

Constraints Perceived by Employed Women of Government Sectors in Their Empowerment

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to trace out the constraints perceived by married women employed in government sector. The employed women face various challenges at workplace and at home as well. They deal with home and family issues as well as job stress daily. In this study, a sample of 100 employed married women was selected randomly from Sabour block of Bhagalpur district in Bihar – India, and data were collected using face to face interview.

It was found that major constraints perceived by employed women lack the facility of playschool/crèche, frequent job transfers, inability to pay attention to health and spend time on fitness, non-availability of conveyance in case of any emergency, role conflict and inability to give time for household activities, inability to spend time with family members, feeling of gender bias and under-utilization as compare to their male counterparts at workplace. Finding shows that being employed, women still face problems. For curbing their problems attitudes of the employers, policy makers, family members and relatives and the public at large needs to be changed. The study also suggests policy makers to implement the policy of reducing working hours for the employed women, providing day care/crèche facilities for employed mothers so that they can spend time with their children, elders and take care of their health.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women are the pillar and play an important role in society, in all fields of life, without their participation no society can nurture properly. Employed women play a crucial role in economic development of the country and their contribution is nothing short of their male counterparts. In the developing countries, there have been an increasing proportion of women participating in the labor force which enable them to contribute to the family income and to achieve economic independence. Today, nearly 50 percent of women around the world are in the labor force [1]. However, there are still several issues and problems that women face today. Sometimes, they are not treated equally at their workplace and are considered as inferior to their male co-workers. In some cases, they do not get the same benefits as that of a male employee.

The major issues and problems that women face in their workplace includes unequal pay, security, sexual harassment, lack of proper family support, deficient maternity leave, etc. 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 men and hence deserve unequal salaries and wages for the same job [2].

Employed women faces so many problems associated with her time allocation while engaging in income earning activities outside. It includes problems related to health or physical, psychological, social and familial problems etc. The factors such as taking care of the family combining domestic work and office work leaves no time for making women fit for higher posts and the stress resulting from this physical strain has been identified as a prime factor [3]. The fear of transfer which disturbs family life and domestic peace and the exploitation due to submissive nature of women executives has been discriminated as second important factor affecting better performance.

Traditionally, the major responsibilities of women have been perceived to be the maintenance of the family including home and childcare and breadwinning was the main responsibility of men. However, with more and more women entering the workforce and pursuing careers, these clearly defined gender roles were forced to change [4]. Most women do not have responsibility only in

one domain anymore; they must balance the competing demands of both work and family domains [5]. Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the harder. They must take up a full day job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker. 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 and affects their health.

This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. They have to handle harassment at their workplace, sometimes just overlook 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 must please all the family members of her husband. The study reported that conflicts in work-life balance of employed women affects their health who report more stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gain and depression than their male counterparts [6].

Juggling between the obligations towards the families and expectations of the organization and constant struggle to maintain a balance between work and family can have serious implications on the life of an individual by affecting their well-being and overall quality of life. It has been observed through various literature reviews that when family responsibilities expand, mothers are more likely than fathers to change jobs, to work part-time, or exit the labor force for a spell because families cannot afford to lose fathers' wages. The result is often a decrease in mothers' financial and occupational attainment. This again creates unnecessary stress of losing the job for most of the women.

In the past, when mainly depended on their spouse's income, they used to save to meet emergencies as well as for future expenses. In those days, women did not have any awareness about various investment outlets. But as time passed, the scenario has totally changed. Employed women have great potential to bring a positive change in socio economic conditions of the country. The status of Indian women has undergone considerable change. Though Indian women are far more independent and aware of

their legal rights, such as right to work, equal treatment, property and maintenance, most women remain unaware of these rights. There are other factors that affect their quality of life such as age of marriage, extent of literacy, role in the family and so on. In many families, women do not have a voice in anything while in several families; the women may have a dominating role.

The result is that the empowerment of women in India is highly unbalanced and with huge gaps. Those who are economically independent, and literate live the kind of life that other women tend to envy about. This disparity is also a cause of worry because it leads to unbalanced development. Now, the present women, who are equally employed, through their education have knowledge about various aspects of investment and as a result they invest in various investment avenues such as shares, debentures, mutual funds, commodities, gold and bank deposits. Furthermore, women are still expected to perform the duties of household in spite of their working status. Consequently, the women work is never complete.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Sabour block of Bhagalpur district of Bihar in the year of 2017. In Sabour block out of total population, 39,215 were engaged in work activities and 25,852 described their work as a main worker (employment or earning more than 6 months) in which only female main worker are 3,093. The main objective of the study was to find out the constraints faced by married employed women in different government sectors. The study includes only the married women with the assumption that they face more problems than unmarried employed women. The random sampling procedure was adopted to select the respondents for the study. A sampling frame of married employed women was prepared by visiting the different government sectors (*i.e.* Schools, colleges, banks and a hospital) of employed women.

A sample of 100 married employed women was selected randomly. The age range of the selected sample was from 18 to 65. Data were collected from the married employed women by using interview schedules. The interview schedule were pre tested in the Sabour block with a random sample of 20 respondents other than the main sample, in order to verify its suitability related with the objective of the study.

The schedule was prepared by the investigator herself. A list of seventeen statements regarding constraints perceived by employed women was traced out. Responses were obtained under three categories *i.e.* very much problematic, less problematic and no problem by assigning score 3, 2, 1 respectively. The scores of all three columns were summed up and mean scores for each statement were computed. After collecting of data it was quantified and then put on Microsoft excel and SPSS software and subsequently arranged in tabular form systematically and put to statistical analysis which helped in the interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Though employment has a positive effect on the minds of women and their families but still they encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace, home and society. Employed women of Sabour block under study were interviewed to trace various constraints faced in balancing their work life and family life. A list of seventeen statements was traced. The findings have been revealed in Table 1.

It was observed that major constraints faced by employed women were lacking the facility of playschool/crèche (mean 2.71, I rank), transfer of women employees (mean 2.48, II rank), unable to give attention to health (2.42, III rank), unable to spend time for fitness and non-availability of conveyance in case of any emergency (mean 2.40, IV rank), unable to give time for home and household activities (mean 2.39, V rank), unable to spent time with husband/children/elders (mean 2.33, VI rank), feeling of biasness and under-utilization among the women employees with their male counterparts at their workplace (mean 2.17, VII rank), lack of good infrastructure at work place (mean 2.07, VIII rank), mental harassment in different aspects and stages during the job period (mean 2.05, IX rank), problem in getting Maternity leave, child care leave by the organization/institution (mean 1.96, X rank), lack of proper implementation and interpretation of law for protecting women from the crimes and inequality at the workplace (mean 1.95, XI rank), feeling insecurity while travelling for their job (mean 1.87, XII rank), lack of good co-ordination & management with women employee at their work place and lack of time for beauty parlor(mean 1.79, XIII rank), working women face difficulties during claim for maintenance if they get divorced (mean 1.72, XIV rank), sexual

Table 1. Constraints perceived by employed women

Sr. no.	Constraints	Mean	Rank
1.	Lacking the facility of playschool/ crèche	2.71	I
2.	Transfer of women employees	2.48	II
3.	Unable to give attention to health	2.42	III
4.	Unable to spend time for fitness.	2.40	IV
5.	Non-availability of conveyance in case of any emergency	2.40	IV
6.	unable to give time for home and household activities	2.39	V
7.	Unable to spent time with husband/children/elders	2.33	VI
8.	Feeling of biasness and under-utilization among the women employees with their male counterparts at their workplace	2.17	VII
9.	Lack of good infrastructure at workplace	2.07	VIII
10.	Mental harassment in different aspects and stages during the job period	2.05	IX
11.	Problem in getting Maternity leave, Child Care Leave by the organization/institution	1.96	X
12.	Lack of proper implementation and interpretation of law for protecting women from the crimes and inequality at the workplace.	1.95	XI
13.	Feeling insecurity while travelling for their job	1.87	XII
14.	Lack of good co-ordination & management with women employee at their workplace	1.79	XIII
15.	Lack of time for beauty parlor	1.79	XIII
16.	Working women face difficulties during claim for maintenance if they get divorced.	1.72	XIV
17.	Sexual harassment at the workplace	1.03	XV

harassment at the work place (mean 1.03, XV rank).

These findings conclude that due to absence of working women from their homes, the health of their family member especially their children suffered as they cannot give proper time to the families [7], also found that female employees face many difficulties in government organizations, such as non-fairness of gender policy, lack of trainings, and lack of pick and drop facilities [8].

Even in some organizations, there is lack of separate toilets for women, lack of a day care center for their children, inflexible timings (night duty), insufficient salary and salary not paid on time, lack of appreciation for their work achievements, lack of computerized systems, lesser access to internet facilities at their office, and lack of official accommodation and cafeteria facility. There are such kinds of facilities which government should provide to female staff in government organizations.

Women employees also faced some common hindrances in government organizations, e.g. harassment issues, workload, no job security, sectarian problems, stagnant work, and bad environmental issues. Due to transfer women employees, adjusting 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.

Maladjustments to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers. Inequality with female employees or lack of opportunities in jobs is considered a serious issue, employed women working hours are too long, most of married employed women face unavailability of conveyance, most of them have no job security, they have very low allowance, they are facing gender discrimination and the problem that is especially related to school teachers and nurses is of low wages [9].

4. CONCLUSION

Keeping in view the findings of the study, it is concluded that now a day's women employees' status has improved in their workplace and in technological work. Trade Union should try to improve the conditions for woman's workers in many parts, for example maternity leave is easily given to women and help the woman for achieve higher posts.

Actually women's are quite more likely to excel in their fields/areas of work but due to major problems like lack of crèche facilities, transfer of women employees, health problems, unable to give time to their children and elders etc. due to which employed women face difficulty in excelling in their carrier and so in getting fully empowered.

Employed women are often subjected to sexual harassment, so to tackle it the government should put strict rules for these types of crimes, also public transport system sometimes become quite unsafe for women and hence government should also work in this direction. Traditionally people think that men should only work and earn money and women should be limited to household but the financial demands on the Indian families are increasing that's why women also should company in earning income for families.

Therefore, a fundamental change is required in the attitudes of the employers, policy makers, family members and other relatives and the public at large. Thus, the present study suggests policy makers to employ the policy of reducing working hours for the women especially who have young children and providing day care/crèche facilities for employed mothers [10]. The overall attitude and acceptance level of the people needs to be changed regarding the problems faced by the employed women at workplace as policies and legal mechanisms alone can't help in curbing their problems.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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