

CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKING WOMEN AT WORKPLACE, FAMILY AND SOCIETY-ITS MAJOR ISSUES, IMPACT AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous challenges which are faced by working women at a workplace on all the positional levels. The women who are working at ministerial level, they generally face the problem of harsh treatment, extended working hours, less number of leaves/holidays, low wages and insecurity because generally at ministerial level most of the employees are men. At the middle level women faces the challenges in terms of insecurity which is generally related to kind of output required which they are not able to deliver due to diverse commitments towards family and society. At the higher level, women face the challenges related to tasks, accomplishments, greater responsibilities towards the organization and their flexible working hours.

In all the three levels of women, there are few factors which enhance their challenges of working at a particular workplace like environmental effect, socio-cultural effect, and senior-subordinate relationship (if there is gender difference between senior and subordinate).

The paper will be based on both primary and secondary data through which the three major areas that are issues, impact and remedial measures will be analyzed and suggestions will be given to reduce the challenges and to provide the working women three "S" i.e. Strength, safety and Security.

Keywords: Working Women, work-family role, decision –making, society, empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Women excel in all fields including space exploration and rocket science also apart from other fields. Women play a vital role in economic development of the country and their contribution is nothing short of their male counterparts. However there are still several issues and problems that women face today. Sometimes, they are not treated equally in their workplace and are considered

as inferior to their male co-workers. In some cases they do not get the same benefits as that of a male employee. The major issues and problems that women face in their work places includes unequal pay, security, sexual harassment, lack of proper family support, deficient maternity leave, etc.

The world of business today is very different from the world of business fifty years ago. Advances in technology plus the evolving work and family roles of women in this country have contributed to the business environment of the 21st century. The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming raise day by day. The sky rocketing cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up even careers that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts in call centers or BPOs. Today women are also employed in male-dominated fields such as law, professional sports, the military, law enforcement, firefighting and top-level corporate positions. Working women today spend less time maintaining the household then they did 30 years ago.

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. It has been anticipated that to fulfill multiple roles simultaneously would result in increased stress and hence women are facing competition and challenges at workplace, home and society.

Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the more harder. They have to take up a full day job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker... If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. They have to handle harassment's at their work place, sometimes just over look things to ensure that their job is not jeopardized in anyway. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband.

The belief of male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work. Women on the way up the corporate ladder discover that they must be much better than their male colleagues to reach the top. Once at the top male colleagues and subordinates often expect much greater expertise and efficiency from a woman boss than from a male boss. Conditioned by social and psychological tradition women colleagues too don't lend support to their own sex. Working in such conditions inevitably put much greater strain on women than

what men experience. These problems tend to make women less eager to progress in their careers. It has been observed through various literature reviews that when family responsibilities expand, mothers are more likely than fathers to change jobs, to work part-time, or exit the labor force for a spell because families cannot afford to lose fathers' wages. The result is often a decrease in mothers' financial and occupational attainment. This again creates unnecessary stress for losing the job for most of the women.

Traditionally, women have generally been more hesitant when it comes to financial investments. They are more cautious when it comes to money. The new women investment clubs take the fear out of investing for women. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world is popular saying about women. Saving is a habit specially embodied to women. Even in the past, when mainly depended on their spouse's income, they used to save to meet emergencies as well as for future activities. In those days, women did not have any awareness about various investment outlets. But as time passed, the scenario had totally changed. Working women had great potential to bring a positive change in socio economic conditions of the country. Now, the present women, who is equally employed, through their education have knowledge about various aspects of investment and as a result they invest in various investment avenues such as shares, debentures, mutual funds, commodities, gold and bank deposits.

General Problems faced by working women from the point of view of society as a whole

Though employment has a positive effect on the minds of women and their families but still they encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace, home and society.

- i) The major problem faced by women is stress caused by role conflict or multiple roles. Women generally do multiple roles like managing work at their organization, manage family at home and fulfill other obligations towards the society. Working women face a big dilemma in managing work-family conflicts. Working women with rigid schedules report more family difficulties than working women with flexible schedules. These problems arise due to the time-constraints a working women has while fulfilling the obligations towards their family and work.
- ii) Insufficient maternity & paternity leaves are another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives.

- iii) Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion.
- iv) Poor security is another major issue that women face in the workplaces. Women working in corporate sector and other private organizations mostly fall victim of various crimes at workplace and this is due to lack of security provided to the employees..
- v) Existing studies on women's work-life balance efforts have generally excluded women in senior positions. They are not being rewarded for their endless efforts. It has been observed from various literatures that women are paying with low salaries in comparison to men. Unequal pay is another issue that women face at their workplace. Even though, women prove to be more efficient than male employees most of the time, they are not paid equally. This creates depression and demotivation among women leads to conflict in work –family, and deterioration in their work performance. It leads to gender imbalances which are still prevailing at the workplace even though this point of discussion has been highlighted in various seminars and conferences.
- vi) The discrimination that women face in the society has its roots in homes. It's not just a few individuals who criticize women who are going out for work but the entire society, especially where a woman is a victim of social taboos like issues related to religion, status symbol, managing at home, take care for their in-laws, family enhancement, child care etc.
- vii) Despite the technological powers of India's engineers and outsourcing firms, the country's basic infrastructure isn't sophisticated enough to support telecommuting and work-from-home arrangements on a widespread basis..
- viii) Sexual harassment is a major issue that women face at their workplace and many women fall victim of sexual harassment at workplace. At times employers try to take sexual favors from women employee in return of other benefits and promotions.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Various research papers have been reviewed to identify the problems being actually faced by women while going out for job. The issues related to family and society along with workplace has been reviewed. Following are some of the reviews:

1. **Dr. Kamini B. Dashora** in their paper “PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA” published in International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences (2013) states that a gender bias creates lot of hurdles while remunerating the women at the workplace. There is an old belief that women are less capable and less efficient than men and hence deserve unequal salaries and wages for the same job.
2. **In an article** “Working Women face Challenges in Zimbabwe” published in a journal named My Wage, a survey was conducted with the aim of understanding Zimbabwean working women’s perceptions, challenges and experiences of their role in the workplace, sexual harassment topping the problems.
3. **Muhammad Atif NAWAZ¹ Noreen AFZAL² Kiran SHEHZADI³** in their paper “PROBLEMS OF FORMALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF BAHAWALNAGAR, PAKISTAN” published in Asian Journal of Empirical Research (2013) highlight the problems of working women in formal sector in Bahawalnagar. It has highlighted the problems faced by working women in various departments such as academics; Nursing, Colleges, police stations.
4. **Dr. P. ASHOK KUMAR and DR. K. SUNDAR** in their paper “PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN EXECUTIVES WORKING IN PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IN PUDUCHERRY” (2012) states that the role of women was confined to household chores and limited to domestic issues. In the male-dominated Indian society, women suffered to extreme levels of exploitation. The paper seeks to identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher post and problems faced by women executives in public sector banks related to work performance. Further this aims also at finding out the organizational support for women employees to achieve higher post.
5. **Owais Shafique and Faiza Anwar, Sahaab Akbar, Uroosa Akhtar Khan** in their paper “PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN EDUCATION SECTOR OF BAHAWALPUR” (2012) states that married women face greater

challenges than unmarried women. Although their husbands are co-operative but there children are prominently neglected. Despite the supportive attitude of their parents, unmarried women still face challenges like transportation and managing time between personal and social life. It is believed that whether married or unmarried, women's salary and promotion system is not satisfactory for which they blame "Favoritism".

6. According to survey done by **National partnership organization**, it has been observed that For many women, the path to finding and keeping a job with decent wages and advancement opportunities is strewn with obstacles — from lack of adequate child care, to juggling work and family responsibilities, to dealing with on-the-job discrimination. These barriers to employment are especially challenging for women living on the economic margins, particularly welfare recipients, for whom the consequences of lacking or losing a job can be devastating.
7. **Damaske (2011)** found that negative psychological experiences, like gender stereotyping and discrimination in male occupations, caused women's movement from male-dominated to female-dominated occupations. Feelings of bias and under-utilization amongst women in male-dominated occupations are common.
8. **MEENU GOYAL and JAI PARKASH (2011)** in their paper "WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA-PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS" stated that the educated Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in Indian society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one She has competed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business is no exception for this. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance.
9. **Pearl Jacobs and Linda Schain** in their paper "Professional Women: The Continuing Struggle for Acceptance and Equality" (2008) states that the situation of professional women has changed dramatically. Integration of women from education and nursing, now have been enhanced to other professions like accounting, medicine, law, etc. however, which does not necessarily mean acceptance and equality nor does it mean that the stress created by work family conflict has been resolved. This paper examined some of the issues that continue to plague women as they attempt to progress in their professional fields.

10. **Dr. Souha R. Ezzedeen** in their paper “Running Head: Work and Life Strategies of Executive Women” (2008) states that Women’s pursuit of an executive career is fraught with obstacles and work-family challenges. This paper examined the work and life strategies of executive women in intimate relationships and inductively derived four career advancement and four life balance categories. The findings call for greater optimism in the study of the career-family dynamics of high achieving women.

METHODOLOGY

The data has been collected through primary sources and secondary sources as well.

- 1.1 **Primary data:** The questionnaire has been formed and filled by the three levels of female employees respectively.
- 1.2 **Secondary data:** The data has been collected through various sources such as articles, research papers, journals on women empowerment, online journals etc

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This is a sample once filled up by the three categories of women namely Higher level, middle level, ministerial level in an organization. These are the findings from the responses collected from above which is depicted through a table:

LEVELS	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6
	What types of problems are you facing while managing at work place?	What type of problems are you facing at workplace?	Is there any facility of flexible timing at your workplace?	Does the organization contains the relevant contents and rules relating to women in HR policies like maternity leave, work	Do you have the facility to work from home in case of any inability?	Does your organization provides the facility of playschool/ crèche?

				from home, flexible timings?		
Higher level	Non-cooperation, non-coordination, lack of staff, lack of books, non-availability of conveyance in case of any emergency	No increment policy, unequal pay according to qualification, excessive work load, irregularities in the timings of departure	NO	Maternity leave only for 2 months, no paternity leave, no facility of work from home in case of any emergency	NO	NO
Middle level	Non-cooperation, non-coordination, lack of staff, lack of books, non-availability of conveyance in case of any emergency	No increment policy, unequal pay according to qualification, irregularities in the timings of departure	NO	Maternity leave only for 2 months, no paternity leave, no facility of work from home in case of any emergency	NO	NO
Ministerial level	Bad behavior of supervisors, shift in duty from	Less salary, salary deduction in case of absence	No, they have to work full time, in case of	No facility of provident Fund, no leaves on	NA	NA

	one place to another	while falling sick	taking leave their salary is deducted	holidays		
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CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

As per the primary data collected through the questionnaire collected from various levels of female employees and as per the secondary data, we come to the following findings.

- Many of the biggest workplace challenges facing women revolve around gender. Why do females still earn less than males holding the same job? Is a balance between family and career attainable? What will it take to establish a work environment where gender is a non-issue?
- In the corporate world, the corner office and/or the six or seven-figure salary are indications that you've made it. But how is it for women at the top? In many industries, there are far fewer women in management than men. Is female leadership different from male leadership, and do female CEOs truly have it all?
- Paid maternity leave is not commonplace in India. So the decision to take time off for childbirth and an extended maternity leave can often result in financial hardship. In addition, there's the fear that by doing so, a woman will might lose her job. Despite her continuous efforts and hard work shown towards the organization, supervisors and management does not give this universal truth, a due consideration.
- Several working women felt that despite being part of various professions, the role of women was still limited. Our society is still male-dominated, while there has been a slight shift in attitudes, women are largely still the victims. While several laws have been introduced to protect women, including the Protection against Sexual Harassment at Workplace, there was a lack of effective mechanism to ensure their implementation. Unless institutions monitoring the implementation of laws are strengthened, these laws still remain more or less useless.

- Policies and legal mechanisms alone cannot help in curbing the problems faced by women at work place - the overall attitude and acceptance level of the people of needs to change. Just letting women work outside home does not mean that society treats men and women equally. The issues and problems that women face in their workplaces should be put to an end and then only it can be said that men and women have equal status. Although there are various laws that are made for protection of women even in workplace but due to lack of proper implementation and interpretation of law, it has not been quite effective in protecting women from the crimes and inequality in the workplace. Organizations are going out of their way to ensure they provide safe work environment for their women employees, and are also putting up policies to ensure the women feel motivated to work and continue their career, even after child birth

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- As our study is based on particular organization and not the region, many more problems would come across if we take response from other organizations too.
- Time span is one of the main constraints to the study.
- Thirdly respondents are bit hesitant to provide the actual information.
- Higher authorities have not given the sufficient time to provide the information due to excessive work pressure.
- As per the ministerial level is concerned, they are unaware of HR policies and are not familiar about the questions we are asking, so the information provided by them is less useful for our research study.

RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Following are the general recommendations and suggestions adopting of which can make a big difference in a woman's life.

- Education campaign for women employees about their rights.
- Training for managers and others in workplaces including acceptable and professional workplace behavior, and diversity training
- Forming a complaints committee, which will keep the privacy of the employee complaining and investigate the complaint independently
- Creating appropriate work conditions to ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women

- Ensuring women do not work late hours, except in secure situations
- Ensuring participation of women at all level of management.
- Providing safe pickup and drop facility in odd hours.
- Providing adequate maternity & paternity leaves
- Providing day care facilities for working mothers.
- Retention of performance ratings - this means that organizations secure the performance ratings of women during maternity leave.

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ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of the Respondent:

Organization Name:

Designation:

Contact No (Optional):

Marital Status: (Please tick the option below)

- Married
- Unmarried

Q1 At what level you are working in an organization?

- Upper level
- Middle level
- Lower level

Q2 Please specify your working hours?

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Q3 Are you satisfied with the number of holidays given by the organization?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q4 Do you have any kid?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not applicable

If yes, how many kids do you have?

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Q5 If you are married, in which age criteria, your kids are falling?

- a) 0-4
- b) 4-8
- c) 8-12
- d) 12 and above

