

Indian Women at Workplace

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Abstract: The present study is about the Indian women at work. What are the reasons that deter a large number of women in the country from going outside their home and work. Why the work done by women is not recognized and not counted in the GDP of the country. Are the women themselves responsible or is it the mindset of the society that their profession is taken as secondary and reproduction, childrearing and homemaking is taken as their primary job.

Index Terms: women, homemakers, caregivers, sociocultural, glassceiling, domestic responsibility

The current population status of India is 1.28 billion out of which the total female population is 622 million and the total male population is 664 million. The sex ratio as calculated in the year 2015 is 943 females per 1000 males. This sex ratio varies from state to state. Kerala and Pondicherry accounts the highest sex ratio.

The statistics of the country in the twentieth century showed that only 39.2 % of the women were working as described by the National Family Health Survey, Round 2, 1998 - 1999. Though, this has declined and currently only 27% women work. The major reason for this decline is the working culture and conditions that compel women workforce to quit and negligence towards their welfare. At the global level, the percentage of women working has been stagnated to about 55% while many women working in the informal economy are not counted. The gender gap has not been reduced to a greater extent. The cultural norms inhibit the growth of women and are considered to be major cause of concern. In China, 64% of adult women work towards the growing economy. While in Japan, where technology is well advanced and higher education rates prevail, only 49% women work because of the gender bias.

Most of the work done by women goes unrecorded in the census count. This includes collecting fuel and fodder, water collection, growing vegetables and other household work. These are unpaid labor and not recognized by the formal sector. Women constitute nearly 90% of the marginal workers. In rural areas they engage in agricultural activities which are different in nature from other works.

Over a period of time, women have overcome the socio cultural difference of being born a girl. They have withstood the narrow vision of the family members and negligence towards their education and health were some of the reasons that hindered the growth of women especially in a developing country like India. .Despite this socio cultural divide where men or a male child is put on a higher pedestal than a female, our girls have come up victorious bringing glory for the country, state and their family in every sphere of life be it technology, sports, education and defense.

“Rome was not built in a day” is truly justified. Women have evolved over a period of time and managed to compete with men at an equal footing. Compare it with women at offices in engineering fields, management areas, research areas or pursuing the newer areas of interest, we have achieved it all though the numbers are small. The remarkable success achieved by our ladies truly needs a special mention. In the field of Dance, Sudha Chandran is the living legend and has performed classical Bharatnatyam on an international platform even when one of her foot is amputated with an artificial Jaipur leg. In Sports, Preethi Srinivisan a champion in swimming has paralyzed her body below the neck area. Despite of grieving for the same, she chose to inspire herself and rest of the others. She has started an NGO on her own Soulfree. Based in Tamil Nadu this organization has assisted many other women with severe disabilities by providing them with basic facilities and ray of hope. She once captained under 19 women’s cricket team in Tamil Nadu. Being in 2% of the merit list was just not enough for her to get through the admission in top colleges. She was denied admissions in Indian universities since these were not disabled friendly. Arunima Sinha lost her leg and with the prosthetic leg within two years she became the first amputee women to climb Mt. Everest. Her success was attributed to her strong will power, determination and passion. These stories were not built in a day. These took years to overcome their plight and achieve a sense of satisfaction and continue to live further without feeling any regret.

The leading ladies like Naina Lal Kidwai, Group Chairman HSBC India. She managed to take HSBC to new startling heights even during the period of recession. Tanya Dubash, Executive Director and President (Marketing), she has been able to provide her company with a fresh and youthful makeover. “Initiative is the first step to success...” Shanti Tekam, a woman from a remote village in Madhya Pradesh received an award on behalf of her community members for conserving forests. She received the award from the Union Environment and Forest Minister Prakash Javadekar. She and along with another villager Bansuri Ram received the 6th JSW – The Times of India Earth Care Award in the “community” category given to the Royal Bank Scotland (RBS) Foundation, India for leading a consortium that is not only working in to save trees through community participation but also promoting these practices to others for adopting sustainable means.

Let us look at the various factors that deter most women to be ambitious and career oriented. The automobile advertisements that come to us are all male centric. Lighter cars or vehicles driven by women and big powerful vehicles by men clearly indicate the mindset of the motor manufacturers. Similarly medicines are also tested predominantly on men despite their different response on male and females. The manufacturers never woo the female clientele as they are not considered a captivating market beyond cosmetics.

It is quite evident that more than 66 percent of the work done by females is unpaid as compared to 12 percent men's. Women have been burdened with major unpaid care giver job. According to a survey by OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), the time spent by women on unpaid work is 352 minutes whereas men spend only 52 minutes. Unpaid tasks cover taking care of the house, children and elderly. Major portion of Indian women are self employed as in unorganized sector and are not covered by labor law regulations.

The most important question that arises in one's mind is do women actually believe that their primary job is child rearing and home making. There is a need for a self analysis that do they prioritize the mother wife role rather than going outside home to work and make their career. Do women feel that their job is only reproduction and delineating domestic responsibilities. Do they take their career seriously. Do women acquire education and develop skills to enhance their matrimonial credentials. Although a woman's job is considered complementary but it is devalued.

It is our sociocultural bent of mind where a woman's job is not given a priority. Women themselves are unaware of their own importance. It is instilled in the minds of the stakeholders that if the husband is earning well then there is no need for the wife to work however qualified she may have been. If there is an emergent situation at home and the wife has a better job prospects than the husband then also it is considered that she should sacrifice her job and take over her primary job of caregiver.

Gender divide is equally apparent in educating females and letting them acquire skills which are more gender specific. According to sociocultural norms some subjects, jobs and skills are supposedly not for women. There is a difference in the nature of job, place and hours of work and also an attitude towards work. In this glass ceiling of stereotyping it is very difficult for most women to break the glass ceiling. This is also known as gender segregation.

The sexual harassment of women at workplace Act 2013 is a positive step towards making women safe at workplace. The workplace needs to be safe for women. Some employers are unable to provide safe work environment and hence find it easier not to employ women.

Me too culture is also dissuading employers giving employment to women.

Recently women have been given paid maternity leave for 26 weeks which has been hailed by one and all. This has also proved detrimental in providing employment to a certain age group of women as no one is willing to give so many paid leaves. This move has also proved in creating a biased attitude in people's mind that only women are liable to take care of children.

Women are enormously powerful. They are voters and are responsible in forming governments. They are consumers and hence contribute to economy and we are decision makers. They must realize that besides being caregivers and homemakers, they are individuals entitled to have their choices, they should be encouraged to take on responsibilities outside their home. The employers must allow flexi timings for women.

In a nut shell, I would like to conclude that whether working or not, women are the major contributors to the economy of any country and also are vigilant citizens towards attaining sustainable environmental conditions. We can manage all the things well whether it is the task at workplace, non-regular job or a household responsibility because we only think about how to deliver and not its consequences!!!

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