
PREDICAMENT OF CAREER WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

VAISHNAVI. N, MARY KAMBAM

Abstract: An attempt has been made to trace the everyday hassles faced by the modern Indian women who seek employment in areas hitherto untraversed by women. Modern educated Indian woman seeks to attain economic independence by showcasing her talents. She has tried to explore new avenues so as to utilize her ever growing knowledge and talents. In this attempt she has explored arenas that were considered man's domain. However her bold attempts have been challenged from time to time due to the restrictions imposed on her by the society. Thus the solution to her problems would be to change the society's perception on working woman.

Key words: challenges, discrimination, dual role, harassment, pressures, solutions, work-home balance.

Introduction: India is one of the fast developing countries that is slowly transforming from a traditional society to a modern society. The symbols of a traditional India society have been, joint families, patriarchal households, women subservience, and single earning male members. With modernization and modern education the members of the joint family are forced to leave the family and seek employment elsewhere. This has brought them in contact with modern ways of thinking. In olden days joint families gave more importance to the education of the male child, but in modern days girls are also sent to schools and colleges. Although, boy baby is still preferred, the capability of a girl child is slowly being recognized and accepted in the family. Increased education has turned young women into confident women capable of earning their livelihood and supporting their family including their dependent parents. The World Bank (1991) estimates that Indian Women make up one-third of the labor force. Leading economists like Amartya Sen hold that the participation of women in workplace is essential for the economic development and population planning.

The educated independent woman has to face a host of challenges. Although there is rampant increase in female education the society is still fixed in its patriarchal view points where woman is considered secondary and inferior to man. She is still considered solely responsible to rear children and to maintain the household. Due to the patriarchal mindset of the society, her ability is severely challenged. A woman is considered to be less capable and is found to be suited to do clerical jobs rather than managerial jobs. A modern educated woman is looked with mixed feelings when she is found to work at odd hours. Her dressing style and behavior is strictly scrutinized at the workplace and by the society. There have been instances of women pursuing field jobs being subject to sexual assault. The best example would be the recently reported sexual harassments of female journalists working at odd times and in remote areas.

The most famous case is that of Dr. Rina Mukerjee a senior reporter working in 'The Statesman', against Ishan Joshi, a news coordinator in the same paper. In spite of Rina Mukerjee's case being genuine, she has complained in an interview, about the discriminatory treatment meted to her by lawyers when she approached them to take up her case. She also complains of the emotional and monetary losses that she had to bear until the verdict. There have many reported and unreported instances of women being sexually assaulted or treated indifferently for pursuing dynamic jobs.

There have been innumerable instances of women in teaching jobs being harassed by their colleagues and also by their superiors. A dynamic and ambitious woman is subject to defamatory remarks by her colleagues. A well-dressed confident outgoing woman is not welcome in her workplace. She is subject to unnecessary comments of being loose in character. The burden to maintain good character is laid on the woman. While a man can escape clean chit, a woman is blamed as the sole cause. An article in 'The Times of India' published on April 1, 2014 at 5.23A, M IST by Smriti Singh states about the indifferent treatment meted to a female teacher in a reputed school, by her colleagues and the principal, when she reported of sexual harassment by a member of the management committee.

There are innumerable examples of such harassments in various other fields. Not to speak about the harassment of young female artists you have come down south to show their talent in south Indian cinema especially, Tollywood. There are many instances of lewd comments and discriminatory treatment of these budding female artists by her male team mates in the sets.

Sexual assault of young women working in software industry is most predominant. Young woman working at odd hours in BPO jobs are a target to many unwanted elements in the society. These have to work in wee hours which make them a target at the workplace and on the road. The brutal sexual

assault and death of Nirbhaya, in Delhi, grabbed the attention of the country and the world and reverberates, the seriousness of the issue. There has been an increase in uneducated women pursuing private cab drivers and auto driver jobs. A bold attempt has been made many women to venture as cab drivers and auto drivers as these jobs require them to travel at odd hours and places although their security is at stake.

Women workers in industrial sector face discrimination by her fellow male employees. A woman is sometimes paid less and given more clerical jobs. She is stressed in her workplace because she is forced to work more in order to withstand competition from her male colleagues and to gain ascendancy. In addition she faces the jealousy, gossip and rivalry of her own sistren. A capable and talented woman who gains ascendancy in her job is accused of receiving favors from her employers due to her loose behavior.

There are several reasons for a woman to seek employment. Previously, and to a larger extent even today, it is widely thought that women seek employment only due to financial constraints. It is still widely thought that women's due place is her home and she seeks employment only due to financial burdens. However, there is a slow realization that women seek employment to showcase their talents and to attain financial independence. A financially independent woman can look after the needs of her family and earn value for herself. However, woman earns this value with a lot of stress and sacrifice. The house hold chores are always considered the duty of a woman. Indian men rarely share the responsibility of rearing the children or doing house hold chores. A working woman has to face the stress of looking after the children, catering to the needs of her family and then concentrating on her career. According to a survey conducted by ASSOCHAM, on 1000 women professionals, around 80 per cent of the households expect their daughter-in-law to prioritize household requirements over the official work. Further, many of them are physically and psychologically abused, by their in-laws and husband but they do not complain or let others know about it, particularly if they have children. The travails of a handicapped working woman are immeasurable. She is sexually exploited by her employers and is disdained at home.

One can conclude that the secondary and discriminatory treatment of woman is meted due to the age old belief that hold woman in inferior position. A girl and a boy in a family are treated

differently. Members of the family bestow favors on the boy. A girl child is strictly watched by her parents but the whereabouts of a boy are seldom noticed. A girl child is openly considered as a burden to the family that could be got rid by marrying her off. A boy is mostly given undue importance which ultimately breeds ego in him. A careful examination of the increasing crimes against working woman has brought out the stark reality that the main reason is the patriarchal mindset that is inculcated since childhood. Most of the criminals are either from lose households or from disturbed families. The panel appointed to research into the increasing brutalities against working women, after the Nirbhaya's case, has observed that boys should be educated about the importance of a woman in society. His behavior should be seriously watched by his parents and he must be reprimanded for his behavior when necessary.

A modern working woman can perform her duties in a protected environment. Stringent laws should be passed and enacted to safeguard the security of a working woman. The organizations should have CCTV cameras so as to control any misbehavior of its employees Government should make it mandatory that vehicles carrying working women should install GPS for their security. Proper child care centres should be provided by the employers incase of women employees working in the company. Flexible timings and working from home opportunities will go a long way to promote work-home balance. Self defense training will also help women to discharge their duties safely. The above recommendations are only temporary and might fail at times. The permanent change can be brought about by changing the mindset of the society. The equality of a man and woman must be stressed in schools along with the academics. The complementary roles of a woman and a man in a family and a society should be reiterated in young minds. The Yin and Yang theory states the unique qualities generally associated with man and woman. A woman is generally considered to be receptive with while a man is usually considered to be creative. A happy family or a successful society is a combination of both the sets of qualities. The Yin Yang theory speaks about the importance and the inevitability of wholeness rather than stressing the importance of one over the other. The wholeness must be driven in the minds of young boys and girls so as to create a safe society. The modern society has increased the scope for woman to work; however, the safety of the woman is determined by the mindset of the men and the women in the society.

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Mrs. Vaishnavi. N , Assistant Professor, Eluru College of Engineering and Technology
 c/o Pokuri Sridhar, Pokuri Sriramulu Oil Merchants, 7A-9-55 , Main Bazaar, Eluru, West Godavari (Dt) 534001
 Mrs. Mary Kambam, St. Theresa's College for Women, Duggirala
 Plot no: 7/116, 7th Road, Chanikyapur Colony, Eluru West Godavari District, A.P 534002