Problems and challenges faced by professional working women in food processing companies in Gujarat

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Abstract: *The main objective of the study was to understand the problems and issues faced by professional working women in food processing companies in Gujarat. The objectives also included identifying the key socio-economic attributes contributing to women's status, safety and security, and to study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for improving of family, community and society. The study was confined to the working women in white collared jobs in the different food processing companies in Gujarat state. A mixed methods approach involving face to face interviews as well as online questionnaire technique including both close-ended and open-ended questions was chosen for effective data collection from the respondents working with different food companies mainly in quality control department, research and development department and product development department. The study was based on primary data collected from different food processing companies in Gujarat state to find out the possible solutions for working women which could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.*

Key Words: *Professional working women, food processing companies etc.*

1. 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.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Okolo, I. (9th July. 1989). Another obstacle is the lack of role models of executive women due to their scarce presence in top managerial positions. Likewise, this study found out that there is no gender difference in organizational hierarchies when a woman has already gained access to them. The lack of impact in women can occur because executive and managerial women have developed survival features becoming immune to the effects of men's hierarchies. A hierarchy composed by men solely may have an effect upon the election of a managerial board, and then its further influence is not very strong.

Ronald J. Burke, Mustafa Koyuncu and Lisa Fiksenbaum (2010) examined the relationship of the perceived presence of organizational practices designed to support women's career advancement and their work attitudes and satisfaction and their psychological well-being. Data were collected from 286 women in managerial and professional jobs working in a large Turkish bank, a 72 percent response rate. Five organizational experiences were considered: negative attitudes towards women, equal treatment, support, career barriers and male standards. Women reporting more

supportive organizational experiences and practices were more engaged in their work, more job and career satisfied, and indicated greater levels of psychological well-being.

Wentling,R.M.(2003) his shown that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant .In her study on working women in Delhi, she has shown that traditional authoritarian set up of Hindu social structure continues to be the same basically and hence. Women face problem of role conflict change in attitudes of men and women according to the situation can help to overcome their problem.

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.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To gain sufficient knowledge about the problems and challenges faced by professional working women in the food processing companies in Gujarat
- To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to women's status, safety and security
- To find out possible solutions that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace

4. METHODOLOGY:

Collection of data
To study the objectives, required data will be collected from primary as well as secondary sources.
Primary data:
The data required for the study will be collected from the respondents by personal interview method with the help of pre-structured questionnaire as well as with online questionnaire. The respondents will be interviewed at different food processing companies, homes and other outside places.
Secondary data:
The secondary data will be collected from books, journals, magazines, internet and other relevant sources.
Sample Design

Particulars		Consumer Survey
Population	1. Respondents at food companies	
Sampling Unit		Individual
Sample Size	50 (Only Female)	50 Respondents (Female)
Sampling Method	Non -probability Convenience Sampling	

Analysis of Data
Table 1: Time Taken for Women to get promoted as compared to their male colleagues

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Equal time	26	52
Longer	22	44
Earlier	02	04

Table 2: Basis for Women getting promotion on merit

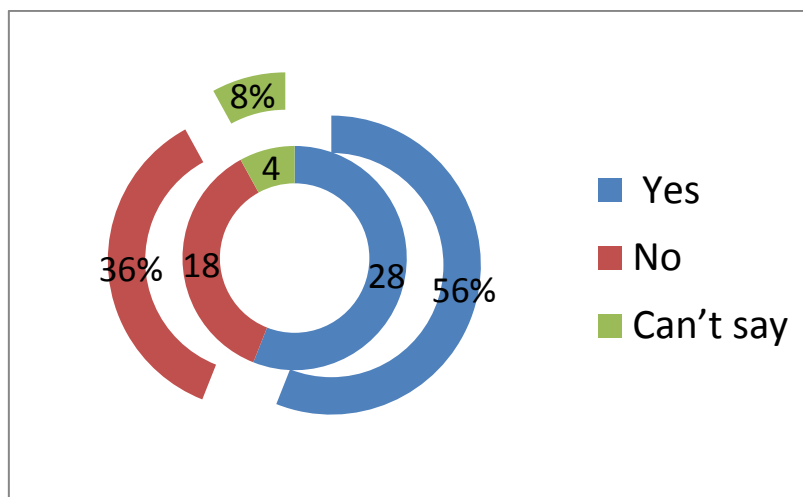|	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	36
No	18	36
Can't say	14	28

Figure 1: Time spent for work by women

Table 3: Attitude of boss towards female colleagues as perceived by the women Employees

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Co-operative	28	56
Neutral	20	40
Abusive	02	04

Table 4: Perception of prevalence of sexual harassment or underestimation on the basis of gender

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
YES	08	16
NO	42	84

Table 5: Regarding people drawing conclusions about working women's character without any reasons

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	52
No	18	36
Can't say	06	12

Table 6: Experience of sexual abuse at workplace

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
YES	06	12
NO	44	88

Table 7: Response of the higher authority towards sexual harassment

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	01	16.66
No	01	16.66
Can't say	00	00
Blank	04	66.66

Table 8: Perception of office authority's willingness to act against sexual abuse

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	32	72.72
No	04	09.09
Can't say	05	11.36
Blank	03	06.81

Table 9: Women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	48
No	26	52
Can't say	00	00

Figure 2: Perception of women to behave when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination in the workplace (in nos.)
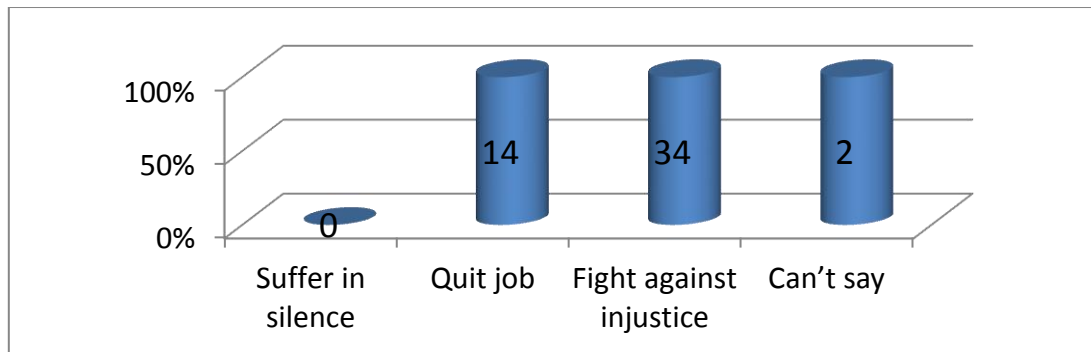

Table 10: Perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	06	12
No	40	80
Can't say	04	08

Table 11: Perception of women on being given respect at their workplace

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	80
No	04	08
Can't say	06	12

Table 12: Problem at the workplace

	No. of respondent
Depression	10
Mental Pressure	24
Gender discrimination	14
Sexual Harassment	02
Others	10

Table 13: support for balance between work and non-work activities

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Spouse/partner	08	16
Friends	18	36
Other family members	18	36
Encouragement to use paid and unpaid leave	00	00
Others	06	12

Table 14: perception among women on being treated differently by their colleagues/seniors/boss/other members

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)

Yes	08	16
No	38	76
Sometime	04	08

Table 15: Perception among women facing problems related to your family life and professional life

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	36
No	28	56
Blank	04	08

Table 16: Perception among women on financial independence giving more respect in the society

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	84
No	08	16

5. KEY FINDINGS:

- Sexual harassment by male colleagues is a reality. Mental harassment by female colleagues is also a reality.
- Working women face problems because of their female colleagues (jealousy, rivalry, competition etc.)
- Colleagues, both men/women draw conclusions about women's character, sometimes without any basis.
- Financial independence gives women more respect in the society as perceived by the working women.
- Working women feel they are facing more mental pressure and depression than   nonworking women.
- Not much aware about Acts and Policies favoring women in the workplace.
- Health issues are also an important problem for working women.
- Working women are forced to leave their small children at home because of their work. lack of proper support system.
- Life as a single parent very challenging for working women.

6. CONCLUSION:

- People make particular perception or draw conclusion about characters of working women.
- Child rearing problems are always faced by working women.
- Professional women feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life on the other.
- Women are discriminated against in all walks of life.
- Women are dominated and exploited both at work places and home.
- Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to households, kids and family.
- Working women generally face workplace mental pressure, safety issues and sometime sexual harassment.
- Females are also highly judgmental about other female colleagues and try to put one at any given opportunity.
- Women face problems leaving kids at home and going to office early in the morning.
- The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed.

Managerial Implications:

- Flexible timing and Possibility to work from home are required for working women
- Child care facilities and Child care leave for working women should be provided by every organization
- Installing safety devices and CCTVs at the work place
- Harassment avoidance policy should be made and implemented by every organization
- Partners can be more sensitive to women's needs, and counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks and take care of children
- Organizations should have an internal code to ensure security of women employees and take measures to ensure that they discharge their job in a secure atmosphere
- Governments should make it mandatory for companies to install Global Positioning
- System (GPS) in vehicles carrying women, in all industries which engage women in night shifts

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