

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE: A STUDY OF KABUL PROVINCE OF AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

This study is an effort to reveal the challenges that are faced by the women of Afghanistan at workplace the sample size of 150 women working in different organizations of the Kabul city. Women working in banks, educational institutions were selected to be part of the sample. It is important to mention that there are a greater number of women working in educational institutions in comparison to banks in Afghanistan. It is advisable to select more proportion of sample from educational institutions than from banks in Afghanistan. Therefore, the present study selected 100 women working in educational institutions and 50 women working in banks, the findings indicates that the following are the major challenges that women suffer in the workplace from it. A majority of the respondents (54 %) were in the age group of 30-40 years. It means that young women are joining the workforce in Afghanistan. Very few numbers of women above 50 years age (5.33 %) were found to be working in Afghanistan. This finding showed that limited number of women above the age of 50 years is in jobs. A sizeable proportion of women (27.33%) were found to be in the age group between 40-50 years; whereas only 13.33 % women were below 30 years. A majority of the respondents (61 %) were having the work experience of 2-5 years, followed by 28.66% women who were having work experience less than 2 years. It means that a greater number of young women are joining the workforce in Afghanistan; therefore, they have less work experience. Maximum number of the respondents (42 %) was getting less than AFN 20,000 per month; followed by 39% women who were getting AFN 20,001 -30,000 as their monthly salary. These findings indicated that women are not getting adequate salary in Afghanistan because over 40 percent of the working women were found to be earning less than AFN 20,000 per month that seems too insufficient for meeting daily requirements of an average family in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Women, Afghanistan, Empowerment, Workplace.

Introduction

Afghanistan is a land-locked country that shares borders with Pakistan to the east and south; Iran to the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north; and China to the northeast.¹ The country has witnessed a lot of disturbance due to Taliban's rule. Moreover, during Taliban's rule, the country has been suffering from large-scale poverty, widespread malnutrition and hyper corruption. With the invasion of United States of America in 2001; Taliban was overthrown in 2001 leading to establishment of elected government in the country. Despite of that, women in this country have experienced extremely difficult times while living in Afghanistan.

One of the prominent agencies working for women's rights, Asia Foundation, has published a report based on its annual *Survey of the Afghan People*. This report has thrown light on some of the important issues that Afghan women face in their daily life. This report has highlighted that

lack of education was found to be the biggest problem among Afghan women. For instance, 49 percent of the Afghan women reported that they lack access to education in their country due to societal and religious issues. Further, 28 percent of the Afghan women indicated that they lack employment opportunities in the country. Some other statistics in this report were also surprising; for instance, the report found that 23.5 percent of Afghanistan's population above the age of 15 years is literate; However; literacy rate for women is far lower than the overall population of the country as only 12.6 percent of the Afghan women were found to be literate (Ayubi 2010). Despite of several hindrances, Afghanistan has recently experienced several milestones in the education sector. The country has witnessed an unprecedented registration of about 2.2 million girls in primary schools. In order to deal with these issues, Afghan government need to spread awareness among masses regarding their rights and must make efforts to improve women's access to education. Civil society also has a major role to play in uplifting Afghan women in society by encouraging parents to get their daughters enrolled in schools that would reduce discrimination against women in Afghanistan (Ayubi 2010).

Challenges of women at workplace in Afghanistan

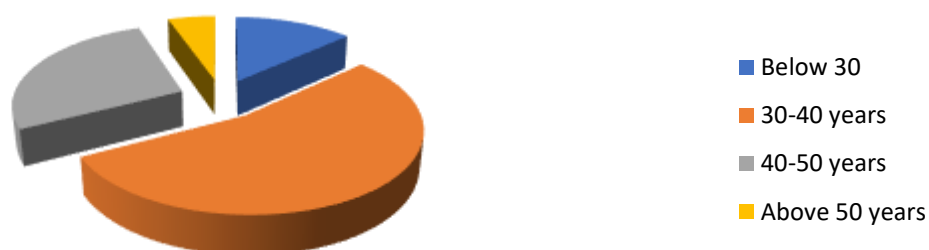
The survey has done through questionnaire which covered plenty of questions However the more related questions with the findings are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Age of the respondents

Women working in Afghanistan were asked to provide information regarding their age. For this, four categories of age were selected. After collecting the data, frequency of the respondents was calculated and percentage corresponding to this frequency was also calculated. Findings regarding age of the respondents are given as under:

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30	20	13.33
30-40 years	81	54.00
40-50 years	41	27.33
Above 50 years	8	05.33
Total	150	100.00

Age of Working Women

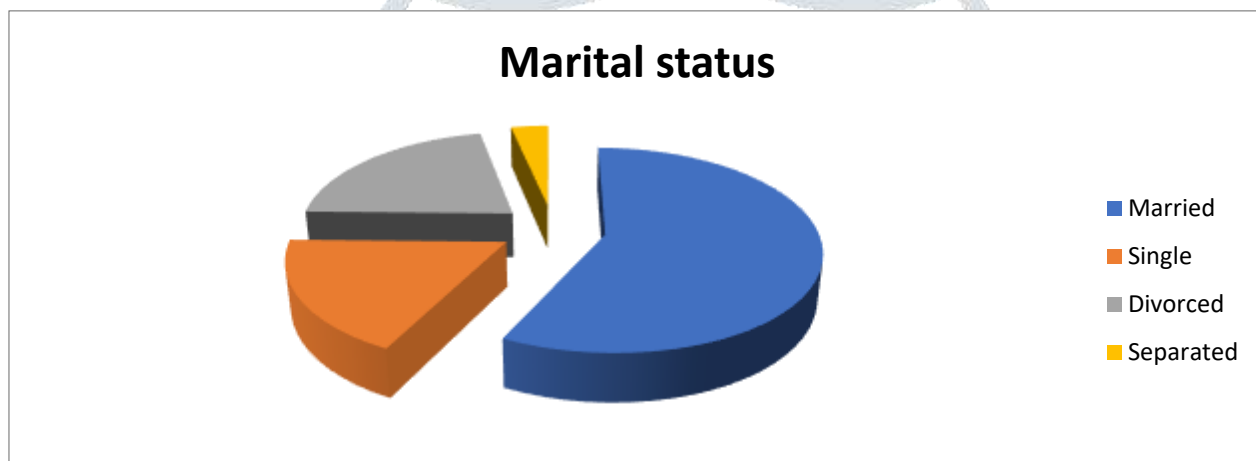


The above table revealed that a majority of the respondents (54 %) were in the age group of 30-40 years. It means that young women are joining the workforce in Afghanistan. Very few numbers of women above 50 years age (5.33 %) were found to be working in Afghanistan. This finding showed that limited number of women above the age of 50 years is in jobs. A sizeable proportion of women (27.33%) were found to be in the age group between 40-50 years; whereas only 13.33 % women were below 30 years.

Marital status of women working in Afghanistan

Women working in Afghanistan were asked to provide information regarding their marital status. For this, four categories of marital status were selected. After collecting the data, frequency of the respondents was calculated and percentage corresponding to this frequency was also calculated. Findings regarding marital status of women working in Afghanistan are given as under:

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	86	57.33
Single	27	18.00
Divorced	32	21.33
Separated	5	3.33
Total	150	100

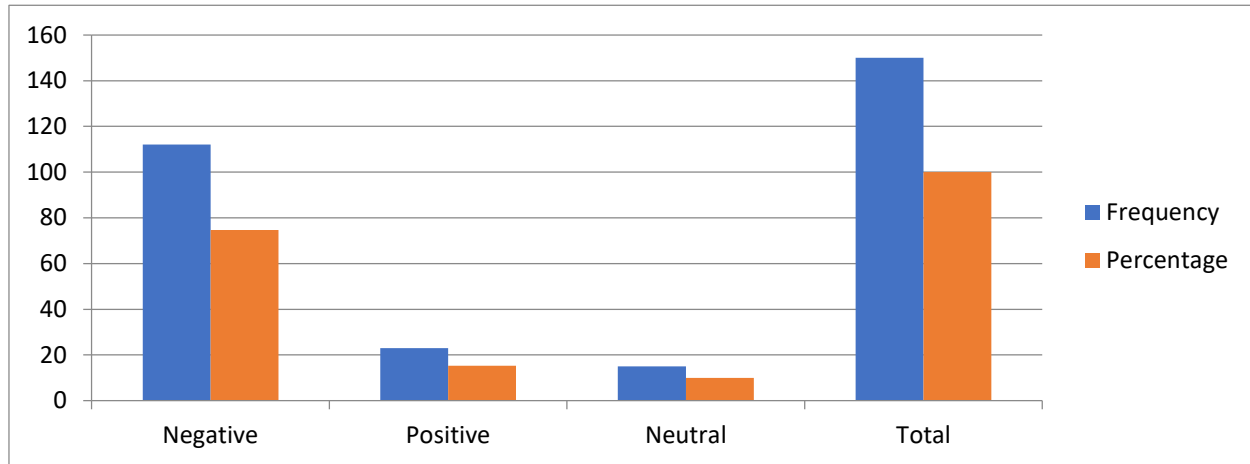


The above table revealed that a majority of the respondents (57 %) were married; followed by 21% women who were found to be divorced. These findings indicated that a sizeable proportion of divorced women are working in different profession in Afghanistan. Saber (2009) reported that divorce rate in Afghanistan has exponentially increased over the past year and many women have started seeking separations from their husbands. There are many reasons that force women to seek divorce from their husbands; for instance, marriage of young girls with old men; drug addiction among men etc. Only 3 percent of the working women were found to be separated from their husband. This happens because women in Afghanistan are not much aware about their legal rights as women and they have little access to judicial services being provided to women in Afghanistan.

Approach of Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends towards working women

Women working in Afghanistan were asked to provide information regarding approach of their Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends towards them. For this, three categories of approach were selected. After collecting the data, frequency of the respondents was calculated and percentage corresponding to this frequency was also calculated. Findings regarding approach of Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends towards women working in Afghanistan are given as under:

Approach of Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends towards working women	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	112	74.66
Positive	23	15.33
Neutral	15	10.00
Total	150	100

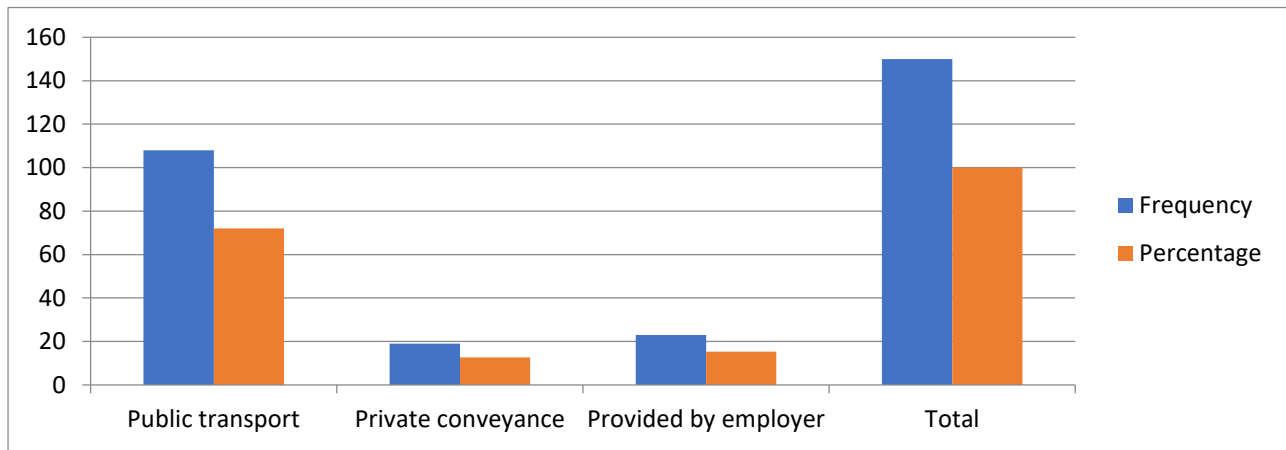


The above table revealed that a majority of the respondents (75 %) reported that their Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends have negative approach towards their job. This finding showed that still majority of the people do not like women to work in Afghanistan because it seems that they have orthodox or reserved thinking about women being part of the mainstream of the society. It was surprising to note that only 15 % respondents reported that their Relatives/ Neighbors/Friends have positive approach towards their job. This finding suggested that some Afghani people have started developing positive approach towards working women. This is a good sign that people are changing their approach towards women in Afghanistan.

Mode of travel from home to workplace

Women working in Afghanistan were asked to provide information regarding travel mode they use from their home to workplace. For this, three categories of travel mode were selected. After collecting the data, frequency of the respondents was calculated and percentage corresponding to this frequency was also calculated. Findings regarding travel mode working women use from their home to workplace in Afghanistan are given as under:

Mode of travel from home to workplace	Frequency	Percentage
Public transport	108	72.00
Private conveyance	19	12.66
Provided by employer	23	15.33
Total	150	100

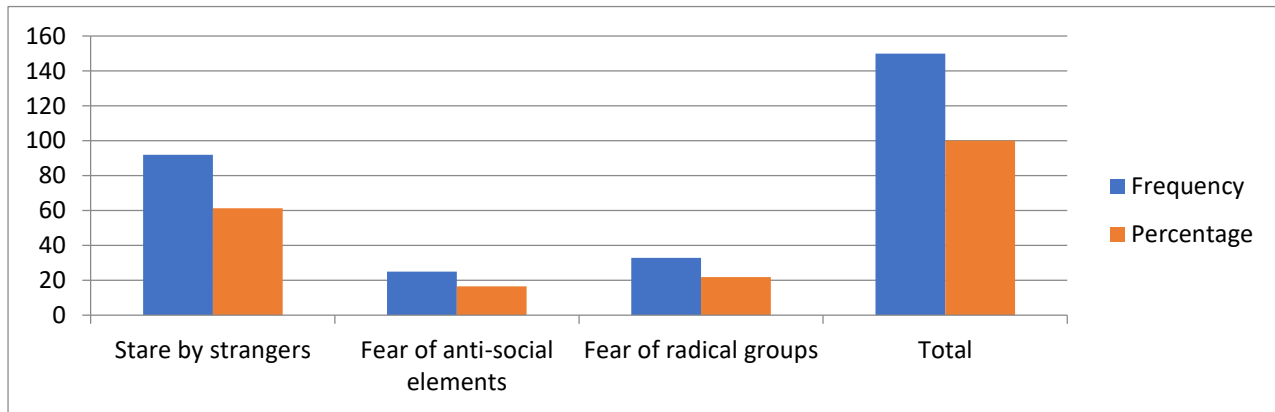


The above table revealed that a majority of the respondents (72 %) reported that they use public transport for traveling from home to workplace. This finding showed that many working women do not have access to private conveyance for their personal travel. For instance, it was found that only 12 % working women in Afghanistan use private conveyance for traveling from home to workplace. However, it was interesting to note that only 15 % working women are being provided conveyance by employer for traveling from home to workplace. Literature suggested that women in Afghanistan face stare from stranger men; that is a big challenge for companies to involve women in jobs. Therefore, more employers need to provide conveyance to women so that more numbers of women are encouraged to join workforce.

Social problems while going to job

Women working in Afghanistan were asked to provide information regarding social problems they face while going to their jobs. For this, three major problems of working women were selected from the pertinent literature. After collecting the data, frequency of the respondents was calculated and percentage corresponding to this frequency was also calculated. Findings regarding social problems working women face while going to jobs in Afghanistan are given as under:

Social Problem While Going to Job	Frequency	Percentage
Stare by strangers	92	61.33
Fear of anti-social elements	25	16.66
Fear of radical groups	33	22.00
Total	150	100



Challenges at workplace for women in Afghanistan.

Women in Afghanistan often face negative attitude of their male boss and colleagues

Nawaz, Afzal and Shehzadi (2013) argued that in most of the Islamic countries like in Pakistan, social customs and traditions do not allow women participate freely in jobs. Women at the workplace in Pakistan are unable to get the value of their work in contrast to males working in the organizations. In order to foster the economy of a country, it is important to encourage women of a nation to join jobs and contribute as much as they can in the development of the organization. Despite of having similar ability and skills as of their male counterparts, it is expected that females are supposed to perform household duties and it is perceived that they are inferior to males in performing job related duties, which is not true actually.

Being a male dominated society, working women in Afghanistan often face a plenty of problems in the organizations. Women are not allowed by the family members as well as society members to work because while going for a job, they are looked down upon by many societal elements. In urban areas, working women has to tolerate men's stares and sometimes women also get negative remarks from male co-travelers and they do not get as much respect in society as they deserve. However, in some cases, employers prefer to offer jobs to women due to their obedient nature and strong commitment towards their job.

Women who stand up for their self-respect do not fail to voice out their difficulties but naive and fretful women still need to be fed with courage and must be taught to fight back against these vengeful men and show them their place. Women have equal rights to men as half of the society in accordance with Islamic laws and the mother of the Laws of Afghanistan (Constitution). The right to choose is the right to education, the right to freedom of expression and the right to work, such as the rights to women. The Bonn conference was taken for women, during the rule of the government of Hamed Karzai, the organizations and institutions of women's rights in the national and international level began their activities, the schools were opened to Afghan girls, as well as in the class of Afghan girls ' universities, and in every government and private organ even if Symbolic but witnessed the presence of women and by relying on these conditions, the participation of the role of Afghan women in all sectors of society was filled. Now, Afghan women are the same as the minister, lawyer, ambassador, diplomat, university professor, employee and student. In the ranks of Ana, Afghan police and various security sectors have also contributed to women, but does it have a safe and psychological security considering that women are working in different sectors? Unfortunately, in recent years, women's complaints from their workplace were the hot-line of the society. Even the minister was unhappy in a way of his work environment, and women who were set up on behalf of the nation to the 16th of the Afghan Parliament were also candidates and famous by the name of the Attorney-linear Afghan women in the ranks of the ANA and the police They have always complained of the discrimination and

prejudice of the workplace and have not been to the demands of their bosses in the years of the year, and have not been promoted, of girls who have even claimed sexual harassment from the Olympic Committee.

However, Afghan women have been given access to women's rights in accordance with that of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan? Do educational awareness and workshops to enhance the capacity of Afghan women by domestic and international institutions has changed the lives of Afghan women? Have the women of these people have been able to enter the environment and have physical and mental security? By choosing the title (the problems of Afghan women in the workplace), he tries to examine the problems and challenges of Afghan women in their work environments. Women's sexual harassment in Afghanistan has always been as a secret challenge, but because of the traditional structures and the patriarchal of the Afghan society and the persecution of harassment, women are often flogged for persecution in most cases. In this direction, it is evident that the issue and insertion of formal complaints of harassment cases, shame and under question of women's dignity and chastity in Afghanistan is deemed. The tolerance of harassment by women and seriously avoiding cases by relevant institutions has led to a great challenge in the women's social lives of Afghanistan. Harassment of women in public neighborhoods is not limited, including working environment, training, sports and private neighborhoods. The Ministry of Women's Affairs reported 2016 women's persecution as the third most important factor in women's low-color presence in the offices. According to the report, many women, when they are persecuted, fear that they do not lose their work and do not harm their dignity, refuse to complain, they prefer the blackout. As a report published by the Women and Children's research office in 2015 in this field, it shows that 90% of women interviewed at least once in public neighborhoods have been persecuted, 87 percent of sexual harassment at work and 91% have experienced in educational neighborhoods. Similarly, the findings of the smaller research in provinces have been conducted by the Youth Development Organization, indicating that 85% of 115 interviewee women experienced sexual harassment in their lives.

Conclusion and recommendations

It was surprising to note that working women agreed that they have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace (mean score= 3.96). This seems to be a major challenge for women who have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace. For this, Afghan government needs to enforce some strict legislation so that sexual harassment at workplace can be curtailed. Further, respondents agreed that their job demands work till late evenings which is against social practices (mean score= 3.65). This seems to be an important finding because working till late evening is a major issue for working women in Afghanistan. It was also discussed in the previous section that women use public transport for commuting from their home to workplace; therefore, traveling in public transport during late evenings is a major problem for working women. This finding also suggested employers to provide conveyance to working women so that they can travel hassle free from their home to workplace.

Recommendations

It was found that only 12 % working women in Afghanistan use private conveyance for traveling from home to workplace. Therefore, more employers need to provide conveyance to women so that more numbers of women are encouraged to join workforce.

A majority of the respondents (61 %) reported that they face stare of strangers while going to job. This finding showed that people in Afghanistan are narrow minded and they do not like women to work in organizations because women are considered to be dutiful house-wives only. Therefore, government needs to curb such social menace immediately. Maximum number of respondents i.e. 41% reported that discrimination in salary is the biggest problem they face at workplace. It seems that this is a major problem among working women in Afghanistan because they are unlikely to get equal wages/salary in comparison to their male counterparts. Therefore, employers are suggested to provide equal salary to female employees as per their male counterpart.

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