

STATUS OF WORKING WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE CONFLICT IN PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: *It has been seen that the status of women has been changing and women have attained remarkable success in what was once considered the “male domain” working world. Worldwide the number of women in the workforce has increased over the years with a corresponding increase in the number of highly educated women equipped with technical know-how. Work-life balance has emerged as major issue in impeding the career progression of women. It explores the main barriers to women progression and highlights the long hours and multi- tasking of women associated with her work. However, discrimination against women in the workplace is explicitly seen as few women are able to reach on the top in private sector. The present paper is descriptive in nature and the data has been taken from secondary sources. Gender inequality in the workplace is exhibited in various forms, such as occupational segregation, gender- based wage gap, harassment to name a few. It goes without saying that despite the existing legal provisions ,women are often deprived of their basic rights subjected to sexual harassment, given less promotions, given low-paid marginal jobs as compared to male counterparts, excluded from the decision making process in both politics and economy, not acknowledged as real contributors to the family and society as a whole. The private sector which talks about gender diversity as the norm also does not give equal status to women in reality.*

Key Words: *Discrimination, Gender inequality, wage, Occupational segregation, women.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Working women are no longer a rarity and are now accepted as an integral part of the work force. However, women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce. Until modern era, socio-cultural and legal practices, combined with religious and educational conventions, prohibited women’s entry and participation in the workforce. Economic dependency upon men, poor socio-economic status of women, and women’s lack of access to higher education have excluded women from well paid and high ranking occupations. However, around the world there has been trend towards increased access for women to education and participation in the labor force. Since 1970, women’s share of the labor force has steadily increased in virtually all regions of the world, now approaches 50 percent mark in places such as the Scandinavian countries, the United States, Canada, the UK, and France. Despite the trend towards equalization of access to employment for women and men, there is persistent gender segregation in the workplace. Women are prevented from achieving complete gender parity at workforce and presence of glass ceiling is seen as very few women are able to reach on the top positions. It is still common to see headlines announcing the first woman to occupy some important post or other. Recently in 2016, Asako Suzuki has just been appointed the first female board member at Honda, a Japanese carmaker. But such milestones may not be much of a guide to the opportunities women have to make progress in the workplace.

Women for most of the 19th and 20th century were limited to menially paid and low status occupations and earned less than men for doing the same work. However, in the 21st century public perceptions of paid work has changed. Women have entered all arenas of the workforce but are still at disadvantage in comparison to men. The progress in the labor force remains limited and the ‘top’ jobs within industry, family business and the professions continue to be filled by men. When it comes to very senior public roles in society, women have not achieved equality of opportunity and the ‘glass ceiling’ and concrete and maternal walls remain firmly in place. These views focus on how gendered practices in organizations are shaped by wider social, economic and cultural processes.

Women now make up to 40 percent of the total global workforce, yet it is less than their male counterparts in every country present on the earth and inequality is quite pervasive at workplace (International Labor Right Forum). As per International Labor organization report (ILO, 2015) the number of women in middle and senior management positions has increased over the last 20 years but still women are underrepresented in top jobs. Only 5% of the CEO’s of the world’s largest corporations are women. According to the findings of the report of The Grant Thornton International Business Report (2016) proportion of senior roles held by women has increased in the last twelve months, returning to the previous high of 24% after falling to 22%. However, one-third (33%) of businesses around the world still has no women in senior management positions. The highest percentage of women in senior roles is in workforce is in Russia (45%) and in India 16 percent of senior roles are held by women. Two of Indian companies,

Reliance and Indian Oil feature in Fortune 500 but only one of the thirty Directors is woman. Further in Indian companies, HR Director (21%) is the most common role filled by women in senior positions. 18 percent of women representatives occupied the leadership positions in company. Women work a lot harder than their male counterpart to reach at higher levels in the political and economic echelons. It was for the first time in American history that a woman was running for the post of the President. Hillary Clinton herself acknowledged that this is “the highest, hardest glass ceiling” and gave a call to all the women around the world to face “no ceilings”. She stated that several hurdles have to be overcome before the world's most powerful jobs are in female hands. The election results in recent Presidential elections clearly showed that Hillary Clinton was unable to break the barrier and whatever she stated was proved to be right.

In India, as per 2011 Census, male workers constituted 39.79 percent of total population whereas the female workers were 25.51 per cent. The ratio of female workers in rural areas is 30.02 percent and in urban India is 15.44 percent. Census 2011 further revealed that work participation of women have increased from 12.11(1971) to 25.51(2011) but is far less than men (as per Indian Labor Bureau Report 2013-14). Census 2011 stated that percentage of educated women job seeker on live register had increased from 78.5 percent to 85.3 percent. As per Catalyst Report (2015), Indian women earn 56% of their male colleagues for performing the same work. Out of 323 total executive positions on Bombay Stock Exchange 100, only 8 are held by women. 54% of companies on BSE 100 have no women board members. Women hold 7.7% of board seats and just 2.7% of board chairs.

2. PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS:

The private sector encompasses all for-profit businesses that are not owned or operated by the government. Companies and corporations that are government run are part of what is known as the public sector, while charities and other non profit organizations are part of the voluntary sector. . The private corporate sector in India has been accorded a significant role in the industrialization of the country. The growth of the private corporate sector therefore had to take place within the limits laid down by the government regulations. The Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTPA) the Capital Issues (control) Act and other regulatory measures imposed limits on the expansion of existing firms and the entry of new firms to the defined areas. Thus the private corporate sector in India had to grow within an institutionally set macro framework. However, over the 1980s there has been a gradual change in the policy approach to the industrialization of the country with a shift in emphasis from regulation to liberalization and a greater role for the private corporate sector. Private sector includes Mnc's, IT companies and private sector banks.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To examine the status of women in the private sector.
- To study the role-conflict of women at workplace.
- To study the existence of glass ceiling.
- To study steps taken by the Government.

4. METHODOLOGY:

The present study is only limited to the private sector organizations and does not include public sector organizations. The study was done with the help of secondary data such as articles, research papers, reports, newspapers, magazines etc.

5. STATUS OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE AND THEIR ROLE CONFLICT:

As per Global Gender Report (2016) by world economic forum, women around the world on average earn just over half of what men earn despite, on average, work for longer hours taking paid and unpaid work into account. Another persistent challenge is stagnant labor-force participation, with the global average for women standing at 54%, compared with 81% for men. The number of women in senior positions also remains stubbornly low, despite the occurrence of enormous educated women at the university level. Thus, countries across the world are stalling on economic gender parity, despite many reaching or nearing equality in education. With only 59% of the economic gender gap closed, there is a long way to go before the world makes better use of all its talent. The report also shows that since 2006 an extra quarter of billion women have entered the labor force and yet their annual pay now equals the amount men were earning 10 years ago. It estimates that gender parity worldwide would be achieved by 2095. World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, 2016 shows women are highly underrepresented and only 1 in 10 CEO is a woman. Gender Inequality Index (2015) also sheds light on the position of women among 155 countries. It yields insight in gender gaps in major areas of development. India's rank is 130 in this index. Labor force participation rates among females are 27 percent and among males is 79.9 percent.

International Labor Organization (2016) report titled 'Women at Work' examined data for up to 178 countries and concluded that inequality between men and women persists across a wide spectrum of the global labor market. The report also showed that over the last two decades, significant progress made by women in education has not been translated into comparable improvements in their position at work. It estimated that globally, women still earn on an average 77 percent of what men earn and it will take 70 more years to close the gender gaps completely.

Gender inequality at the workplace is exhibited in various forms, such as occupational segregation, gender-based wage gap and discrimination. It goes without saying that despite the existing legal provisions, women are often deprived of their basic rights, subjected to sexual harassment, given less promotions, assigned low-paid marginal jobs as compared to their male counterparts, are excluded from the decision making process in both politics and economy and are not acknowledged as real contributors to the family and society as a whole. Advancement of women in management jobs has not kept pace with the correspondence increase in the number of working women. Gender discrimination in the working place may take place first during the hiring process, where men are hired first or hired instead of women. It may also vary in the context of income disparity whereby men are paid more than women. In some offices it is seen that women are harassed and subjected to some brutality or fail to get promotion regardless of their academic credential in favour of men. Workplace politics also instigate gender discrimination (International Labour Organization Report, 2015). Several organizational mechanisms promote the glass-ceiling effect and social closure in male-typed occupations. Both formal and informal hiring procedures, unequal access to informal networks for learning about jobs and securing them, gender biases in criteria, and implicit stereotypical assumptions that men and women are better suited to perform different types of work endorse the inequality. One form of gender based discrimination at work is sexual harassment, it includes unwelcome sexual advances that intimidate or bother an individual and the creation of a hostile work environment through sexual innuendos, teasing, and touching etc that unreasonably Organizations produce and reproduce gender differences. Women are still breaking into male dominated fields, but still face the problem of tokenism, the hiring of one or a few women and minorities, perpetuating group disadvantages (Heidi Gottfried, 2013).

Occupational segregation is seen almost everywhere. It refers to the fact that men and women are concentrated in different types of jobs, based on prevailing understandings of what is appropriate 'male' and 'female' work. Occupational segregations have both vertical and horizontal components. Vertical segregation refers to the tendency for women to be concentrated in jobs with little authority and hardly any room for advancement, while men occupy more powerful and influential positions. Horizontal segregation refers to the tendency for both men and women to occupy different categories of job. The reasons for the persistence of occupational segregation are rooted in a complex interplay between societal and personal gender stereotypes, discrimination by power-holders against out-groups, habits and social inertia-and the repeated impact of all these on individuals' choices and behaviours. Though increasing number of women now work full time outside the home, a large number are concentrated in part-time employment. Men, by and large, do not assume prime responsibility for the rearing of children. However, it is also seen that women have started bagging some important positions in jobs. Several processes have affected these trends. One significant factor is that more women are moving into higher paying professional positions than was the earlier case. Young women with good qualifications are now as likely as their male counterpart to land into lucrative jobs. The improved educational qualifications of women seem to lead inexorably towards more women finding their way into the professions looking for a long career that will include promotion to the higher levels. Occupational segregation by gender is one of the main factors in the persistence of a wage gap between men and women. Despite some gains, women still remain under-represented at the top of the income distribution.

For a male or female dominated occupation to tilt in the direction of becoming more gender balanced, someone from the under-represented gender has to be first. It was first noted by Kanter (1977) that the woman or man who makes a foray into a job dominated by colleagues of the other gender, becomes a gender-token who faces a number of issues. For one thing this person will necessarily stand out among her/his co-workers-which can be either a good or bad thing. The negative aspect of standing out is that a person becomes more self-conscious and anxious, and thus prone to make mistakes. Particularly in managerial and professional occupations, women seem to become increasingly rare and so seem more and more like tokens at higher level of advancement. There are quite a few women in middle management, but very few female CEO's of top companies or female members of corporate boards (Hilary M. Lips, 2014). Gwen Moore (1988) study reveals that women who have managed to reach the highest corporate or political positions are isolated in comparison to the male counterparts and are best characterized as "outsiders on the inside."

6. ROLE CONFLICT OF WORKING WOMEN:

The role of women in Indian society is primarily considered to be confined within the home. Women are held responsible for all the responsibilities that they bear be it marital obligations or upbringing of the children. However,

the male member is considered to be the karta of the family, financial need provider and the bread winner in the family but women these days do support in both at home and their work. This leads to role conflict among women. There is a clear conflict between the society-approved status of women as housewives and mother of children on one hand, and their status as more productive workers on the other. Family duties have also imposed restrictions on their role in their employment. For most of them the major role they have to play is that of a wife and a mother. The home always revolves around her and she plays the key role in the house. She faces the dilemma of somewhat contradictory role expectations. Some fundamental problems encountered in combining family and work life are problems of work overload and time budgeting, conflicting expectations of dual roles (i.e. work and family situation) and occurrence of the problem of adverse self evaluation where a dilemma arises from conflict within oneself about whether one is being a good person in leading a certain type of existence. A working woman may blame herself for neglect of mother's role. Corporate Women and Job satisfaction has become a most vital issue. The Cultural issues, family issues, legal issues, medical issues, parental issues are few of the barriers that any woman has to cross to be in a corporate world. Work-Life Balance has actually become a major issue in the world of work. While success at both work and life is the most sought after goal for all, the need for achieving equilibrium is equally significant. One aspect of the present study makes it unique and relevant is its focus on the specific adaptive behaviour of people facing work-family conflict. Buddhapriya (2009) in his study reveals that although conflict between career and family roles can be a potential source of stress for both female and male manager, but it affects women in India more than men because of many reasons. While social, legal and economic reforms have helped women to join the workforce in India, the continuing influence of normative attitudes and values have prevented them from altering the perceptions of the society as well as of their own regarding their sex roles. He explained how family responsibilities have hindered many women from entering the workforce; he states that the talent pool of women candidates at the top level is very shallow.

There are number of reasons why the gap in economic activity rates between men and women have been closing in recent decades. First, there have been changes in the scope and nature of tasks that have been traditionally associated with women and the 'domestic sphere'. As the birth rate has declined and the average age of child birth has increased, many women are now taking on paid work before having children and return to work afterwards. Smaller families have meant that the time many women previously spent at home caring for young children have been reduced. The mechanization of many domestic tasks has also helped to cut down the amount of time that needs to be spent to maintain the home. There is also evidence that the domestic division of labor between men and women is being steadily eroded over time, although women certainly carry out more domestic tasks than men. There are also financial reasons why a growing number of women have entered the labor market. Many households find that two incomes are required in order to sustain a desired lifestyle. Finally, it is important to note that many women have chosen to enter the labor market out of a desire for personal fulfillment and in response to the drive for equality propelled forward by the women's movement of the 1960's and 70's. Having gained legal equality with men, many women have seized on opportunities to realize these rights in their own lives (Giddens, 2009). In recent decades, women have made great strides towards parity with men and increasing economic activity has been central to this process.

7. EXISTENCE OF GLASS CEILING:

The very fact of women being adequately represented in the workforce, but rarely present in the senior managerial positions has been labelled "the glass ceiling". It is a barrier that is so subtle and transparent; yet so strong that prevents women from moving on the top in management hierarchy regardless of their qualifications or achievements. The glass ceiling metaphor has been used to describe inequality between man and women at the workplace. Women Managers are conspicuous by their minority in Indian Organizations. Glass ceiling is deep penetrated in India. Indian organizations too have experienced a steady increase in the number of women employees and this pattern is bound to continue in the future as well. No longer are women associated with low expectations in education and workforce. Women now try to seek and obtain the highest position in business. But Women are not given enough opportunities that would catapult them to the upper echelons. This is the reason there are only handful of women who have reached the top and breached the barrier to name a few are Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kocher etc. The Hindu (18 May, 2016) reported that gender pay gap is still wide in India (according to Monster India report). It released the monster salary index and found out that gender gap is still wide and is at 27%. According to report, some of the reasons behind gender pay gap could be the preference for male employees, preference for promotion of male employees to supervisory positions and career breaks of women due to parenthood duties and socio cultural factors.

8. PROACTIVE STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT:

Women's participation in the paid labour force has risen more or less continuously over the last century. Millions of women in the early 1900s had rejected conventions and fought for the right to vote. The succeeding generation secured their rights in legal sphere, and then entered the workforce in droves, fuelling growth in economy in 1980s and 1990s. With the commencement of 21st century, women are not just enfranchised and fully engaged in

the workplace but few are also leading heads of global corporations. During the British period in India, some substantial progress was made in eliminating inequality between man and women in matters of education, employment, social and property rights and so forth. During the freedom struggle women came out of four walls and demanded for freedom. The Indian National Movement led to the emancipation of women. Women demanded equal social, economic and political opportunities and were given but were given only in theory and not in practice. The change in the position of women from sheer degradation to equality is not a simple case of the progress of the women in the modern era as women had to across many hurdles. In today's liberalized scenario, there is not an iota of doubt that women form an indispensable part of the Indian workforce. In the last three decades, there has been a remarkable change in the attitude of Indian women towards education and employment. To uplift the status of women numerous legislations were enacted after independence. The status of women has been raised in the eyes of law, but they are far from being equal to man in all aspects of life. In reality, they continue to suffer from discrimination, humiliation, exploitation inside and outside home. Even after a century of stupendous progress, women still lag behind men.

The Government of India has taken several steps like we have Maternity benefit act 1961. We have extended maternity benefit act from 12 to 26 weeks in private companies. Companies act, 2013 has been amended and replaced its 60 years old predecessor. There is a clause that at least 1 women member should be in the board of directors. We already have factories act, 1948, Minimum Wages Act, 1950, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, Sexual Harassment Act at Work Place, 2013 to name a few.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS:

On the basis of the present study, following recommendations has been made:

- Organizations should fix the ratio for male and female employees. Equal chances to employees should be given irrespective of gender. The ultimate aim of every organization should be to promote organizational diversity which would lead to growth of an organization
- Organizations should provide training to women workers at local level where experts can be invited. Women shall be provided full security during the training. Trainers should accept women as an equal counterpart to men and should not distinguish on the basis of gender.
- There is a need to develop leadership qualities Organization has to develop leadership qualities in women executives by providing proper training, mentorship and learning environment to feel them as a leader and have an opportunity to know what others have a view on their fitness to the leadership role.
- HR policies should cater to the growing need of women employees' career growth, which needs to be formulated at various levels.
- The promotions should be done on the bases of merit; quality should be more stressed during promotions. Gender gaps should not be considered during promotions. Adequate security should be provided to employees especially to women.
- Organizations should ensure that they conduct de stressing sessions for their employees such as seminars, programmes to ensure their healthy environment.
- Organizations should create an environment where women executives should get support from their leaders and the co-workers should also be encouraged.
- Family has a major impact on women executives' career, but organization should mentor women executives and should support them. Organization should create a path
- for those women who are willing to take a re-entry to their work life after the career break due to the family commitments.
- There is a need for moral counseling as well as motivational seminars for reducing it.

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