CHAPTER V
THE WOMAN EXECUTIVE’S ROLE AT WORK AND IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
"In the decades ahead any organisation which ignores or underestimates the potential of women - or overlooks any source of talent for that matter - will be making a fatal mistake." So said George R. Vila, the chief executive of one of the largest U.S. corporations, Uniroyal Inc., way back in 1973. (Boyle, 1973, p.85). In her article, 'Equal opportunity For Women Is Smart Business' which appeared in the Harvard Business Review of May-June, 1973, Boyle has stated that even those companies that several years ago were rather hoping that the women's movement was a fad, and would go away if ignored, are beginning to recognise its importance. "Some are still at the stage of merely mouthing their commitment to the elimination of sex discrimination, but others have begun to follow up their words with clearly defined programmes designed to improve the utilisation of women in all phases of their business." (Boyle, 1973, pp.85-86). American companies are learning that they must reach for talent and ignore sex.

Harvey-Jones, in his book, 'Making It Happen: Reflections on Leadership', has wise words to say about women in management. One of the greatest changes in the industrial scene of the eighties is the
emergence of more women in senior positions in management. The complementary nature of their strengths and personality will enrich any team. (Harvey-Jones, 1989).

Another significant change in recent years in the West is that childcare is "inching up the corporate agenda." Recently, a Fortune Magazine survey found that employees who were dissatisfied with childcare arrangements were the most likely to be absent or unproductive. Levine, in his article, 'Childcare: Inching Up The Corporate Agenda' which appeared in the Management Review issue of January, 1989, has quoted Gerstner of American Express: "The question for us in business is how we will get involved, because we can't afford not to. We can't afford to sit out this crisis." (Levine, 1989, p.45). It is increasingly being recognised that facilities and amenities for working women are essential in organisations so that they are relatively worry-free to devote more time and energy to the job, not solely on humanitarian grounds but more on occupational grounds.

Today, one can see a change in the career aspirations and goals of the younger women as compared to the older
ones. A few decades ago when there were limited opportunities, women worked mostly because of an economic need and, therefore, their ambitions were also limited. Today’s generation is faced with the advantage of many choices. With widespread admission into the educational system and a slow, but steady acceptance into the workforce, the young female post graduate or professional has a wide variety of options open for her, depending on her particular liking, aptitude, skill and training.

Women in the workforce are here to stay and as mentioned earlier, with better education and opportunities being open to them, are making a significant entry into the executive suite. Women who are high achievers work to be fulfilled. They associate themselves with their work, which gives them a purpose in life; their work gives a meaning and direction to their path and establishes their place in society. "Through their work, and only through their work, they become independent, have their self-concept reinforced, gain recognition and influence within their community, and experience the exhilaration of power. The need for large financial rewards, prestigious titles, high status among their peers, and satisfaction from
performance becomes a very important - if not the most important - drive in their lives." (Collins, et.al., 1988, p.13).

We cannot manage without power, and to have power, we must discover for ourselves what power is, and also, how much power we are comfortable with. Much has been written about power and it is usually pointed out that women often do not seek power, especially not at the start of their careers, in the same way that aggressive males do. Research suggests that women are often seen as powerless. However, experience has shown that once a woman has power she handles it well, and it becomes a part of her.

The current chapter deals entirely with the respondent's work role. Some of the important areas which are responsible for factors that are conducive or inconducive to a woman executive's success at the workplace are included in this Chapter. (They are motivation, career commitment, reasons for working, the general atmosphere and facilities that are available at work, the interrelationships among the various members at the workplace and gender discrimination, among others)
It is interesting to note that in spite of the Indian woman's almost total involvement in her home and family life, she finds it possible to carry out her responsibilities and duties as a career woman with commitment and dedication. The following figures speak for themselves:

93.0% of the respondents were totally committed to their work, while only the balance 7.0% said they were "somewhat committed." 97.0% found their jobs either very interesting or interesting; and almost all (96.0%) felt that they are performing their duties and responsibilities at the workplace either very satisfactorily or satisfactorily.

The reasons for working would necessarily be important for a person's commitment and dedication to work and it is significant that 97.0% were working because they wanted to or "out of choice." The actual reasons for working, however, were varied and
the data is presented below in the form of a table:

### TABLE 19

**REASONS FOR WORKING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Reasons for working</th>
<th>Initially %</th>
<th>Now %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Because of economic necessity</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To supplement husband's/head of households' income</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>To escape from the drudgery of domestic chores</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>To be away from an unhappy atmosphere at home</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To meet new people</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Because she is used to work</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>To utilise spare time</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>To have an independent income</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Because of ambition of a career</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Because of liking for or convenience of a particular profession/job</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>To achieve position/status of her own</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>To make use of education</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This is a multiple answer question and, hence the totals exceed 100.0%

From the table above, it is obvious that almost all the respondents were working because they wanted to.
It is significant to note that a greater number (55.5%) of the respondents who were above 45 years of age, as compared to the respondents who were younger (24.6%), had started working initially for reasons of economic necessity or to supplement husband’s or head of household’s income. This is not surprising because women working for self-fulfillment and out of choice, is a more recent phenomenon. Earlier it was mostly only economic necessity that made women venture outside their homes into the world of paid work. The data, therefore, corroborates what has already been stated earlier that the younger generation, as compared to the older, is faced with many options for ambitious career goals.

Not only are women today working alongside men in all fields, but women working in highly demanding executive careers which entail decision making and leadership qualities are often required to put in long hours or travel a lot. The 9 am to 5 p.m. routine is not for them. This would necessarily lead to some problems which have been discussed later in the chapter. It was found that many of the respondents had long working hours and travelled quite frequently. Most (75.0%) found their working
hours very long or long, while 22.0% stated that their working hours were neither long nor short. 59.0% worked anywhere between nine to twelve hours on an average day which included carrying office work home; while 12.0% said they worked eight hours per day. 13.0% stated that during the peak season (in the service sector) or while on tours, they worked anywhere between thirteen to eighteen hours per day.

A large majority (77.0%) of the respondents travelled on duty every one or two months for a few days at a time. 12.0% stated that they never had to travel or travelled very rarely for just one or two days.

What or who inspired these pioneering women to venture into the hitherto male dominated world of management? Could it have been some other brave and enterprising woman herself? Since women entering male dominated professions face special problems such as the formation of an identity as a professional, as a woman professional a role model may be helpful but inadequate. "Role models are, at best, of limited effectiveness in assisting women to actually gain positions of leadership, authority or power."
(Shapiro, 1978). In the present study it was found that of the total respondents, 33.0% had some role model like father, ex-boss or different people at various stages of their careers with 16.0% of these having other 'women' as their role models; for example, mother, aunt, supervisor (a woman), Indira Gandhi and Marie Curie.

Career Aspirations

Very often, the role of motherhood is an important determinant for the career ambitions of a woman, as it sometimes assumes greater significance than other roles of wife and career. The priority of family needs to career has a lot of implications, not only in a woman's personal life but in her public life as well, because there is a certain stigma attached to the woman who has pursued her career at the cost of her family. She is made to feel guilty and somewhat a freak.

Of significance is the fact that the majority (56.0%) felt that their needs and aspirations in life were more home and family oriented. As one respondent put it, "they were more career oriented, now they are
more home and family oriented. Essentially, the child changes it." 43.0% clearly stated that their needs and aspirations in life are more career oriented than home and family oriented. Of these, 4.7% clarified that earlier their needs had been more home and family oriented, but had changed to career "now that the children have grown up," or "because of the satisfaction I have derived from my job."

When asked how much higher they aspired to reach in their professions/careers, 35.0% categorically stated that they would like to be right at the top; 27.0% stated that they would like to go up a few rungs but not right to the top; while 23.0% were happy where they were. 15.0% replied that they were already at the top.

Of these respondents who wanted to reach the top, 16.0% clearly stated that they were "ambitious, confident, and capable of doing so," and that was the reason for pursuing their careers.

As mentioned above, a significant number of respondents in the sample either did not want to reach the top or were happy where they were. It
appears that for these respondents the reality of the struggle involved in balancing two roles has curbed their career ambitions. Some of the reasons mentioned by those who did not want to reach the top were:

(i) 15.0% said that "being right at the top demanded total commitment, involvement and additional time" and "one loses out a lot on family life; " "Since both my husband and I are doing very well, it is not so important for me to go too high up as I can devote more time to my family now; " "I don't know whether I can continue working till I reach the top because as the child grows up, he may need me at home and I would like to keep my options open."

(ii) 6.0% stated that women would not be considered for the topmost positions in their organisations:

(a) being an engineering organisation where women could only head service functions or
(b) the topmost position being a government appointment where you have to "play the game and have someone's support to reach there."
(iii) 7.0% stated that they were enjoying what they were doing and were not too ambitious.

Among the respondents who were above 45 years of age, a significant number (33.0%), as compared to the younger women (19.2%), were happy where they were because their careers had plateaued off. Only 18.5% of them, in comparison to 41.1% of the younger respondents aspired to reach "right at the top." 26.0% of them were already at the top while only 10.9% of the younger respondents were already at the top. This is not surprising since the older women who were above fortyfive years of age had more experience and, probably, a longer span of time to reach higher up the executive ladder. Also being not too far away from retirement, they were more likely to be content with what they had already achieved, their careers reaching the stage of plateauing off.

Goal Achievement

The respondents were then asked what they felt were their chances to achieve their goals. 50.0% of the respondents were confident of their chances to achieve
their goals of either going up higher or reaching the top for various reasons; some of which are:

(i) 40.0% were confident that they had the potential, qualifications, experience, competence, and the ambition and drive to achieve their goals.

(ii) 7.0% stated that more and more senior positions were opening up for women in the executive world; that they were in organisations / professions where discrimination against women was nil* or at the lowest, and their organisations had given them "the opportunity to move towards general management functions and they were on the fast track."

(iii) Interestingly, a large number (42.4%) of the married respondents stated that they were confident of achieving their goals because they had the full support of their husbands and families. This not only implies that there is a change in the attitude of family members, particularly husbands, towards career women, but also that support from husbands and families is an important factor in the success and achievement of these career women.
As women go higher in organisations, acquiring position, power, and responsibility, they must become increasingly adept at leading and managing people. In spite of this, no matter how excellent their personal qualities of leadership and management are, it is hard for them to get to the top without first learning to work effectively and supportively with subordinates, peers, and bosses. They must fit into the organisational structure or else they will stagnate, not advancing beyond a certain level.

Most women executives will agree that in their struggle to climb in organisations, they came across people—bosses, peers, and subordinates—who were supportive as well as some who made life and the accomplishment of their objectives difficult. While, often, problems arise because the executive is a woman, it must be realised that in some cases, these are simply difficult people, and gender plays no role in the interpersonal relationship.

The most important person in a career, besides oneself, is usually the boss. (Women executives need to
Of the 12.0% who felt their chances to achieve their goals were probable or slim, 5.0% stated that "There are only men in the top bracket." The balance said that they are close to retirement or had already given the best they could and in order to reach further up the corporate ladder, would have to make a big difference" which may be difficult at this stage.

Facilities at the Workplace

For the efficient working and managing of two roles, certain facilities at the workplace are necessary, like flexible timing, a comfortable office, a congenial atmosphere, amenities, and attractive pay and perquisites. It is pertinent to note that most respondents (76.0%) were satisfied. Of the balance, there were mixed responses: 2.0% "would like more project oriented work - to take total charge;" 2.0% wanted more flexibility in their working hours; 8.0% stated that they could do with more by way of infrastructure - "better support services;" 3.0% wanted better amenities for ladies like creche and toilet; and 2.0% said they would like "a better designation and more pay/perks."
understand the power their boss can wield in making or breaking their advancement in the short term or long term. It is the boss who evaluates them for promotions and increments; and it is the boss who carries or suppresses the message of their abilities to superiors, thereby establishing their reputation throughout the company.

In their book referred to earlier, Collins, Gilbert and Nycum have stated that the value of a good boss cannot be overemphasised. He or she is very competent, is well respected by peers, has vision, does not feel threatened by subordinates' good performance, rewards achievement and is willing to delegate. In general terms, they have defined a bad boss as one who stifles a subordinate's growth and initiative, does not recommend a deserved promotion, and hides the subordinate's ability and performance from other superiors. Such a boss can sometimes feel threatened by a subordinate, afraid of being overshadowed. He or she can also be defined as one who is powerless and, therefore, unable to command the necessary resources to accomplish the job. (Collins, et al., 1988 pp. 32-33).

What type of relationship did the respondents in the
sample of this research study enjoy with their bosses? To ascertain this a few straightforward questions on how they perceived their relationship with their bosses were asked. 5.0% of the respondents had "female bosses" out of which 3.0% stated that their relationship with these female bosses was "tolerable" or "indifferent." The majority (82.0%) were reporting to male bosses and of them a large number (75.0%) found the relationship to be "good" or "comfortable", while 5.0% said it was "okay" or "so-so." Only 2.0% stated that they found their bosses attitude "belligerent" and sometimes "difficult." It appears from the above that women themselves still find it easier to relate to male bosses than to female ones.

Good relationships with colleagues can facilitate the transference of information, a feeling of belonging, and smooth day-to-day operations. Most of the respondents in the sample (87.0%) felt that their male and female colleagues were supportive and they got along well with them.

Only a few (11.0%) felt that some male colleagues were jealous as they considered these women a threat. Some of them stated that their male colleagues often passed
unkind remarks like, "She is being promoted because of her sex." Some felt that while their male colleagues treated them with resentment initially, they found cooperation and acceptance later by working doubly hard to prove themselves.

Similarly, a few (8.0%) stated that while some female colleagues were supportive, others "had shades of envy in them," "they are more jealous and competitive than men," "a certain amount of professional jealousy and competition is always visible," "it is they, (i.e., the women) more than men who tend to feel that men are better to work with," "I'd rather work with men - women sometimes are bitchy."

The remarks that these few respondents have made about their female colleagues, necessitates discussing, at least briefly, what is known as the "Queen Bee Syndrome", a term familiar to most working women. The label "Queen Bee" refers to a woman, usually somewhat older than the other female workers, who has worked very hard to get where she is and who is unwilling to be helpful to other women who are making it behind her in the organisation.
Her unwillingness to support others is usually the result of her attitude or feeling that she has made it by herself, taking a lot of hard knocks along the way, with little or no support. Collins and her co-authors even state that "sometimes she will even quietly sabotage the career of any female below her who is perceived as a fast riser and may be a threat to her position." (Collins, et. al., 1988 p. 49). One of the respondents in their study has very aptly summed it up: "The Queen Bee, because of her access to power and her visible role within the organisation, is in the best position to advance the careers of women. But the irony of the situation is that she is the least inclined to do so." In examples like this, women have been labelled "women's worst enemy." Although situations like this do occur time and time again, the authors have stated that many women in their study have echoed the belief that the Queen Bee era has ended and are applauding the new spirit for the eighties, characterised by women pulling together and supporting each other in their mutual progression to the top. (Collins, et. al., 1988 p. 49-50).

The response of the majority of women executives in this research study, mentioned above, that they did not
have problems relating to their colleagues, male or female, corroborates this. It seems that, by and large, senior level women are quite supportive of each other.

An important development that has occurred in the last few decades is that as more and more women are taking up responsible, decision making positions, they are dealing with a larger number of subordinates. The executive is above subordinates in rank, power, and importance. She has the authority to direct and control their assignments and play a large role in assessing and evaluating their performance, thereby affecting their careers enormously.

It is heartening to note that a large percentage of the respondents in this study (90.0%) stated that they have no problems with either male or female subordinates, except for a few (2.0%) who felt that male subordinates "don't like taking orders from a woman boss;" and another 3.0% who felt that it was easier to handle male subordinates than female subordinates "speaking from experience," as female subordinates "apply tactics" (psychological). "They feel that being a woman myself, I should understand their problems of why they can't
stay late at work, etc. said one. Also, one respondent felt that female subordinates were "not as pushing and result oriented as men."

**Popular Notions/Stereotypes**

There are several popular notions or stereotypes connected with the woman executive. It was decided to ask the respondent's views on these popular notions/stereotypes:

1. **There are very few women executives in India:**

A majority of the respondents (63.0%) agreed with the notion that there are very few women executives in India, while 35.0% disagreed.

29.0% of the respondents felt that women themselves were responsible for this as many "midway in their careers lose their ambition and quit for marriage and children", "They don't see themselves as managers and look on themselves more as potential wives and mothers;" They don't want responsibility and are satisfied with less demanding jobs like clerks, secretaries, teachers, etc." One respondent mentioned
that some women in the bank actually refused promotion because they were used to the routine and did not want added responsibility in case it interfered with their responsibilities at home.

23.0% felt that (society's negative attitude towards women was the reason for her representation in the executive force in small numbers) Traditionally, Indian society is a male dominated one, with distinct roles for men and women."

21.0% felt that it was relative. In terms of absolute numbers and (in comparison to men there are few women executives because fewer have entered the job market) "It is only now that they are coming out and venturing into the executive world."

The reason for the low population of women executives, according to 9.0%, was that marriage and children put too many demands on a woman's time and energy and, hence, she cannot devote full time attention to an executive career, which causes conflict.
The majority of respondents (64.0%) agreed with the popular notion that women executives' personalities differed from male executives, while 32.0% disagreed. 40.0% replied that they "did not know" or "were unsure".

Of those who agreed that women executives' and men executives' personalities differed, 28.1% stated that a woman executive's strengths were that she is more understanding, fair minded and flexible in her approach to dealing with issues although she can be quite tough when needed and she is more perceptive, analytical, loyal and intuitive than a man.

28.1% stated that women executives are far more dedicated, committed to work, conscientious, hardworking and sincere than men. Men work because they have to. Women don't have to. They can rely on the economic status of their husbands. They work because they want to, and hence are more emotionally committed to their jobs. "Their dual responsibilities put them under pressure and, therefore, they learn to be better time managers; household management helps in office management too and vice versa".
An interesting observation about the different personalities of male and female executives was made by 10.9% of the respondents who stated that, "since most men work, you get all types, but women who get to executive positions are few; they are a certain type of person; they have something in common to reach there in spite of odds (aggressive and ambitious). Hence there is more homogeneity in their group."

Another 9.0% were of the opinion that, "a woman executive’s approach/outlook is different; she has her own way of handling things."

While the above responses were more positive, some of the responses made were negative. For instance, 26.6% of the respondents stated that the same characteristic deemed "go-getting in a man is deemed aggressive in a woman." Anyway "there is a need for women to be more aggressive, work harder and perform better, in order to be taken seriously. They have to continuously prove themselves. They are more diplomatic because they have to survive and be accepted in a male world."

17.2% made diverse comments such as, "Women executives are currently passing through the throes of change and,
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hence, suffer from an identity crisis;" ("Women are
less at ease in their executive roles.) Many of them
either "overdo" or "underdo" it. Only a few are
completely secure and natural. (Women executives
appear less committed than men executives.) Because of
conditioning, (the concept of work is not a woman's
priority). For a man his job is everything, but for a
woman her home is as important. Hence there is more
commitment from men. (Women executives are too soft and
not good decision makers like men;) they are usually
less firm and assertive than men particularly in terms
of self promotion, on themselves and in getting things
done;" "they are more petty than their male
counterparts and always bursting into tears at the
wrong time;" "they are catty and jealous."

Old stereotypes die hard and today's female managers
still face many obstacles along the way because of
them.

The common stereotypes are:

(1) Men are intellectually more superior

The majority of the respondents (94.0%) denied the
stereotype that men are intellectually more superior
than women, while only 6.0% agreed. 4.0% stated that
they often "make men feel superior" so that they "won't be acting out of role".

(2) Men value achievement, promotion and meaningful work more than women

While 54.0% disagreed with this stereotype, and 1.0% was unsure, the balance 45.0% agreed that men valued achievement, promotion and meaningful work more than women. The main reason according to most of them is that man's role in society is to be the bread winner and, hence, his assessment of his own contribution, both in the family and in the job, is by his success at work. A woman rates hers differently, particularly if she is married. Her home is as important as her career. Also mid-way in their careers women marry and give more importance to their homes.

(3) Men are more assertive than women

In this instance too the majority (57.0%) did not agree, while the balance 43.0% agreed with the stereotype that men are more assertive than women.
While most of those who agreed (69.8%) were of the opinion that man's assertiveness was due to cultural/social conditioning, 9.3% believed the difference was biological and 11.6% stated that it was both biological and cultural conditioning.

(4) The successful manager has masculine attributes

A large majority (79.0%) did not agree with the stereotype that the successful manager possesses masculine attributes; 19.0% agreed, while 2.0% "were unsure" Of those who agreed, the most commonly stated reason was that "women are moody, temperamental, highstrung, emotional and break down crying;" while men are more "pushy, agressive and determined to rise. They use their heads rather than their hearts."

The above responses clearly indicate that women holding senior managerial postions, by and large, do not agree with common stereotypes and this corroborates what Dipboye has stated that most stereotypes appear to be fallacious. This has been referred to in some detail in Chapter I. (Dipboye, 1975).

The question of stereotypes naturally led this
researcher to the question of whether single (or divorced) women executives, numbering 32 in the sample, had a better chance of rising up the corporate ladder than their married colleagues. 56.3% clearly stated that this was not so. It depended not on marital status but from individual to individual, on their abilities, capabilities and infrastructure at home, physical and emotional support from families, hired help, etc.

9.4% stated that actually married women had one advantage over them as they had emotional support from their families which they lacked. They felt a sense of loneliness which could affect their work.

However, 59.4% did state that to some extent flexibility for the company is greater as single women can more easily put in longer working hours, and that having no family hassles, the single woman could probably devote more time and attention to her career.

Career Related "Conducive" Factors

Certain favourable or conducive factors or conditions are essential at the workplace too in order for anyone
to be a success at his or her job, particularly for women who bear a dual burden. With favourable conditions at home and work, the executive does not normally carry mentally to her job her problems at home and vice versa. As was done in the previous chapter on home and family related conducive factors, career related conducive factors were also looked into. These are presented below in the form of a table:
TABLE 20

CAREER RELATED "CONDUCIVE" FACTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Working out of choice</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Commitment to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totally committed</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat committed</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Woman executive is confident determined, systematic, efficient, well-organised, planning her time, and applying management techniques not only in the office but in the running of her home too.</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Recognition received from the organisation for good performance/ support from boss/colleagues</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Have the full support of husband and family members in their need or desire to rise higher up the corporate ladder</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Have proper facilities at the workplace, like comfortable environment and access to telephone to keep in touch with the family</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Flexible timing/working part time/proximity to the office</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>More organisations providing opportunities for women, with little or nor sex bias</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conducive factors mentioned in the Table above, in connection with a woman executive's career, indicate that commitment to work and good performance at work are related to the fact that they are working of their own free will, more for self fulfillment rather than economic necessity or circumstance. This is corroborated by the statements of 46.0% who said that they were working because of ambition of a career, 42.0% who were working to achieve a position/status of their own; 29.0% because they liked their professions; 39.0% to have an independent income; and 31.0% to make use of education.

Apart from this, having proper facilities at the place of work, like congenial and comfortable atmosphere, a good office room to work in, and telephones and other conveniences, also helped a great deal. Most of the women executives kept in touch with their homes during the day by using the telephone.

11.3% attributed their success partly to the fact that their organisations permitted them to work on flexible timings, or part time; and their proximity to their place of work, "For example, being senior one does not
have to take permission to leave the office and has more freedom to dash home, having own transport as well, to see a sick child if necessary", said one executive.

Also important is the factor of more opportunities being open to women in organisations where there is little or no sex bias as was stated by 45.0% of the respondents.

Another important conducive factor for a woman executive's desire to rise higher and fulfill her own personal needs, is the "full support of husband and family members." 42.4% mentioned they were confident of achieving their goals because of this factor.

If we can deal with our surroundings, they in turn can become a supportive environment where we can develop. Of course, a woman's own determination, confidence, efficiency and her ability to organise and plan her time, using managerial skills and techniques in all her responsibilities at work and at home are major contributing conducive factors for her success. 40.0% clearly stated that they had these qualities and
attributed much of their success to this factor.

From the above, it is clear that there are certain conditions or favourable factors that have helped the respondents, and on which they rely to achieve some measure of success at their workplace. Although the factors do not number too many, each of them is crucial to the woman executive's happiness and help her to shoulder her responsibilities with zest and vigour, making her successful.

Career Related "Inconducive" Factors or Problems

Conditions are not going to be favourable to all of the people all of the time. Almost every executive, male or female, faces problems at some stage or the other in their careers. Woman, however, having just entered the race and because of her earlier socialisation, the attitude of society towards her career, and the dual nature of her responsibilities, faces more hurdles than the male executive, having to cope with problems that are peculiar to her.
Most women executives have undergone some stress in their lives and a few may even be in a state of almost perpetual stress. The working world produces a unique stress of its own. Coping with the rush hour traffic, carrying work home, making important decisions in the organisation, long working hours, travel out of the city, and caring for the family—all these produce stress which comes with all high level jobs.

In the study by Collins, Gilbert and Nycum, referred to earlier, some women reported that a certain level of stress can even be useful. The late Hans Selye coined the word "eustress" which he described as "stress which if handled correctly, gives one a competitive edge, and enhances one's creativity." Eustress can have a positive effect on people's careers and can psyche them up for presentations and situations with others in which they need to do their best. (Collins, et.al., 1988, p.19).

The problems or inconducive factors faced by the women executives in the sample of this research study are listed below in the form of a table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Long working hours</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Type of Organisation (eg. Engineering, where women can only head service functions or Government appointments where they have to toe the line).</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sex Bias:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Men given preference for top positions</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Initial resentment from male boss/colleagues- had to work doubly hard to prove themselves</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Pregnancy hampered promotion</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Most men have a problem dealing with senior women “don’t like taking orders from them”.</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) Customers/clients don’t take women executives seriously.</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Absence of infrastructure or support services, for example, day-care centres for small children.</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Transfer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Would not like it at all</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Only if duration of separation is of one or two years</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Only if duration of separation is one to two years</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Even if duration of separation is three years or more</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. No.</td>
<td>Factors</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Society's attitude towards women:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Conditioning, and division of male and female roles</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Some men view career women differently (with less respect) than they do their women who stay at home</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Jealous male colleagues</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Jealous and competitive female colleagues</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Physical harassment</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Crude/suggestive language and jokes or harmless flirting</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Boss usually makes advances while travelling together</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long working hours and travelling every one or two months seem to be acute problems for these women executives who sometimes feel they are missing or neglecting their families. Nevertheless, they face such problems squarely and still manage their multiple responsibilities, mainly with the supportive role played by their family members. 76.0% of the respondents sometimes go through anxiety and pangs of
guilt at such times. The absence of support services, like day care centres for small children, also pose problems for some executive mothers.

Another problem that dual career couples often face is the threat or possibility of transfer of either one of the spouses. On this issue Harvey-Jones reflects upon his years with ICI, a progressive and tolerant company with respect for the individual. (He was appointed to the main board of ICI in 1973 and became Chairman in 1982). The Company expected its managers to be prepared to move, and work, anywhere. This was, in fact, a condition of service with the company, and still is. He recalls, "Nevertheless, we seldom considered, in my early years with the company, the effect on a wife's career if we asked a manager of promise to move to another part of the country. We of course understood if he could not move on personal grounds, but those grounds could be related to health, or elderly parents, or children's schooling - never his wife's career. Now only some fifteen or twenty years later we would know that both partners in a marriage are likely to have important careers, and may well have decided that neither one of the two should be the 'lead operation'. Companies, in the past, have tended to
expect that their employees should conform to the wishes of the company. This is becoming less and less practicable as a philosophy of operation, and I believe absolutely that in the future it will be the company that conforms to the individual that attracts and motivates the best people." Companies will have to be more flexible in their demands, to accommodate more and more the individual's different hopes, wishes and ambitions. (Harvey-Jones, 1989 p. 15)

The respondents in this research study were asked if they would like to carry on with their jobs if either they or their spouse was transferred. 36.4% stated that they would not like it at all. 25.7% replied that they would not mind a transfer but only if the duration of separation from spouse is less than a year, while 16.7% did not mind a separation of about one to two years.

Some of the respondents (13.6%) have taken even this major problem in their stride and lived away from their spouses for two to three years, while one respondent, who is in a very senior position in a large government organisation, has lived away from her husband for a total of ten years, on one occasion due to his transfer
and on the other, due to her own transfer.

Many, however, stated that they would not like at all to live away from their husbands even for short periods. They would try to get the problem of transfer sorted out or else even take up an alternative assignment to be with their spouses.

Male attitudes towards female ambitions in the work world are greatly changing, although not so quickly as most women would like. Collins, Gilbert and Nycum have reported a new willingness to listen to women which they feel may come more easily to younger men. The younger men have a large percentage of female classmates in professional schools and have learned that not only will they be competing with women, but that women are as smart and just as ambitious. This recognition itself becomes a double edged sword and contributes to competitive ruthlessness - as younger men take women seriously, they are keenly competitive as they themselves struggle for positions in the corporate workplace. The authors also believe that older men who would like to see options available for their daughters are particularly helpful to women in business. (Collins, et.al., 1988, p.37).
Our society is still in transition and its attitude towards women, the conditioning that is provided to boys and girls from an early age, and the division or demarcation of male and female roles are also seen as problems by some career women, as can be seen by the responses in the table above. Particularly, what some of them resent is that some men view them in a different light, with less respect "than they do their own women who stay at home."

While talking about the problem of sex bias in organisations, a large majority of the respondents (85.0%) stated that there was no bias or hardly any bias as far as promotions/increments were concerned in their organisations. (14.0% felt there was bias; 1.0% said she did not know).

Women were given a fair chance of employment in their organisations, according to 87.0% of the respondents. Only 11.0% felt that the chance of employment for women was not so fair and that a "mediocre male" was often preferred to a "good female" because of wrong notions such as, "women won't do outdoor work," or "women will give priority to home and family," "will she leave when
she gets pregnant?", "what will she do when she or her husband are transferred?", etc.

An overwhelming majority (88.0%) stated that women executives were given as many opportunities as their male colleagues in their organisations. Only 10.0% felt that the opportunity was unequal with a bias towards men, and 3.0% of them stated that they actually did not perceive it so much as bias as "concern" as "there are several technical and shopfloor activities" or "the company would not post a female in difficult or dangerous situations, e.g., in Lagos or Saudi Arabia, as these are not female societies."

On the subject of sex-bias at the workplace, 45.0% of the respondents stated that they did not face any specific problems at their workplace due to sex bias, nor did they feel there was any. However, it appears that problems arising out of sex bias did exist for the majority (55.0%) who had either faced such problems themselves or were aware that sex-bias did exist in their organisations.

25.0% of the respondents clearly recalled that they had initially faced bias/resentment from their male bosses
and colleagues, and had to work doubly hard to prove themselves and earn cooperation and acceptance later, by putting in extra hours, remaining constantly on their toes, knowing all the time that they were battling against more odds than the average male executive by virtue of their sex. They were often aware of jealousy and unkind remarks like, "She’s being promoted because she must have slept with the boss," etc. Some male bosses/colleagues, according to 12.0% of the sample, found it difficult to accept women in high positions and were uncomfortable with them, or they viewed these career women differently, i.e., with less respect, than they did their women who stayed at home.

21.0% also felt that men were given preference for "top" positions in their organisations. It was felt by 15.0% of the respondents that most men had a problem dealing with senior women. "It is difficult to get top male executives interested in working for a woman;" "They don’t like taking orders from women bosses;" "Some male bosses/colleagues cannot accept a woman in a senior position. They are jealous and cannot accept that a woman has the courage to stand up to them or disagree on a particular issue;" "Some males view
working women with contempt - considering them unfeminine."

Also, customers and clients often do not take women executives seriously, felt 8.0% of the respondents. "They think we are indulging a fad," said one. The woman executive has to make double the effort that a male executive would have made while dealing with them.

A few (3.0%) of the respondents have faced the problem of their pregnancies coming in the way of their promotions. They are sure that they would have risen higher earlier if they had not been forced to go on maternity leave. A woman's child-bearing activities force her to be away from her work for some time at least and some companies still view this as a serious threat to the achievement of the organisation's goals.

Jealous and competitive male and female colleagues seem to pose a problem for some women executives. However, this can hardly be said to be a "woman's" problem, as competition and a certain amount of envy exists in every organisation, even among male colleagues themselves.
The table below gives the sector of work for those respondents who either faced problems or saw sex bias in their organisations and those who did not.

**TABLE 22**

**SEX BIAS RELATED TO SECTOR OF WORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Sector of work</th>
<th>45% who had no problems or saw no bias</th>
<th>55% who had problems or saw bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a.</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b.</td>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c.</td>
<td>Travel Agencies</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d.</td>
<td>Market Research Agencies</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e.</td>
<td>Advertising Cos.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f.</td>
<td>Consultants/Recruiting Agencies</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2g.</td>
<td>Newspapers/Periodicals Agencies</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All India Service</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Solicitors/Advocates Office</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Banks/Insurance Cos.</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Educational Institutions</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>45.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table indicates that the majority of women (53.3%) who have stated that they have not faced or are unaware of problems arising out of sex bias in their organisations were in the service sector (Refer Table 7 in Chapter III), while only 36.3% in the same sectors of work did face problems of bias. Here, there is one common factor. Performance in these jobs is dependent on the person herself rather than getting work done through interaction with others. The very nature of the job or profession has less scope for sex bias as the work is less interdependent and more independent and quite clearly the application of one's own capabilities.

However, as indicated by the table, it must be pointed out that within the service sector, women in sectors of work like airlines and advertising companies do face or are aware of sex bias.

On the other hand, by and large, as indicated by the table, in sectors like industry, Central Government - All India Service, and Solicitors/Advocates' offices, more women faced problems due to sex bias. For example, in industry alone, 24.0% (total percentage of respondents in industry was 34.0%) had faced or were
aware of sex bias. The very nature of the job or profession in these sectors demanded much more interaction and interdependence with bosses, colleagues and subordinates.

Thus, it appears that the problem of sex bias still exists to a large extent in those traditional workplaces which have been the bastions of male dominance till now, although it is not there or hardly there in the service sector and in educational institutions where women are more easily accepted and where the nature of work is such that independence and the application of one's own capabilities are required rather than interaction with others.

Then, of course, the factor of sexual harassment faced by women in the workplace is another problem. On this problem, the responses were: 81.0% of the women executives quite categorically stated that they had never faced any type of sexual harassment from their male bosses or colleagues at any time in their careers. Only 19.0% had faced some or other type of sexual harassment, of which 6.0% had faced physical harassment while 12.0% stated that it was mostly crude/suggestive language or jokes or harmless flirting. Of these women
who had faced some form of sexual harassment, most stated that it was more from male clients/customers rather than bosses/colleagues. Only 1.0% stated her boss usually "tried" when they were touring together.

Therefore, the study seems to reveal that sexual harassment is not as rampant as is commonly believed. Only 19.0% of the respondents had faced some sexual harassment with the majority (12.0%) stating that it was usually only in the form of harmless flirting or crude language and jokes. Only 6.0% had actually been physically assaulted, but this took place when they were relatively junior in rank. 4.0% of the respondents stated that although they themselves had not faced any sexual harassment, ("They wouldn't dare because of my position"), they were aware that it happened a lot to the junior women, especially typists and secretaries, who often came to them for counselling.

It, therefore, appears that any form of sexual harassment is not really a serious threat or problem for the highly placed executive women. When it does happen, her senior position and status ensures that she
is confident and capable of coping with the situation.

From the above it appears that women executives do face several problems at their workplace which are peculiar to themselves; and yet as some of them put it, "Men in the organisation also face several problems in the rat race." "These are all problems and hazards that go with the job. It is not as if men don't face any problems at the workplace. It depends on the individual's capacity to take each problem as it comes along and look at it in the proper perspective," said one respondent.

In conclusion, it can be said that several studies on working women over the last couple of decades have revealed the difficulties, and the severity of the stress and strain that women undergo in balancing career and family. This is a worldwide phenomenon, and is likely to remain the major problem faced by career women for many more years. In spite of this, society is forever faced with change and challenge and viewed on a continuum, as more and more women make an entry into the world of work, individual solutions or novel and effective strategies for coping with the duality evolve, offering motivation and encouragement to
others. Therefore, as a student of sociology, it is revealing and exciting for this researcher to note the social change that has taken place, derived from the responses made by the women executives in this sample. It is, once again, reiterated here that the sample being restricted to women in the higher income levels and to the confines of the city of Bombay, it is not representative of working women in the entire country. However, the revelations derived from this sample are path breaking and important for they show that, given certain conditions, as mentioned earlier, and in spite of the strain involved, women executives are optimising their two roles and achieving success in both.