

Problems and Prospects of Work Life Balance of Working Woman: A Systematic Review

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Abstract:

Women have been treated a second class citizens since time immemorial. Patriarchal norms in a male dominated society have dictated the dos and don'ts to women in every aspect of their lives, from conducting themselves in public to choices of reproduction. The public sphere has always been seen as the male domain with limited number of women venturing out to test the treacherous waters of the workplace. Discrimination faced by women at the workplace includes unequal pay for equal work, sexual harassment, lack of adequate sanitation facilities, unsafe roads and transportation, denial of promotions, inadequate work-life balance and so on. This paper seeks to provide a critical and analytical perspective on the various issues confronting women at the workplace. Based on secondary sources, it examines the existing international legal instruments providing protection to women workers. It also highlights the role of the Indian state in making workplaces equal and safe for women by enforcing the various provisions of the Indian Constitution. The paper concludes with a few recommendations, which if implemented, could go a long way in empowering women and infuse them with the much needed confidence to take on the professional world.

Key words: *Indian women, discrimination, international law, Indian Constitution, Women empowerment.*

I. Introduction

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.

Working women in India are face with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. 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 handle as a homemaker. Men's role has not changed much.

Women have started sleeping lesser than before because only when they wake up early they can cook for the family, get themselves ready for the job, get their children ready for the schools, so on an average, women lost 2 hours of sleep per day and up to 14 hours sleep per week. If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family.

They have to handle harassment'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. Some of us have given up that hope and learnt to accept that nothing can be done about it. India has a long way to go before our women will be able to live their lives to the full.

II. Literature Reviews

Various research papers have been reviewed to identify the problems being actually faced by women while going out for job. The issues related to family and society along with workplace has been reviewed. Following are some of the reviews :

1. **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 man and hence deserve unequal salaries and wages for the same job.
2. **In an article** "Working Women face Challenges in Zimbabwe" published in a journal named My Wage, a survey was conducted with the aim of understanding Zimbabwean working women's perception challenges and experiences of their role in the workplace, sexual harassment tapping the problems.
3. **Muhammad Atif 1 Nawazi Noreen AfzaL2 Kiran Shehzadi3** in their paper "Problems of Formally Employed Women : A Case Study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan" published in Asian Journal of Empirical Research (2013) highlight the problems of working women in formal sector in Bahawalnagar. It has highlighted the problems faced by working women in various departments such as academics; Nursing, College, police stations.
4. **Dr. P. Ashok Kumar and Dr. K. Sundar** in their paper "Problems faced by women Executives working in Public Sector Banks in Puducherry" (2012) states that the role of women was confined to household chores and limited to domestic issues. In the male - dominated Indian society, women suffered to extreme levels of exploitation. The paper seeks to identify the factors preventing women employees from aspiring for higher post and problems faced by women executives in public sector banks related to work performance. Further this aims also at finding out the organizational support for women employees to achieve higher post.
5. **Owais Shafique and Faiza Anwar, Sahaab Akbar, Uroosa Akhtar Khan** in their paper "PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN EDUCATION SECTOR OF BAHAWALPUR" (2012) states that married women face greater challenges than unmarried women. Although their husbands are co-operative but their children are prominently neglected. Despite the supportive attitude of their parents, unmarried women still face challenges like transportation and managing time between personal and social life. It is believed that whether married or unmarried, women's salary and promotion system is not satisfactory for which they blame "Favoritism".
6. According to survey done by **National partnership organization**, it has been observed that for many women, the path to finding and keeping a job with decent wages and advancement opportunities is strewn with obstacles from lack of adequate child care, to juggling work and family responsibilities, to dealing with on the job discrimination. These barriers to employment are especially challenging for women living on the economic margins, particularly welfare recipients, for whom the consequences of lacking or losing a job can be devastating.
7. **Damaske (2011)** found that negative psychological experiences, like gender stereotyping and discrimination in male occupations, caused women's movement from male dominated to female dominated occupations. Feelings of bias and underutilization amongst women in male dominated occupations are common.
8. **Meenu Goyal and Jai Prakash (2011)** in their paper "Women Entrepreneurship in India - Problems and Prospects" stated that the educated Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in India society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one. She has competed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business is no exception for this. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance.
9. **Pearl Jacobs and Linda Schain** in their paper "Professional Women : The Continuing Struggle for Acceptance and Equality" (2008) states that the situation of professional women has changed dramatically. Integration of women from education and nursing, now have been enhanced to other professions like accounting, medicine, law, etc. however, which does not necessarily mean acceptance and equality nor does it mean that the stress created by work family conflict has been resolved. This paper examined some of the issues that continue to plague women as they attempt to progress in their professional fields.

Problems and Challenges Confronted by Indian Women at the Workplace:

For the working Indian woman, the workplace is replete with various issues and challenges that need to be confronted on a daily basis. While the range and intensity of these issues may vary, the ones that are most prevalent can be summarized as follows :

- **Gender Pay Gap :**

There is no country on earth where women get equal pay as men for equal work . Not even the Nordic countries with impressively high overall gender parity can boast of equality when it comes to the pay packet. India has the distinction of being the lowest ranked on gender parity, which includes pay parity, among the BRIC(Brazil, Russia, India, China) economies . This was revealed in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2010. Gender parity in wages has been a global concern for about a century not . Yet progress has been slow after the initial victories .

The latest Monster Salary Index report provides a wage analysis based on a data set covering the years 2013, 2014 and the first three quarters of 2015. The report is based on data collected from the *paycheck.in* salary calculator and the Monster salary index across eight different sectors . On the whole, the report finds that the gender pay gap in India is 25.4 percent . This means the median hourly wage for a woman is 25.4 percent less than the median hourly wage for a man. According to the report, some of the reasons behind gender pay gap could be the preference for male employees over female employees, preference for promotion of male employees to supervisory positions and career breaks of women due to parenthood duties and other socio- cultural factors .

- **Sexual Harassment :**

For Indian women, sexual harassment is an abhorrent reality of their daily lives . Their biggest struggle, every single day , is to maintain their sanctity at their homes, on road, in their educational institutions, as well as at their workplace .

According to one of the recent surveys conducted by Nimbuzz, , a cross platform mobile calling and messaging app. Indian women don't feel safe at their workplace . The survey, little Nimbuzz-pulse of the nation, reveals that 47% of women feel their top issue at work is sexual harassment vis-a vis inequality in pay and unequal opportunities .

Between 2014 and 2015, cases of sexual harassment within office premises more than doubled from 57 to 119 according to National Crime Records Bureau data . There has also been a 51% rise in sexual harassment cases at other places related to work from 469 in 2014 to 714 in 2015.

Despite the rise in numbers, women are finding that their complaints are not redressed effectively by employers . Employers are either unaware of the law's provisions or have implemented partially and even those that do set up internal panels have poorly trained members.

An internal complaints committee (ICC) is mandatory in every private or public organization that has 10 or more employees, according to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. However, 36% of Indian companies and 25% of multinational companies had not yet constituted their ICCS, the 2015 research study, Fostering Safe Workplaces, by the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) showed . About 50% of the more than 120 companies that participated in the study admitted that their ICC members were not legally trained .

- **Inadequate Sanitation Facilities :**

The lack of adequate sanitation facilities at workplaces has negative consequences for women . According to Indian Census data (2011), the female population is 587 million and constitutes 48 percent of the population. Yet, women's participation in the workforce is only 29 percent of women aged over fifteen years . At least part of the reasons for this could be attributed to the inadequate safety of women which could in turn be related to inadequate access to toilets .

- **Unsafe Roads and Transportation**

Women in India continue to feel unsafe while using public transport, even two years after the horrific gang rape and murder of a young physiotherapy student in the national capital that resulted in nation wide protests . With the lack of safe public transport option post 10 p.m., most people are dependent either on their own vehicles or autos and taxi services. As darkness descends, the number of women on the streets reduces and women are hampered by a lack of gender diversity in public spaces . Factors that contribute to making women feel unsafe on the streets are lighting , the presence of security and visibility, or knowing that you are visible to others - vendors, shops, street facing houses on the streets .

- **Gender based Discrimination**

Five out of ten employees in India Inc have experienced one or the other kind of discrimination, said a study by staffing firm Team Lease Services . There exists a gender segregation in the workplace in terms of benefits, hours, leave, wages, opportunities, promotions, etc. In its latest survey 'Bias@Workplace', the firm said that India Inc.(mainly in the top 8 cities) is yet to adopt the concept of equal opportunity in its true sense. The report indicated the strong prevalence of discriminatory practices while recruiting and at

work. The Team Lease study further reflected that pregnant women or women with young children are at a relative disadvantage, both during the recruitment process as well as vying for opportunities at the workplace.

- **Poor Work Life Balance**

Work life balance is a term used to describe the balance between an individual's personal life and professional life. Work life balance is seen more as a women issue due to the traditional mindset, where the woman is considered primarily responsible for the smooth running of the day to day affairs of the family irrespective of her job profile and official responsibilities that is why managing work and family responsibilities can be very difficult for women. The dynamics of the work environment have exerted enormous pressure on working women as they need to cope with virtually two full time jobs one at the office and the other at home. Such imbalance has a negative effect on personal life of working women which in turn have taken form of social hazards such as increasing number of divorces infertility due to high stress levels every day about a woman's safety while travelling. 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 have 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 stresses.

- **Workplace Adjustment**

Adjustment 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. Malaadjustment to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflict with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.

- **Lack of Role Models :**

Women have time and again proved their capabilities in the work front but still, the top cream layer is mostly occupied by men. The challenge here is female leaders are many but role models are few. Hence when women try and look for leaders whom they can emulate, they are left behind. But this challenge is slowly minimizing as more and more are entering as managers, politicians, presidents, ECO's and in the next few years to come, there will be more leaders who will turn role models for the generations to follow.

Remedial Measures :

- Training programmes should be provided to self-employed workers to develop their self confidence, self-esteem, courage and risk.
- Promote greater women business owner's equity by increasing women's assets through savings programmes, home ownership etc.
- Promote appropriate loan guarantee schemes.
- More awareness programmes should be conducted jointly by government and NGO's in order to make self-employment more attractive.
- Make a credit pool available to women from the smallest to the largest business opportunity in a secondary market for small business loans.
- Success stories of self employed women workers from varied backgrounds should be popularized through textbooks of schools and colleges. All possible media should be used to project these role models.
- Increase women's business success by promoting counseling services to women business owners from start up to development and access to support networks for training, information, market development and child care.
- For economic security of women, it is necessary to develop co-operative credit societies where small amounts of money can be saved and used for giving better financial resources to self-employed women workers. This process would develop intended support among its members.

- Self-employed women workers should be trained in modern techniques and latest trends in activities like sewing, dairy, bakery, spinning, weaving leather products etc. so that productive utilization of their time and capacities can take place.
- Access to training and technological information has to be provided to self-employed women workers to improve their skills, level of decision making and effective participation.

Importance of Women in the Workforce :

As per research, companies who have a higher number of women in their workforce have gained high financial profits and productivity as their output, when compared to the companies which have fewer women employees. Being in this 21st century, where women have been equally capable and successful as men, gender diversity at the workplace should be made a mandatory rule. Moreover, the companies which have a diversity at the workplace should be made a mandatory rule. Moreover, the companies which have a diverse workforce are more successful when compared to other companies which are mostly male dominated. Hiring women in the companies have many benefits as they are more focused, committed and successful. Workplace are usually equal and it is a global truth, one can easily understand it by seeing the pay, the position, the designation what men and women get at work. But still, women have been victorious in making a mark on their own in this competitive market. The best part about hiring more women in the workplace not only helps you double your gains and increases your organization's productivity but also make the workplace a better place to work. Some of the top advantages of having gender diversity at the workplace are :

- Better job satisfaction
- The work turns out to be enjoyable and fun
- The dedication level towards the company will be higher
- Being positive and focused on company goals
- More meaningful work
- Have better opportunities to succeed
- Lesser burnout situations

III. Conclusion :

Conditions of working women in India have improved considerably in the recent years. Ironically, despite the improvement in their status, they still find themselves dependent on men. It is because of the fact that man in patriarchal society has always wielded economic independence and power to take decision. Since the working woman earns an independent income in the same patriarchal set up where the basic infrastructure of society has hardly changed, though her own role within the same structure is passing through a transitional phase, it is but natural that she would remain vulnerable to exploitation even in her economically independent state. Society perhaps yet needs to accord due recognition to women to take the lead role and women at the same time, need to be oriented vigorously towards assuming this role in the society. The problems of self-employed women workers are multi-dimensional. These can be solve by the coordinated efforts of self-employed women workers, coordinated functioning of promotional agencies and government assistance without red tape or bureaucratic delays. The self-employed women workers has to be educated and she should have a proper training in acquiring the necessary skill in running an enterprise. Once all the problems are soothed out there is no looking back at all. Women are capable of being as good as or even better than men in business. If formal training is imported to women they could acquire skills required and can contribute in a big way to the nation's prosperity. Given the right opportunities and encouragement they will be very successful and eventually overcome all the problems.

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