



## ***WOMEN'S OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION: HOW DOES IT AFFECT TO CONCEAL HARASSMENTS BY THEIR HUSBANDS IN AN URBAN CONTEXT?***

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From a modern context, as a result of gender equality being an accepted norm, majority of women across the world are leading independent lives engaging in various occupations, professions, etc.. Owing to the growth of educational opportunities and, current progressive trends in women's rights movements, women are no longer limited or confined to their household chores. On the contrary they have become an integral part and partners of national development and foreign income generation. Nevertheless, with all these developments and changes gender discrimination is still at large in the South Asian region and women, be it homemakers or professionals have to face numerous hardships and challenges, both at home and work-places. The persuading factors of this study are to identify whether women belonging to a higher strata of the society could achieve total (gender related) independence, to identify if they are truly satisfied with their choices, rights and privileges and the level of interpersonal relationships they have with their spouses (husbands). To assess these factors, a sample of 295 women were selected from a population of about 3800 women attached to government, semi-government and private sector who occupy positions of executive grade and above in Colombo district. To gather data, interviews, formal and informal discussions, and case studies were conducted and additional data was gathered by administering questionnaires. According to the research findings, 88% of women were identified as living with many unsatisfactory conditions and harassment. However, owing to their social and professional status these women are compelled to conceal these issues from society and tolerate these conditions, simply attributing them to their negative "Karma." A serious situation of this problem arises when women contract non-communicable diseases such as asthma, heart ailments, pressure, depression, etc. as a result of the constant mental and physical trauma caused by their spouses (husbands). In addition to this, they face work-place issues (pressure) stemming from the psychological/physical trauma they encounter at home. Other work environment issues they face range from sexual and mental abuse, lack of decision making power and, inequality in career advancement and promotions. A critical factor that stems from these findings is, though working women enjoy a certain level of detectable independence, they deliberately conceal the domestic abuse they encounter in order to avoid labeling and, prejudices. They believe social/work-place stigmatizing is much devastating than domestic discrimination and abuse, as that could adversely affect their careers and social status.

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