt for exclusive women's networks
- (g) Role played by personal attributes in attaining professional success
- (h) Professional success as defined by them
- (i) Future professional goals

Analysis

The responses obtained from the ranking scale were in terms of ranks assigned to various alternatives related to the statements given in the scale. These ranks, assigned by the professional women revealed their personal preferences for the various dimensions of professionalism.

In order to determine which alternative was the most preferred one and which was the least preferred one, the total sums of the ranks assigned to the various alternatives were calculated. In this manner, the rank-order among the given alternatives was determined for each of the 22 statements of the ranking scale. On the basis of these rank orders, all the alternatives were reordered separately for each profession as well as cumulatively for women of all the five professions.

In order to find out the differences among the perceptions of women professionals across the five professions, Kendall's co-efficient of concordance (w) which is a non-parametric measure, especially employed to measure inter-judge reliability was computed. This measure (w) indicated the degree of concordance or association in the perceptions of women professionals belonging to the five professions - viz - Academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media. Finally, table R was consulted in order to determine whether the concordance obtained was significant.

For analysis of the problems of the professional or women, the information provided by the respondents was content analysed. This was followed by clubbing the similar responses under relevant headings. After this categorisation, the frequencies for each category were counted and converted into percentages. On the basis of this categorisation and percentages the differences in the nature of the problems faced by women across the five selected professions and the extent to which each problems is faced by women in five selected professions was found out.

The responses obtained by way of interview schedules were content-analysed and the profiles were prepared highlighting the personal, professional and social factors instrumental in their outstanding achievements as professionals.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The following section of the chapter presents objective wise major findings of the study.

1. The first objective of the present inquiry study was to the perception of women teachers in the Academics with regard to professionalism. An attempt was made here to study their perceptions with regard to the components of professionalism such as commitment, accountability, pursuit

of excellence, adherence to code of ethics, professional culture, sincerity and autonomy.

For the women professionals in academics, commitment means giving the first priority to the profession rather than to their personal lives. They perceive their professional role as an activity to be pursued as long as their competence lasts. Their commitment is also reflected in their striving for the maximum productivity in their profession.

Their accountability is primarily towards their profession rather than any institution or client and so their professional activities are determined by the requirements of their profession.

Their enthusiasm and interest for their profession increase with increase in their competence. This indicates that their pursuit of excellence is influenced by the increase in their competence. They believe that a professional is continuously involved in the enrichment of one's profession. Even one's own personal enrichment is for the enrichment of one's profession. While pursuing excellence, if they are faced with constraints in terms of physical facilities, they make optimum use of available resource. Job security, instead of making them complacent and limited, motivates them to further enrich themselves and their profession.

An ethical code is perceived to be essential for them as it ensures quality of performance. It also enables the professionals to work with clear conscience.

Professional culture for the academic professional is important to the extent that when there is a conflict between theory and practice, they discuss it with other members of the profession and strive for a reasonable compromise without giving up professional values. They perceive that the main function of a professional organization is to provide conditions which are conducive to optimise professional development.

Sincerity to them means completing one's tasks competently.

Autonomy for the academic professionals means devising one's own modalities of functioning towards the achievement of the professional goals.

2. The second objective of the inquiry was to study the perceptions of women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration, Law and Media with regard to professionalism.

The commitment of women professionals in the above mentioned four professions is reflected in that all of them

strive for maximum productivity in their professions. The women professionals in the professions of Administration, Law and Media perceive their first priority to be their professions whereas the women in the professions of Medicine, Administration and Media give equal priority to their personal lives also. Their commitment is also reflected in their attempts to strengthen and enrich their professions. For this the women lawyers encourage generally competent persons to join their profession whereas women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration and Media encourage the persons with aptitude to join the profession. The medical professionals consider their professional role as a life-long activity whereas women professionals belonging to the professions of Administration, Law and Media consider it as an activity to be pursued as long as one's competence lasts.

They perceive their accountability to be primarily towards their professions except in case of Media professionals who hold that a profession's accountability should be equally towards the profession and the institution in which one works. Their accountability towards their professions is also reflected in that their professional activities are determined by the requirements of their professions.

All the women professionals, belonging to the professions of Medicine, Law, Administration and Media pursue excellence to the extent that for all of them the enthusiasm and interest for one's profession increase with increase in their competence. The women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration and Law perceive the importance of innovative practices and researches from the point of view of enrichment of their professions whereas women professional in the profession of Media perceive its importance from the personal enrichment viewpoint. For them, the main motivating factor is to be considered unique in their profession. Contributing articles in the professional journals is important for the women professionals in Medicine, Administration and Media as it enriches the professions whereas in case of women lawyers it is important for enriching oneself.

Women professionals belonging to all the four professions consider adhering strictly to the professional code of ethics necessary because it enables them to work with clear conscience. Women professionals in the professions of Medicine and Law consider an ethical code of conduct also essential as it ensures a check on possible mal-practices in the profession whereas for the women professionals in the professions of Administration and Media it is essential as it ensures quality of performance.

Sincerity for the women professionals in Medicine, Administration and Law means completing one's tasks competently but for the Media professionals it means critical reviewing of one's performance.

The professional culture is important for women professionals belonging to all the four professions to the extent that whenever there is a conflict between theory and practice, a professional discusses with other members of the profession and strives for a reasonable compromise without giving up professional values.

They perceive professional autonomy as a device to find out one's own modalities of functioning towards the achievement of the professional goals.

3. The third objective of the investigation was to study the differences in the perceptions of women professionals belonging to the five selected professions viz - Academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media. On examining the differences in the perceptions of women professionals, it can be concluded that irrespective of differential nature, structure, professional ethos and culture of the professions selected for the present study, the perceptions of the women professionals belonging to the five professions do not differ significantly. The earlier assumption of the investigator that the perceptions of women professionals belonging to the conventional professions like Academics and Medicine,

unconventional professions like Media and male-dominated professions like Administration and Law would differ significantly. But the results of the study do not substantiate this. More than differences, there is consensus in their perceptions. So the null hypothesis stating no difference in their perceptions is accepted. The consensus in their perceptions may be on account of gender or Social Reality which is common to all of them. This indicates that it is the dominant social reality which influences their perceptions rather than conditions related to professions.

4. The fourth objective of the investigation was to study the problems of women teachers in academics (Higher Education). The results obtained in this respect indicate that women academicians are comparatively in a better position than the women professional in the other four professions as they do not seem to be facing the problems to a significant extent. Some of the problems, however, they face to a considerable extent than other problems are : Commuting long distances in order to reach to their work place (20%), not getting opportunities for professional growth (33.07%), Family commitments resulting in Absenteeism (41.53%), professional responsibilities leading to domestic conflicts (27.67%) and physical appearance influencing their professional assessment (27.69%).

h. The fifth objective of the investigation was to study the problems of women professionals in the professions of Medicine, Administration, Law and Media. The nature and extent to which women professionals belonging to the above mentioned four professions face the problems are as follows :

- It is in the case of Media professionals that maximum number of women have to commute long distances in order to reach to their work places, (44.11%), followed by Law professionals (41.37%), Administration (37.16%) and Medicine (23.8%).

- In case of 27.91% administrative professionals and 14.22% media professionals frequent travels and transfers are involved.

- 29.22% media professionals and 20.68% Law professionals do not get equal opportunities for challenging and difficult responsibilities.

- The problem of not getting equal opportunities for professional growth is faced by all the women professionals but to varied degrees. Highest degree in this respect is found among the medical professionals (33.09%) followed by Administration (31.25%), Media (27.77%) and Law (24.15%). The reasons for this are varied in different professions. In Law the main reason is gender-bias whereas in other professions reasons which are not specific to gender are more important.

Emotional involvement is maximum among the medical professional (69.84%) followed by Administration (50%), Law (44.92%) and Media (44.44%). The main situations leading to emotional involvement are related to their concern with the clients (Medicine 31.23% and Law 20.68%). In the profession of Law, issues related to professional ethics also lead to emotional involvement (17.79%). In case of media women the major types of situations are related to the nature of their professional tasks. Emotional involvement has mainly positive effect on their professional efficiency.

- The problem of resentment shown by the male subordinates is not faced by the professional women to a significant degree except in case of Medical professionals who face this problem to some degree (20.83%).

- In Administration profession 31.25% women face differential treatment followed by 22.22% in Media. This differential treatment is mainly manifested in allotment of repetitive and stereotyped tasks.

- The problem of harassment is not faced by women professionals in any of the five professions to a significant degree.

- The problem of expecting a higher level of performance is faced to a significant extent by the women Lawyers (48.77%) followed by women Administrations (27.08%) and the extra efforts put in by Law professionals are in terms of investing more time and energy (51.50%).

- With regard to the problem of physical appearance influencing the assessment of professional performance it is women in Media who experience this to the maximum degree (55.55%) followed by Law (34.48%), Medicine (26.15%) and Administration (29.16%).

- The problem of family commitments resulting in absenteeism is experienced to the maximum degree by the women professionals in Medical profession (52.38%) followed by Media profession (44.41%), Administration (35.41%) and Law (31.03%). In case of Medical professionals and Administrative professionals, no consideration is shown by the authorities and colleagues regarding absenteeism most of the times.

- In case of 58.73% medical professionals, their professional role leads to domestic conflicts and tensions, followed by Administration (39.50%) and Media (21.22%). Their main tensions are lack of time for rearing children and overburden of work leading to fatigue and ill-health.

- The problem of lack of satisfaction from financial rewards offered by the profession is to the maximum degree in the profession of Media (56.55%) followed by Law (37.93%).

5. The sixth objective of the inquiry was to study the differences in the problems faced by women professionals in the professions of academics, Medicine, Administration, Law and Media.

Like the perceptions of professional women with regard to professionalism, here too, there are not many differences in the problems faced by women belonging to different professions in spite of the differential structures, ethos and professional culture of the different professions. However, in case of a few problems it can be said that women belonging to the male-oriented professions such as Law and Administration, face them to a greater degree. Moreover some of the problems are manifested in a unique manner in the profession of Media owing to its flexible structure. But on the whole, as the social reality which is more dominant than the professional structures, women belonging to all the five professions face the same kinds of problems.

7. The seventh objective of the study was to prepare profiles of a few women professionals with outstanding achievements in their respective professions.

From the 6 profiles of the professional women with outstanding achievements, it can be concluded that family environment and their upbringing has played an important role in the selection of their careers. Although in case of all the 6 women professionals their careers have not been systematically planned but they all agree that planning of career leads one to professional success. Moreover, the Role-models, professional images and mentors play an important role in the professional careers. Professional training, family support and their personality attributes such as assertiveness, courage, determination have been the major facilitators in their professional success whereas gender-bias, professional rivalry and lack of conducive working conditions are the major barriers which they face while functioning as the professionals. Most of them feel a need for exclusive women's professional networks. All the 6 women professionals have clear future professional goals and are putting in adequate efforts to reach their goals.

Summing up, it can be remarked that women professionals in any of the five professions do not perceive professionalism in a significantly different way. There do not seem to be efforts to perceive the dimensions of professionalism, such as commitment, accountability, code of conduct, pursuit of excellence, sincerity, professional culture and autonomy in different

ways to meet the specific requirements of profession. By and large, women professionals seem to be accepting the prescribed concepts of professionalism.

Even the much talked about problems of working women also are not reflected adequately in the responses of women professionals. It also appears that they either resign to the problems considering them as inevitable or find limitations with their own selves rather than visualising structural changes in the professions which can accommodate women fully.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The outcome of the present study indicates that irrespective of differential natures, structures and work-ethos of various professions, women professionals perceive professionalism in more or less the same way. This implies that they have not been adequately oriented to their respective professions while receiving professional education and undergoing professional training. From this it can be stated that there is a need to provide proper orientation to the aspirant professionals for the professions which they have selected. An inter-disciplinary approach to look at the professions should be developed.

From the profiles it emerges that in many cases the professional careers have been unplanned which spells out clearly, the need for career guidance for the students right from school level.

From the findings related to the problems which professional women face, it can be derived that the aspirant women professionals should also be oriented adequately in the professional preparation programmes, towards the problems, which they may face later on as professionals.

Lastly there is also a need for codes of conduct for all the profession, especially for the academic profession. In spite of being labeled as a noble profession and being highly concerned with ethical issues of the society, surprisingly, academic profession does not have a clear stated code of conduct to guide the professional behaviour of the academic professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. The present study could be replicated with a sample from other zones and cities of Gujarat state.
2. The present study can also be replicated on national level, taking into consideration regional differences.

3. Similar studies can be undertaken, employing the participative observation technique in order to find out the actual problems of women professionals which have not surfaced adequately in the present study.
4. Researches studying the effects of the variables such as age, marital status, type of family, experience, number and age of children etc. on the perceptions of women professionals with regard to professionalism and on the problems which they face also may be undertaken.