

SOCIAL SECURITY OF WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is a growing economy and we are experiencing a transitioning society as a result of advancement in technology and globalization. Significant development in each and every field can be seen. Today, the number of working population is growing at a faster pace.

The main reason for this development is that apart from the tradition of men-folk at work, there is a significant increase in the level of literacy of women and also they have started working in the fields which were supposed to be men dominated. There is hardly any field left where no participation of women is found. Women can be seen working in factories, military, police services, IT industries etc. The current paper highlights the social security of working women in India.

KEYWORDS:

Society, Security, Working women

INTRODUCTION

In the lighter version, it looks very motivating that Indian women chose their career themselves and are a part in contributing to the development of the country and their families. But, the other face of this rosy scenario is that many of these women have to face work place challenges so as to survive in this competition along with the familial hardships. In India, there is no such field where women are not treated badly. Yes, not all the women are targeted; but good number of research and studies suggests that most of working women have to face work place difficulties.

This scenario can be visualized from the historical background of India after industrial revolution. Till the 19th century, Indian society was supposed to be male dominated. Men used to work and women were subjected to too many restrictions and confined to the jobs of house makers and care taker of the family.

The situation was such that most of the girls were not sent to the schools and colleges for education and were also not entertained to take up jobs. In case she did so she would be subject to character assassination. In this way, most of the women were made to be inferior to men with all restrictions.

With the intervention and support of the government and its policies, by giving encouragement to girl education, reservation policies, industrialization, globalization, advancement in technology, the thinking of Indian societies and the status of the women has changed but not up to the desired level as is it is in many parts of the developed countries. This trend is still growing and now women are able to compete with men in all fields of life and work.

This is the most welcomed and a positive change for a growing nation like India but in most of the societies, there are some men of lower mentality, who still believe that women are inferior to men and they are meant to serve men and take care of house hold chores and child and elderly care. It is expected that the women should not question men or order them but be highly subordinate and obedient to them.

Most of the men feel it is below dignity and a matter of shame to be supervised, take orders or to work under the female. So many a times the male workforce tries to put down the chances of the female being at work, occupying higher positions, performing, recognizing or acknowledging and administering suitable rewards.

Due to this menial mentality of the men, some women have to face challenges at workplaces. In every field of work, women get to encounter such kind of people with very rare exceptions. The suffering women can be married or unmarried, in her teens or

much older. But on reality grounds, if a thorough comparison is made, then it can be concluded that married women have to face many challenges as they have unshared extra family responsibilities as well.

They have to maintain balance between work and family. The scenario is much more complicated and multifaceted in case of a middle aged married woman working as senior software professional, with more responsibilities at work place, catching up with ever changing technology, added problems of teenage children, also the elderly care to be exercised, be it the parents or the parent –in-laws apart from taking care and maintaining good self. The general health issues that could arise at this phase of life is menopause and stress related ailments apart from others, if any.

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The Indian society is considered as the male dominant where males are given more priority as compared to the females. This thing is also shown in work places where women workers are supposed to receive less value especially in informal sector.

The working environment in most of the small and medium firms is not considered as the supportive for the women workers as these workers have to face many problems from psychologically to physically in informal sector.

In this sector, the matter of security issues of women workers is always under question. In these industries, the women from the poor families work and sometimes, they have to spend extra hours on the duty.

In recent years, the share of women in working places has increased due to globalization and hence, industrialization. Women now have started to contribute in the economic situation of their families. They work outside in day and work at home in night.

The participation of women in many sectors like agriculture can also be seen. This rising contribution of Indian women have certainly help the basic needs of the industries but it has also raised the problem of social security of working women.

Gender bias is one more factor due to which the women workers have to suffer a lot at the work places. Mostly, the ration of men is higher than that of women at the workplace. This becomes the good opportunity for the male workers to tease the women working at their work places which is very shaming.

These kinds of things are responsible for the depression among the working women. They are disrespected by the their male fellows which surely decreases their work efficiency and consequently the performance of the victims tends to fall down.

In many cases, it is found that the working women are mentally tortured by their collegians. They are often treated as inferior at the work places. This may cause fall in self-confidence among the working women at the work places.

Long working hours, carrying heavy loads even during pregnancy, working in hazardous occupations, absence of separate latrines and urinals, no portable drinking water, absence of lighting and ventilation, and lack essential safeguards made the life of women employees miserable.

After attaining independence it was fully realised that the overall economic development in the country is not possible unless women are also brought in its main stream. Accordingly, the Indian Government took various steps to protect women employees from unsafe working conditions and health hazards. Due to peculiar reasons such as their physical build-up, poor health on account of repeated pregnancies, responsibilities towards children and due to nature of occupation in which they are engaged, the special protection has been provided to women employees.

The Factories Act, 1948, authorizes the State Government to prohibit employment of women in dangerous operations where it is of the opinion that any manufacturing process of operation carried on in any factory exposes any person(s) employed in it to a serious risk of bodily injury, poisoning, or disease. It may make rules applicable to any factory or class or description of factories in which manufacturing process or operation is carried on specifying the manufacturing process or operation and declaring it to be dangerous and prohibiting or restricting the employment of women in the manufacturing process or operation.

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 aims at regulation of employment of women employees in certain establishments for certain periods before and after child birth and provision of maternity and certain other benefits and facilities to the women employees.

DISCUSSION

Legislations which are providing health and welfare measures, maternity benefits etc., are not implemented effectively because women employees do not get the stipulated benefits and facilities to their desired extent. This is a sign of vulnerability and exploitation. Despite all these labor laws, a majority of women employees lack proper education and ignorance of statutory provisions, which is the thrust area affecting the development and welfare of women employees. Hence, appropriate efforts should be taken to make women employees conscious about their rights for improvement in socio economic conditions.

While a majority of the women still face discrimination and gender bias, in the last few decades, the number of women successful in politics, technology and business etc. is definitely on the rise. Society has started seeing women in a different perspective. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, secretaries, managers and officers etc. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. For centuries

women have been subjected to exploitation and torture, physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenge and problems faced by them both at home and workplace.

Status of women can be broadly defined as the degree of socio-economic equality and freedom enjoyed by women. Economic, social and cultural factors interplay for reinforcing the gender differences in ownership, control and access to land through inheritance, marriage or informal networks.

Women's economic status in the household, depends on three levels of influence, viz., women's acquired economic and social power, the socio-economic status of their households and the level of support and opportunities in the community.

Women's economic well-being is usually enhanced by women acquiring independent sources of income that begets increased self-esteem and improved conditions of their households and the overall level of development in their communities. The gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the most significant contributor to the gender gap in the economic wellbeing, social status and empowerment of women.

Women have been playing vital roles in households since ages. Now women are also recognized for their value in the workplace and are engaged in wide range of activities of work in addition to their routine domestic work. Building a society where women can breathe freely without fear of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination is the need of the hour, to ensure a better future for the next generation.

Educated urban women are presumed to be more aware of the opportunities and challenges of the workplace or educated urban women can better understand their roles and limitations in the workplaces and are perceived to be bold enough to develop their own personalities, with or without encouragement from their families. An assessment of the problems and issues plaguing urban working women is therefore a necessity for better understanding of workplace dynamics related to women.

CONCLUSION

Women working in some industries, factories, banks, hospitals etc. complain that they do not get time to look after and give care to their babies. The efficiency of a working woman is always suspected and questioned by most people, especially their male counterparts. In the upper class cadres, it is generally seen that all qualifications remaining similar, men are usually preferred. Authorities are doubtful whether women would be able to handle male subordinates, take independent decisions, cope with crisis and manage their duties properly.

Even though women prove they are efficient, authorities think twice before promoting them and even if women are given the chance, there is always a remark that they were given the position because they were women. Sexual harassment is another serious problem faced by working women.

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