



Challenges faced by working women in India

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Abstract

India is a traditional country and there is diversity in religions, culture and customs. Role of the women in India mostly is household and limited to domestic issues. In some cases women can find employment as nurses, doctors, teachers the caring and nurturing sectors. But even if well qualified women engineers or managers or geologists are available, preference will be given to a male of equal qualification. The present study investigated to identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher post and challenges & problems faced by women workers. Further the study try to explain the real condition of Indian working women and also make an effort to clear main problems of working women.

Keywords: challenges, women, workers and employment

Introduction

It is only in the history of India where the women have been perceived as the resemblance of a Goddess in fact in the ancient times and specifically in the Indian mythological instances, woman has been conceived as purely a Goddess who possesses all the godly virtues and who administers her compassion, affection and wisdom for the welfare of others. Over the time this ethos has been modified and changed and moreover has been diluted under the immense influences of Male dominance, Patriarchal system of the society and rapidly increasing modernization in the nation as well as the world around. But here we are entirely focused upon the context of Indian Women. The conditions and situations of Indian women have been worsened rather getting better. A vicious chain of struggles, hurdles and many more other problems has become very traditional for the Indian women. Although it has been very much tough for the women in India, to survive after facing many hurdles, exploitation and discrimination still they are being persistent in their efforts and constantly trying to make their existence noticeable in the male dominated Indian society.

In India, today women are educated, they are already famous as being the best homemakers but they are now spreading their wings and their horizons out of the four walls of the house. They are also aspiring to become independent, they are also getting established like any other male entrepreneur and professional. Today Indian women are also being aware of their Rights and Privileges, they are also raising their voices for their Right to work, Right to maintenance and moreover for their Right to Equality. They also seek equality and fair decisions, they also wish to feel the joy of Freedom and Independence and there they begin to make efforts to realize all their aspirations.

Women of today are confident, they want to become self-reliant and they also want to contribute to their families and children not only in terms of physical and mental terms but also in terms of financial support. Although the overall scenario of Indian women is not so much praiseworthy because there is still a major percentage of women who are illiterate, unaware of their rights and duties, those who are living in rural areas and those whose social participation is

totally nil, that surely needs a lot of interventions and improvements from our Governance, Society and of course the Indian women themselves.

Women have always been considered best suitable for few particular tasks which only they can perform at best such as taking care of the family, childbirth and child bearing, giving the whole of their time and attention to the family members and the children. Since Indian society follows the Patriarchal system, it strictly confirms the dominance of the Males in the families, only the male is considered to be the prime doer & the breadwinner of the family. This system considers women as secondary party who perform the secondary functions of the family and the society. In fact in India, girls are being brought up in a very traditional way in which they are particularly trained by their mothers and other elder female members to become a devotee of her family and kids after her marriage. In many rural areas and Indian village, girls are strictly taught about their duties of sacrifice and commitment towards their family. They are not encouraged to acquire education rather home chores should be their top priorities. But we have just discussed that Indian women are persistently making efforts to improve their long created traditional picture and trying to advance their status in the society, hence they are enhancing their awareness and education and empowering themselves by becoming working women in their lives. And especially with the increased inflation rates in India it has become really difficult to earn the livelihood and to bear the family expenditures by depending all alone upon the income of one person hence the women of the family also show their kind concern to help their husbands in raising the family income. Women living in the Urban areas are getting a bit freedom from their families they also get prestigious jobs as a result of their education and awareness whereas the women living in the rural areas are still limited to their daily household works and usually work as inept laborers. But precisely the life of a working woman is not cheesy, since she already has been facing many personal and social turmoils and problems, becoming a working woman adds to her already existing challenges in her life. Both married and unmarried women have their own levels of problems which they have

to face when they move out of their homes to work. There are numerous of problems Indian working women have to deal with and moreover there is a tremendous pressure for creating a balance between the family and the work. Difficulties in the workplace, remuneration issues, security problems, gender biases, assaults and exploitations are among the major issues/challenges which the Indian working women have to struggle with.

Working women i.e., those who are in paid employment, face problems at the workplace just by virtue of their being women. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. The attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not others, causes prejudice in those who recruit employees. Thus women find employment easily as nurses, doctors, teachers, secretaries or on the assembly line. Even when well qualified women are available, preference is given to a male candidate of equal qualifications. A gender bias creates an obstacle at the recruitment stage itself. When it comes to remuneration, though the law proclaims equality, it is not always practiced. The inbuilt conviction that women are incapable of handling arduous jobs and are less efficient than men influences the payment of unequal salaries and wages for the same job. But in most families her salary is handed over to the father, husband or in-laws. So the basic motive for seeking employment in order to gain economic independence is nullified in many women's case. Problems of gender bias beset women in the industrial sector when technological advancement results in retrenchment of employees. Women workers in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other countries. Besides of so many efforts from past years, female section of society is deprived in compared to male section. They are not given first priority in social and economic decisions in her own family. According to United Nations Development Programmer (UNDP) report, women are involved in doing 67% work of world; still they are socially and economically deprived. They are receiving only 10% of the universal income and have 1% part in global assets. This discrimination also persists in their work place in unorganized sector. In informal sector, women workers don't get same wages for same nature of work for same hours done by men. They are exploited at workplace. They are some acts i.e. The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act, 2010 etc. but due to their improper implementation, women workers are forced to work and live in miserable conditions in unorganized sector. In India mostly it is women who have to do household as cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, care of children and men do not share on most of the household works. Men do that work that is to be dealt outside the house. Now a day there is increasing need for getting some income for the family then women have to work harder. Women workers have to handle Persecution'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. Listen to their complaints that they make against her and turn deaf ears towards them and so on. Overall, majority of women in India look towards or live in the hope that things will change.

Gender biases begin to take place at a very early stage for the Indian women. First of all in the male dominated Indian

society it is very much tough to accept the fact that even the women are also capable of working shoulder to shoulder with the men. Indian society has created preconceived notions that support male dominance in all the major and important tasks whereas the women are considered to be tender and weak and only capable of bearing lesser work pressure at the workplace. In India the potential and capabilities of women have always been underestimated in regard of their recruitments, salary issues and promotion issues. In fact, even if the woman is working, with many of the families her all salaries are given to her husband, father-in-law or elder member of the family and in a way her independence is basically on the superficial level. Indian working women have to face a lot of discrimination in their workplace which are usually gender biased. Males are always given preferences and priorities in comparison to female colleagues. Following are the few prime stages where Indian working women have to face the gender biases:

Even if the women are highly qualified there has already been done a stratification of work that keeps the females out of touch of certain jobs which require outstanding intelligence/ hard physical labor/ alertness. Profession of teachers, nurses, gynecologists (doctors), secretaries, desk-managers or counselors are easily recruited to Indian women and taken as among the most suitable jobs for Indian women whereas jobs like of a manager, engineer, geologists, Para- military, administrators and other dignified jobs are primarily recruited to males of equivalent qualifications.

The Equal Remuneration Act 1976, professes equality in remunerations but it has seldom been exercised in fact Indian working women are usually underpaid. The preconceived notion that the women are less capable of working hard in comparison to their male counterparts, has deeply impacted the salaries or wages given to the women in India. Usually the women who work in Indian factories and labor oriented places, are generally paid lesser in comparison to their male colleagues.

Since in India, there has been a deep influence of male dominance Indian working women have to go through a lot of struggle in order to visualize their growth and development. The male colleagues are indulged in a lot of politics and manipulations at the workplace against their women colleagues. The basic ideology of Indian society treats men being superior to women and when it comes to step on the ladder of success and growth there are already numerous of people who are ready to pull back the women colleagues at the same working place. Raising too much of voice in such an atmosphere might drag the woman into much more trouble hence they usually prefer to keep themselves safe and keep glued to their static designations and show lesser interest to get promoted in their careers.

It is actually a very big challenge for the Indian working women to maintain a balance between their work and family. There are so many expectations of the family members and particularly from the kids. Since in India, women are primarily supposed to look after their families and kids, hence their career and professional aspirations are generally perceived as secondary and sometimes unessential by the family members. In majority of the families there is a lack of emotional and moral support given to the women. And there are also many official expectations that the women have to fulfill otherwise it is very easy to terminate

and hire any new woman personnel. In Indian families, women are already burdened with social and psychological ideologies of family members which 'Expect' them to be all rounder and perfect in all tasks and activities. And moreover it is a long age concept of the Indian society that the prime responsibility of a woman is to take care of her family and to become a perfect mother and a wife.

Over the time Indian working women have felt that it is not only unsafe while travelling and moving out of their homes for their works but it is also unsecure to work at their own workplaces. There are many cases where women subordinates were asked for sexual favors from their male superiors in the return of the promotion and growth granted to them. The male superiors show that they have done some mercy or extra favour that should be repaid with much of a regard from the woman. In the corporate sector, women are usually treated as weak and vulnerable and hence the male colleagues and superiors think that they can take any kind of advantage of their female colleagues & subordinates. Many other kinds of attitudes like taunting, teasing, abusing and assault is also practiced against working women at their workplaces.

Being a working woman in the Indian context is really not an easy going task. Women literally have to face many outcomes of the social and the psychological ethos of the society and the people. They must have to maintain a balance between their families and career if they truly do not want to slaughter their aspirations and dreams to achieve independence and success in their lives. And in this hassle and bustle women get restless. They try to increase the working power for which they are constantly working that further makes them lacking in sleep. Gradually they feel frustrated and helpless because they see no one to help and support them. They sometimes tend to feel isolated, and then they invite many emotional and psychological problems. Insomnia and depression are two major mental problems Indian working women usually being noticed to suffer with. They feel an immense lack of Personal Space. Their whole time remains not theirs at all. They feel unable to share their feelings with anyone because they know that no one will understand them. Under this psychological pressure at a point of time they are left with only two options; either to give up the job or to accept the depression as a part of their working life.

Review of Literature

Review of related literature is an important research effort as it provides comprehensive understanding of what is already known about the topic.

Jyoti, Kiran, (1994) [6] in her book "Women Labourforce and National Product" emphasized on contribution of women employees in national development and growth. The book covers significant characteristics of women employees which make them more comfortable at job place. The author tries to point out the participation of women employees at different level. The book explained adverse effect of gender based discrimination on the overall performance of women employees. It also stated the various problems faced by women employees are more practical and reliable.

Narasaiah, Lakshmi, (1999) [7] in her book "Small Scale Industry" has given detailed information about the procedure of small scale industrial unit. It has explained that small scale industries contribute significantly to the straightening of the industrial structure. It serves as seed

beds of entrepreneurship. They serve the developing economy not only by their output of goods but also by functioning as a nursery of entrepreneurial and management talent. The book stated that the role of small scale industrial units is of decisive importance in any economy. According to Narasaiah Lakshmi such industries lead to the creation of employment opportunities as a dispersed basis not only in large cities and towns but also in smaller towns and far flung regions. The book covers various suggestions to remove problems of unemployment from rural as well as urban areas.

Nath, Madhuri, (2003) [5] in her book "Rural Women Workforce in India", highlighted the role of women in rural transformation of India. Mrs. Nath has fully justified the inevitability of the effective use of rural women workforce in dynamics of development of rural India. The book covers various problems faced by women employees which will help in making women movement in India more effective and will be proved helpful for women welfare in transitional society.

Das, Divya (2010) [4] in her article work life balance of women professionals edited in Advance in management monthly journal illustrated the current workplace conditions and some of the reasons causing imbalances in work and life. The article covers life of working women and the hazards and problems they face at work and in family life. Factor analysis was performed on the survey and it was found that two factors namely psychological and cognitive factor and organizational climate factor are the causes of work life imbalances among women workers. The book covers a very intelligent conclusion which recommends that organizations may use the insights to mitigate voluntary turnover among women employees and increase the workforce diversity.

Objective of the study

- To identify the problems faced by women workers in India.
- To clear main problems of working women.

Methodology

The method used in this paper is descriptive-evaluative method. The study is mainly review based. It is purely supported by secondary source of data, i.e. books, journals, papers and articles and internet.

Problems faced by working women in India Occupational problems as stress

In women Occupational stress is stress involving work. Work and family are the two most important aspects in women's lives. Balancing work and family roles has become a key personal and family issue for many societies. There are many facets in working mother's lives that subject to stresses. They deal with home and family issues as well as job stress on a daily basis.

World Health Organization's (WHO) definition

Occupational or work-related stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."

Reasons of occupational stress

Imbalance between work and family leads to occupational

stress. Imbalance between work and family life arises due to a number of factors. Various factors are following.

Mental harassment

It is an age old convention that women are less capable and inefficient in working as compared to men. The attitude which considers women unfit for certain jobs holds back women. In spite of the constitutional provisions, gender bias creates obstacles in their recruitment. In addition to this, the same attitude governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job. The true equality has not been achieved even after 61 years of independence. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career.

Sexual harassment

Today, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and the types of their employment. They face sexual harassment on way on transports, at working places, educational institutions and hospitals, at home and even in police stations when they go to file complaints. It is shocking that the law protectors are violating and outraging modesty of women. Most of the women tend to be concentrated in the poor service jobs whereas men are in an immediate supervisory position, which gives them an opportunity to exploit their subordinate women.

Discrimination at Workplace

However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. They are often deprived of promotions and growth opportunities at work places but this doesn't apply to all working women. A majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay, under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and are underpaid in comparison to their male colleagues. This is usually the case in factories and labor-oriented industries.

No safety of working women while traveling

Typically, the orthodox mindset in the Indian society makes it difficult for a working woman to balance her domestic environment with the professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to work after six o'clock. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety every day about a woman's safety while traveling. So many issues affect a working woman because she is closely protected or watched by her family and the society.

Lack of Family Support

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.

Insufficient Maternity Leaves

Insufficient maternity leave is 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.

Job insecurity

Unrealistic expectations, especially in the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes puts unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employee, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload extremely long work hours and intense pressures to perform at peak levels all the time for the same pay, can actually leave an employee physically and emotionally drained. Excessive travel and too much time away from family also contribute to an employee's stressors.

Workplace adjustment

Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be lesson of life. Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

Other reasons

it include Personal demographics like age, level of education, marital status, number of children, personal income and number of jobs currently had where you work for pay and Work situation characteristics like job tenure, size of employing organization, hours worked per week.

Conclusion

Now a day's women workers are improved and promote in their workplace and in technological work. Trade Union should try to improve the conditions for woman's workers in many parts for example maternity leave is easily give to women and help the woman for achieve higher post actually women's nature is promotion to gain high quality in every field but if the condition is not ready then the reduction of promotion and optimization in work will be occur and etc... Women workers are often subject to sexual harassment then the Government should put strict rules for these types of crimes , also public transport system sometimes danger for woman and Government should put more Inspection. Traditionally people think that men should only work and gain money and women should work as house hold, but The financial demands on the Indian families. Fundamental change is required in attitudes of employees, family members and public.

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