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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### WOMEN AT WORK PLACE: EMPOWER HER ALONG WITH MAN

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#### Abstract

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#### Introduction:-

There is an increase in the extent of women's workforce participation in organized sectors on account of increasing access to education, training and facilities. However, the total labor force participation of women in organized sectors is only a small section of total employees in the country. An analysis of women's employment over the years shows that women's employment in central government has increased by 323%. There is an increase by 390% and 684% in state government and central government respectively. Every data and survey reports are going behind numbers and figures. The qualitative assessment of the women's working condition is the need of the hour. How far she is safe and secure in the work place, issues faced by women at work place, the hindrances that she faces in getting promotions and related issues are also addressed in many reports, but in superficial level. The real issues of women are least addressed. Especially the issues related to accepting her views and opinions and acknowledging her. This paper is qualitatively analysing the problems faced by women at workplace from personal point of view and the detailing from the experiences of the fellow workers.

#### Major problems faced by women at workplace

This section of the paper is making an in-depth analysis of the problems faced by women in wide perspectives from different angles.

- **Problem in acknowledging the abilities and capabilities of woman:** Women at workplace face the problem of acknowledgement. Able women are often teased for any innovative ideas presented before the team. It is a prejudice mentality that ideas of women will never stand with utility. Even if the capabilities and abilities of women are upto the mark, the hesitation to acknowledge and admit them are still there among the male dominated society. The pathetic situation is that, any achievement of women is secretly attributed either to the effort which is stolen from somewhere or someone, or viewed as she sacrificed her morality for attaining the promotion or a better position. These kind of teasing from the group always compel women to conceal her ideas in herself. She will never speak up and the faculty of thinking creatively is curtailed by herself. The exact self of women is lost somewhere else.
- **Occupational Segregation-** Women in higher positions are often treated as arrogant, pushy and abrasive. These tags are attributed to women without any grounded reason, whereas men at higher positions are valued with their leadership traits. The belief that women in higher positions cannot render their duties and responsibilities effectively as they are more concentrated on household and domestic works debilitates women from achieving goal. Underestimating ambitious women and degrading them is a common scene in the organized sectors.

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Approaching women in a higher position with a request and pleading in front of them is considered to be beyond the limit of dignity of men.

- **Gender pay gap:** Pay band, though it is fixed for both genders in corporate sectors, it remains in papers most of the times. It is nowhere implemented except in government sectors. Treating women as unskilled is a usual practice for which none raise voice. Appointing women in specific shifts where the wages are low is common. In organized sectors also it is considered to be just fine to give low salary to women compared to men for the same work. Availing maternity leave and taking leave for managing the maternal responsibilities are often ill-treated and considered to be the inability of women. These people should also have the sense that it is because of these care and responsibilities given by women, the world is continuing. This caring is the pillar of the human existence which no one could neglect at any point of time. So, give respect to the maternal feelings and give her some time to relish and refresh herself. She will come back in full swing to render her duties and responsibilities. The reason that women deny the duties for overtime shifts should not be taken for granted for hindering her promotions and increments. The nature of men's jobs often changed with these promotions, while women keep on slogging in the same position.
- **Inadequate Access to Basic health resources:** Facilities provided to men and women should be different as the need of both genders are different in all aspects. Provision for rest rooms and childcare facilities are basic necessities which are deprived for women in the work place. Though there exist mandatory statutory provisions, these facilities are not provided to the needy. Hormonal changes and mood swings at the time of menstrual period and post-partum related issues are beyond the limit of manageable among women. Early menopause and psychological issues are also common phenomenon now a days among women. Rest room and flexible environment at workplace will support women in managing their mood swings and related issues in a better way. Most of the work place is neglecting this aspect and when it becomes problematic for women, they are compelled to leave the job. Work force participation of women in the country is decreasing though they constitute half of the population.
- **Abandonment from higher skilled training:** Women are usually abandoned from getting training. Usually, men are given preference in moving to abroad and getting access to technical education. Women are neglected under the vague explanation that they don't have enough skills and intellectual faculties to acquire these skills. Though basic skills are given to women in small proportion, higher skilled training is reserved for men. The discriminatory attitude of the employer is reflected in providing opportunities of training to women. Lack of enough skill is also considered as an easy way to terminate women from the post. Women, working on temporary basis are facing much pathetic situation compared to those who are in permanent post. They were not at all given the opportunity for training.
- **Low Level of Awareness about Occupational Health and Safety:** Most of the women are not aware about the occupational health hazards. Many women are working in hazardous conditions without considering their health. Improper posture is leading to many gynaec related issues like vaginal discharge, burning sensation during urination, frequent and urgent need to urinate etc. Working women are not taking adequate amount of water on daily basis which leads to many infectious diseases. Need for rest rooms is highly essential. However, provision for rest room is rarely available. There should be access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Most of the women working in unorganized sectors are finding it difficult to get access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Urinary infections are common among such people. Materials used by them in the working conditions can be allergic and hazardous too.
- **Physical and mental harassment:** Women are treated as easily available commodity by the fellow workers. An unmarried girl is keeping silent towards any sort of harassment at the thought that she will not get a good marriage proposal when the society get to know that she is a victim and married women keep mum as they are afraid of the status of the husband and in-laws. But the million-dollar question is how far this could be sustained? Don't we need a change in this regard? Remaining silent in the issues of oppression and sexual harassments is related to the involvement of power relations. The reported cases of sexual harassment are only microscopic minority. The unreported cases are much more. Sending porn videos, using of sex related words, peeping into the personal life and staring at the body parts of women are considered to be usual and so called 'manly' by our society which is in turn humiliating and stressful for women. Crimes against women in general have risen steadily across the years, standing at over 400,000 cases of reported crime in 2019 (Bhuyan and Khaitan, 2021). Chaudhuri (2007) found that in incidents where the perpetrator was in a position of relative authority, victims were less likely to report them as they did not think that any action would be taken against the perpetrator, and because of the possible consequences of making a complaint. "Many reported fear of dismissal, loss of income, blocking of promotion and victimisation

in work assignments”.Lack of punitive action in cases reported is hindering women from reporting cases and in certain cases the one who voiced complaints were punished instead of the offenders.

- **Glass ceiling:**Glass ceiling refers to discriminatory barriers that prevent women from rising to positions of power or responsibility and advancing to higher positions within an organization simply because they are women (Li and Leung, 2001). There are certain invisible barriers which hinder women from getting promotion despite of their hardwork, education and experience. Efforts made by women to break this glass ceiling and raise to top positions are attributed to ‘queen bee syndrome’. Such women don’t stay there for long. The work pressure and lack of support from the employees make them pull themselves from the post. The hard work of women is not counted at the time of interview with regard to their performance evaluation. Certain top positions in the companies are reserved for men. There is no space or chance for women even to apply for the post which is a form of glass ceiling. Making decisions based on gender, instead on individual’s qualifications and performance would lead workers to believe that there is a glass ceiling.
- **Glass cliffing:** Glass cliffing is more related to glass ceiling where women is placed in such a situation where the firm is at the edge of collapse or in turmoil. She is pushed in front of the position where they have to take certain challenging decision and also the success the rate is anticipated to be very low. Glass cliffing is a term which is more indicated to uplift women and it is true that women need upliftment but in real sense. Pushing women to upliftment based on the hidden agenda where the chance to win is very less and finally putting the blame on women is not considered to be recognizing or raising the status of women.
- **Imposter syndrome:** Self-assessment is very much essential for moving forward. Women in the middle of gender bias find it difficult to assess themselves accurately on account of lack of confidence. This situation is termed as imposter syndrome. Every time women in position are in the thought that whether their ideas and perceptions will be valued or taken into consideration. Continuous neglect and avoidance from the authority will lead to a situation of depressive thoughts and demotivation. Such an internal experience of perceiving oneself as not competent as the male counterpart is leading to imposter syndrome.

#### **Is pandemic a boon or bane to women to be safe at work place?**

During the pandemic period many of the organizations shifted their modus operandi from offline to online and the survey reports indicates that sexual harassment at work place in most of the largest companies in India found a drastic decline following the coronavirus outbreak. “The total number of sexual harassment complaints at workplaces in 44 Nifty companies fell 38.26% in 2021. These companies received a total of 455 complaints of sexual harassment in the year ended 31 March, compared with 737 and 739 in FY20 and FY19 respectively”, (Data analysed by anti-sexual harassment advisory complykaro.com from company annual reports).

Even though the cases of sexual and mental harassment decreased as compared to earlier days before the pandemic, sexual harassment is still continuing in one or in another way such as messages and calls at odd hours, sexist remarks, taking the screen shot of the video calls, sending porn related videos and images etc. It is a peak time to consider the urgency and gravity of the situation and take necessary steps.

#### **Policy of prevention of sexual harassment- A revisit**

##### **The policy recommends the following provisions**

- 1) Women should not be sexually harassed at workplace.
- 2) The following circumstances are treated to be sexual harassment-
  - “Implied or explicit threat about her present or future employment status”
  - “Interference with her work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment for her”
  - “Humiliating treatment likely to affect her health or safety”

#### **Complaint of sexual harassment: The modus operandi**

If there is an internal committee constituted at the workplace, working woman can lodge complaint before the committee or before the Local Committee, in case it is not so constituted, the complaint should be lodged within a period of three months from the date of incident. The member of the Internal Committee has the responsibility to give all kind of assistance to the woman who lodged complaint.

As per the above description, it is very much evident that the act is much strong enough to protect women at workplace.The government is much committed to protect women at workplace through the Ministry of Women and Child Development by publishing a handbook on sexual harassment of women at work place to inform employees

about workplace sexual harassment and their right to lodge a complaint under the acts and rules in a lucid form. But still, the number of complaints lodged is very less compared to the actual number. Even if the complaints are lodged, it is resolved in such a way that everything is just part of a game. The victim is never received justice in a proper way as she deserves. It is taken for granted that it is right of men to mentally and physically harass women and they are even sure in the fact that complaints lodged by women is having only the span of an air bubble. This pathetic situation is making women to retrieve themselves from lodging complaint. The status of family and the related issues evolved on account of the unwritten rules and regulations of the society is dissuading women to go for legal action.

### **Conclusion:-**

From the time immemorial, we have been talking about the safety and security of women at work place. But the focus is usually on sexual harassment. It is a fact that sexual harassment is increasing remarkably in the country and the judiciary is keeping a check on that. but still, the number of incidents is increasing. Apart from sexual harassment, women face many more problems at workplace which have been given re-visited in this paper. Let the society understand her and her importance. Women want to empower along with men, not beyond men or over men. If this fact is clear, then the world will be a paradise for both genders.

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