International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development (IJERED)
ISSN: 2320-8708, Vol. 10 Issue 2, Mar-Apr, 2022, Impact Factor: 7.326

Investigating the Position of Women at the Workplace: A Study through the Lens of Gender Variance

Manya Misra

Research Scholar (Ph.D.), Department of English, CSJM University Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Despite the recognition that women play a key role in economic growth and development, their own growth at the workplace has remained significantly subdued. Even with rising work-from-home culture in the post-covid world, we still continue to observe little improvement in the day-to-day experiences of women. This has been a result of the many gender related challenges they face in the competitive space with their male counterparts. Very recent findings suggest that senior-level women are twice as likely as senior-level men to spend substantial time on work that falls outside their formal job responsibilities. It is found that even with increasing levels of burnout, women are much more likely than men to take necessary actions for their subordinates and colleagues, for example managing workloads of their teams, supporting diversity and making efforts of inclusion, simply by checking on how employees are doing. However, continued research on the participation and inclusivity of women in the workspace suggests that while it might seem that the world is progressing and there's a rising involvement of women in the workplace, the reality of them being on the benefiting end is quite different. As per the evolving statistical data, women continue to remain underrepresented at every level, starting from entry-level jobs to senior roles. Even today, only 22% of senior executives in India are women. If we compare the position of men and women, we find 62% of men in managerial positions whereas women stand only at 38%. Women still have a long way to go, especially in corporations where the adage glass ceiling is still quite prevalent. Motherhood, equal pay, fewer leadership opportunities, sexual harrasment and industry specific bias are perhaps the tip of the iceberg that can be observed while investigating the position of women. Creating a better workplace, and helping women at the same time through a scrutiny in these lines will help to promote wider gender inequalities. In my paper, I will investigate the current position of women in the corporate workspace. I will analyse and look at the dimensions of women accepting work outside formal responsibilities, their underrepresentation at all levels, unequal pay, fewer leadership opportunities, sexual harrassment and industry specific bias. The why's and the solution.

Keywords: Gender bias, Sexual Harrasment, Gender Inequality, Unequal Pay, Underrepresentation, corporate workspace

INTRODUCTION

Gender bias is not a thing of the past. Even today, we are still far from gender parity. 42% of women in the corporate sector have experienced gender discrimination at work. 40% of people agree that men have more rights to a job than women when roles are scarce. With identical qualifications, men and women are treated differently. Looking to the future, the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report shows that the greatest challenge to closing the economic gender gap is women's under-representation in emerging industries and roles.

Despite the popularly rising belief that women have nearly closed the gender gap in the workplace, men continue to land the majority of high-paying jobs. It will be fair to say that the workplace is an inhospitable place for women due to the various forms of gender inequalities present. The major concern here is that both the objective disadvantages of lower pay, status, expectations of longer working hours, opportunities at work, industry specific bias and the subjective experiences of being stigmatized, affect women's mental and physical health, job satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately, their performance.

Despite the continued efforts of activists and policymakers for the gender gap in different parts of the world, gender equality still seems like a pipe dream. According to the latest World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report, India ranked 108th out of 149 countries on the gender gap index. What is noteworthy is that the gender pay gap is not the same as unequal pay. Unequal pay essentially means that a woman is paid less for the same work that a man does. A company's gender pay gap, however, will also consist of fewer women in senior or highly-paid roles or more women in part-time jobs. India's battle for gender parity is like the myth of sisyphus. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report of 2021, which places India amongst countries with the largest Gender Gaps in Economic participation and opportunity due to an observed declining trend from 27 percent in 2010 to 22 percent in 2020.

Secondly, now that we're growing as a country in the corporate domain, we see women's lack of representation in it, especially at the C- suite level. It must be argued that to ensure equality, women's participation in the positions of power and decision making should be as much as men. But they have made slow progress in the corporate arena, even while delivering impressive results at the workplace and making exciting gains in areas such as health, employment and education.

It is but a rare phenomenon for women to hold power positions in the corporate space.
According to Catalyst, a global nonprofit that works for women, the percentage of women in senior management roles globally grew to 29% in 2021. Though this is the highest number ever recorded and it still needs improvement. Talking about the current situation in India, women hold 9% of business management roles, 8% of management roles, and are only 2% of CEOs.

Looking into the third and one of the most significant perspectives when gender bias is observed is Industry-Specific bias. There are innumerous industries as one puts their feet into observing the corporate world, some of them being the Electronics, Finance, Education, Information Technology, Entertainment and Health Care, etc. However, many of these have made gender-bias an obvious situation. Research shows that the tech industry has a 4:1 ratio for men and women respectively, which is disregarding the position of women. This disbalance can promote gender bias within an organization very easily. Around 72% of the women who currently work in the technology industry have shared their experiences of being discriminated against on the basis of their gender at some point in their existing careers. Women who work in IT jobs are also more likely than men to face gender discrimination and consider it as a major problem in their industry.

Workplace sexual harassment is a prevalent issue faced by many in our country, but it goes underreported due to a variety of reasons. When committees are set up to investigate and collect data on workplace sexual harassment, few organisations have the necessary policies and structures to allow data collection and thorough investigation. Adding to this challenge is the fact that nearly 90% of the working Indian population is employed in the informal economy, where they work without contracts, paid leave and health benefits. In the informal economy, the employees might be vulnerable to sexual harassment but have few formal structures through which they can report such incidents and seek help. A major barrier to the reporting of workplace sexual harassment is the fear of dismissal as a result of making a complaint. In a recent study, it was 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 victimization in work assignments.

My last problem area for discussion revolves around the debate on the long-working hours, where women are found to be incompatible as men. It is widely believed that women, unlike men, do not want to work for longer hours. They would also not want to travel to far away places for reasons of safety and inconvenience and hence, are undeniably put their careers at stake. When the organizations were questioned about it, they continued to maintain that women were failing to advance because they had difficulty balancing work and family.

CONCLUSION

Creating an employee compensation program that is fair, equitable and transparent is a necessity to seek equality of genders. Employees must be offered equal pay for equal work, regardless of their gender. This is one of the most obvious ways in which one can work towards gender equality in your workplace. It is noteworthy that everybody benefits from transparent evaluation and promotion procedures, not just women and minorities. On the other hand, it is clear that tackling workplace sexual harassment must be intertwined with measures to address sexual harassment, and significant efforts are required to tackle cultural norms that hold victims accountable and prevent them the help and

support they require. Victims must be supported to open up about their personal experiences and report through relevant channels. Possible policy considerations include:

Strengthening enforcement mechanisms outlined in the POSH Act of 2013, ensuring effective implementations across organized and unorganized sectors may be of great help. Developing a policy framework for challenging existing socio-cultural attitudes towards sexual harassment can also prove to be an important measure. Workplaces must also expanding the criteria of who can be considered a victim of sexual harassment by including other genders in legal frameworks addressing workplace sexual harassment.

Lastly, I would like to suggest that what holds women back at work is not some unique challenge of balancing the demands of work and family but, it is rather a general concern of overwork that perpetually exists in the contemporary work culture. Both women and men suffer alike in such a situation. But, it is seen that women have to pay higher professional costs in such circumstances. If we want to resolve this issue, we must bring to account what we're willing to allow such workplaces to demand of all their employees. As individual families and employees move against overwork, they will pave the way for others to follow. And as more research shows the business advantage of reasonable hours, some employers will come to question the wisdom of grueling schedules. When such actions will garner positive results, neither women nor men will feel the need to sacrifice the home or the work domain, demand for change will swell, and women might begin achieving workplace equality with their counterparts.

REFERENCES

[1]. Observer Research Foundation. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/trickle-down-wage-analysing-indian-inequality-from-a-gender-lens/. 4 January, 2021.
[2]. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-58786739. 6 October, 2021.
[3]. BW Business World. https://www.businessworld.in/article/The-Lack-of-Women-in-the-Position-of-Power-in-the-Corporate-World/06-11-2020-339988/. 3 March, 2022
[4]. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2020/03/whats-really-holding-women-back. March, 2022
[5]. Baker, J. G. (2002). The influx of women into legal professions: an economic analysis. *Mon. Labor Rev.* 125, 12–24.
[6]. Biernat, M., Tocci, M. J., and Williams, J. C. (2012). The language of performance evaluations: gender-based shifts in content and consistency of judgment. *Soc. Psychol. Personal. Sci.* 3, 186–192. doi: 10.1177/1948550611415693
[7]. Case, K. A. (2007). Raising male privilege awareness and reducing sexism: an evaluation of diversity courses. *Psychol. Women Q.* 31, 426–435. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00391.x
[8]. Cassirer, N., and Reskin, B. (2000). High Hopes: organizational position, employment experiences, and women and men's promotion aspirations. *Work Occup.* 27, 438–463. doi: 10.1177/0730888400027004002
[9]. Cox, T. H., and Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity: implications for organizational competitiveness. *Executive* 5, 45–56. doi: 10.5465/AME.1991.4274465
[10]. Crocker, D., and Kalemba, V. (1999). The incidence and impact of women's experiences of sexual harassment in Canadian workplaces. *Can. Rev. Sociol.* 36, 541–558. doi: 10.1111/j.1755-618X.1999.tb00963.x
[11]. Eagly, A. H., and Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychol. Rev.* 109, 573–598. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573
[12]. Business News Daily. https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4178-gender-gap-workplace.html. 14 January, 2022.
[13]. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2021/11/01/new-women-in-the-workplace-report-reveals-high-burnout-highlights-womens-contributions-to-corporate-culture/?sh=afaabcf41c18. November 1, 2021.
[14]. Western Governors University. https://www.wgu.edu/blog/women-tech-addressing-gender-bias2002.html#close. 14 February, 2020
[15]. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/10/women-are-more-concerned-than-men-about-gender-discrimination-in-tech-industry/. 10 October, 2017