



PROBLEMS OF WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract

The primary aim of the study is to identify and understand the various problems faced by working women in India. The study was confined to study different factors responsible for the problems. Women plays prominent role in the society. It is generally perceived that gender bias against working women starts right from the stage of recruitment. There are certainly some common problems, like mental and physical stress, lack of proper balance between employment and family care, unfair treatment in the workplace, stressful life and work place discrimination etc. But some challenges are age or category specific, like prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, ego hassles with colleagues, and problem of glass ceiling etc Some probable solutions for problems plaguing working women that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace are proper safety and security measures by the parent organizations, sensitive and supporting partners at home, effective child care policies and appropriate grievance redressed mechanisms for women in place at the workplace. An assessment of the problems and issues plaguing urban working women is therefore a necessity for better understanding of workplace dynamics related to women.

Key words: Women empowerment, discrimination, employment and education



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INTRODUCTION:

In India, men do not share on most of the household chores, it is women who have to cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, get their children ready for school etc. Men just took care of few chores that are to be dealt outside the house. So the major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all the chores as long as they were homemakers. 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 9 to 5

job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker. Men's role has not changed much.

The status of Indian women has undergone considerable change. Though Indian women are far more independent and aware of their legal rights, such as right to work, equal treatment, property and maintenance, a majority of women remain unaware of these rights. There are other factors that affect their quality of life such as age of marriage, extent of literacy, role in the family and so on. In many families, women do not have a voice in anything while in several families; the women may have a dominating role. The result is that the empowerment of women in India is highly unbalanced and with huge gaps. Those who are economically independent and literate live the kind of life that other women tend to envy about. This disparity is also a cause for worry because balanced development is not taking place.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To identify the status of working women in India.
2. To examine the problems faced by working women in India.
3. To recognize the role of women in the society
4. To review different studies related to issues and concerns & stress about working women

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Hate (1978) in her book stated that there is positive change in the political, economics and social status of middle class working and non-working women living in four cities in Maharashtra with the advent of independence.
2. Robinson and Skarie (1980) in their article on stress of working women stated that in the area of stress and its relationship to locus control reveals that internally oriented individuals show less perception of role overload and role ambiguity
3. Chandrika (1982) in her study stated that in the last decade of the 20th century the spotlight fell on various specific issues of women, these include multiple feminine identity, gender and sexuality, feminization of poverty environment and sustainable development, planning and power globalization, sex tourism, sexual harassment at work place, Dalit women's issues, tribal women and minority women's problem, women's rights as human rights, communal fascism, women and media. These yielded truly in depth analysis, studies and discussions and action programmers.

4. Seta Vaidayalingam (1994) discussed the problem and concerns of Indian women. According to working women are subject to more explanative problems and pressures then their non- working sisters. Finding a suitable occupation in the first problem right and proceeds it and of course fighting for the right amount of education to secure a decent job, tops it all, after having completed her education when a women steps the field of vocation are not quite correct, we find to be women's staying capacity and the usual remarks is adequate. This kind of attitude spoils a women's changes at all levels and particularly in the field of self -employment with a job come other problematic situations, kinds of people at work especially men. Number of lawyers do not encourage women simply because the later to level the office at about 6 p.m. in order to reach home early despite the fact that a busy lawyer's office is at its best after 6 p.m. Single working women have the accommodation problem, if working in a city their families do not live with them. One has heard and read in the newspaper of the unfavorable conditions prevailing in hostels which in any case among to meet encouraged to need. My own mother has never done a day's work despite having secured a medical education from the Madras Medical College.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The status of working Indian women has been shown in Table 1 during the recent past of post independence period. From 1971-2001 the overall work participation rate for women has gone from 34.3 percent to 39.26 percent, just a marginal increase of 5 per cent over a long period of three decades. Ideal share in work participation of women should have been equal to sex ratio of women in the total population of the country. We are far away from this ideal even after 75 years of independence. Work participation in higher administrative posts is miserably low. Though there has been a cry for equal political participation for women in political decision making, barring a single exception of Women's' participation in Local Self Government bodies, the rate of women's participation in state assemblies has hardly increase by .05 percent over the period of 15 years from 1985 to 2000 whereas the participation in MPs in Parliament has increase just by 4 per cent over a period of 20 years from 6.1 per cent to 10.1 per cent. Shall we be able to bring gender equality in near future? How long we should wait for bringing gender equality in real terms.

PROBLEMS OF WORKING WOMEN:

1) Acceptance As Working Professionals:

Most Indian men are yet to come to terms with the fact that women are also capable of working with them, shoulder to shoulder, in any field or professional sphere. They still visualize women as individuals who should be in charge of the kitchen and other domestic affairs. Work is either seen as a temporary evil for women whose husbands do not earn enough, or the domain of women who do not “know their place.” As a result, Indian working women do not get the respect they require from their male colleagues in the workplace.

2) Balancing Work-Family Life:

No matter how high their position or designation is in the office, women in India are still viewed as the family manager back home. They are expected to return home at a certain time, cook, clean and take care of family affairs.

In fact, men who help out around their house are often the butt of jokes by their male friends. This makes life extremely stressful for women who have little help around the house and have to do it all.

3) Travelling For Work is Not Acceptable:

One of the problems faced by married working women is that they cannot travel or go on tours without having to answer uncomfortable questions by most of their friends and family. This is especially true for married women, who also have a flourishing career. Their professional obligations often depend on the support and understanding of family members.

4) Safety Of Working Women:

The “nosey questions factor” aside, there is still the concern for safety of working women who need to travel on official business. Women travelling out of their home city for work trips are considered vulnerable and an easy target to fulfill the lewd intentions of their chauvinist male colleagues. Checking into a hotel alone is one of the problems faced by working women, even if the trip is purely official. Many hotels refuse to allot a room to a single woman (under strange pretexts) because of their own safety concerns or if a woman decides to stay alone, she is viewed with suspicion.

5) Unequal Pay:

One of the raging topics of discussion in the context of problems faced by working women (not only in India, but also in many other nations) is that of equal pay. Legally, a woman is entitled to get the same salary as their male colleagues for the same kind of work done by

them. However, gender discrimination is rampant as many companies still do not adhere to these guidelines and pay women less than their male colleagues.

6) Education:

Though it is gradually rising, the female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. According to the National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy rates. According to majority of the scholars, the major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. Under Non-Formal Education programme (NFE), about 40 Per cent of the centers in states and 10 Per cent of the centers in UTs are exclusively reserved for females. As of 2000, about 0.3 million NFE centers were catering to about 7.42 million children, out of which about 0.12 million were exclusively for girls. In urban India, girls are nearly at par with the boys in terms of education. However, in rural India girls continue to be less educated than the boys.

7) Discrimination at Workplace:

However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. A major problem faced by the working women is sexual harassment at the work place. Further, women employees working in night shift are more vulnerable to such incidents. Nurses, for example, face this problem nearly every day. There is nothing that is done in hospitals to tackle and address the danger they face. Such blatant disregard of current Indian laws is one reason why sexual harassment at the workplace continues to increase.

8) Land and property rights:

In most Indian families, women do not own any property in their own names, and do not get a share of parental property. Due to weak enforcement of laws protecting them, women continue to have little access to land and property. In fact, some of the laws discriminate against women, when it comes to land and property rights. In 1986, the Supreme Court of India ruled that Shah Bano, an old divorced Muslim woman was eligible for maintenance money. However, the decision was vociferously opposed by fundamentalist Muslim leaders, who alleged that the court was interfering in their personal law. The Union Government subsequently passed the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights upon Divorce) Act. Similarly, the Christian women have struggled over years for equal rights of divorce and succession. In 1994, all the churches, jointly with women's organizations, drew up a draft law

called the Christian Marriage and Matrimonial Causes Bill. However, the government has still not amended the relevant laws.

9) Crimes against women:

Police records show high incidence of crimes against women in India. The National Crime Records Bureau reported in 1998 that the growth rate of crimes against women would be higher than the population growth rate by 2010. Earlier; many cases were not registered with the police due to the social stigma attached to rape and molestation cases. Official statistics show that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of reported crimes against women.

10) Domestic Violence:

Globally, one out of every three women faces violence at the hands of their husbands, Fathers, or brothers and uncles in their homes. Domestic violence can be described as when one adult in a relationship misuses power to control another through violence and other forms of abuse. The abuser tortures and controls the victim by calculated threats, intimidation and physical violence. Although men, women and children can be abused, in most cases the victims are women. In every country where reliable, large-scale studies have been conducted, results indicate that between 16 and 52 Per cent of women have been assaulted by their husbands/partners. These studies also indicate widespread violence against women as an important cause of morbidity and mortality. Such violence may also include rape and sexual abuse. Psychological Status of Women in India: Problems and concerns 25 violence includes verbal abuse, harassment, confinement and deprivation of physical, financial and personal resources. For some women emotional abuse may be more painful than physical attacks because they effectively undermine women's security and self-confidence. In India, violence within the home is universal across culture, religion, class and ethnicity. The abuse is generally condoned by social custom and considered a part and parcel of marital life. Statistics reveal a grim picture of domestic violence in India. The National Crimes Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India reports a shocking 71.5 Per cent increase in instances of torture and dowry deaths during the period from 1991 to 1995.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, while discussing the issues and concerns about working women, the main emphasis should be on the 'opportunities for women', as it is of utmost importance. Like every human being, a woman has a 'natural desire for the expression of her inborn knack and

abilities'; even a small baby shows his natural guts through his actions and movements. So, if a woman learns something, she craves for expressing it in some way. It is quite encouraging that nowadays, women have much more opportunities and prospects for the assertion of their individuality and talents. The services sector has increased the chances for women with its comfortable environment, where they can actively participate and excel, even from a distant place. Hence, if the focus is right, this issue will hopefully find its way towards a positive solution.

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