

Women in Industry an Overview and Challenges

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Abstract

This study aimed to picture the issues and challenges faced by women employees and employers in the modern world with reference to the industries. This is a qualitative survey where the HR Managers of several organizations have been approached, and their views have been captured around 3 major challenges in women employment, mainly as economic challenges, social challenges and organizational challenges.

Keywords- *Issues in woman employment, Challenges in women employment, POSH, Organizational Issues, Diversity*

INTRODUCTION

The world has come very far as women's empowerment is being concerned. There are many challenges and benefits with woman employment. Also, the effort of society has made it a bit feasible, but due to a certain level of education disparity among women or society, we have landed into such an era of human resources where on certain issues like POSH, it's more towards a legal problem than anything else. This study emphasizes the landscape of women's employment in industry and its overview and challenges and also questions on some emerging issues in women employment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women constitute around forty-nine percent of the available human resource in India. Out of which, a significant percentage, i.e., 25 percent, are represented in the workforce (census) and play crucial roles in the production processes in all

sectors of the transitional economy. But if you see a recent study conducted by the World Bank, then woman's participation in India declined in the last couple of decades, and despite being the 5th largest economy, we are lagged by developing economies like Lebanon, Pakistan and Egypt also. In this paper, we have tried to emphasize on identifying such issues with interaction with HR Managers of various organizations. India's female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) the share of working-age women who report either being employed or being available for work has fallen to a historic low of 23.3% in 2017-18, meaning that over three out of four women over the age of 15 in India are neither working nor seeking work see Fig. 1(a) 2. Laws proposed, passed and seconded by the three pillars of democracy viz. the legislature, Executive and Judiciary. The administration deals with several consequential decisions of the government pertaining to politics.

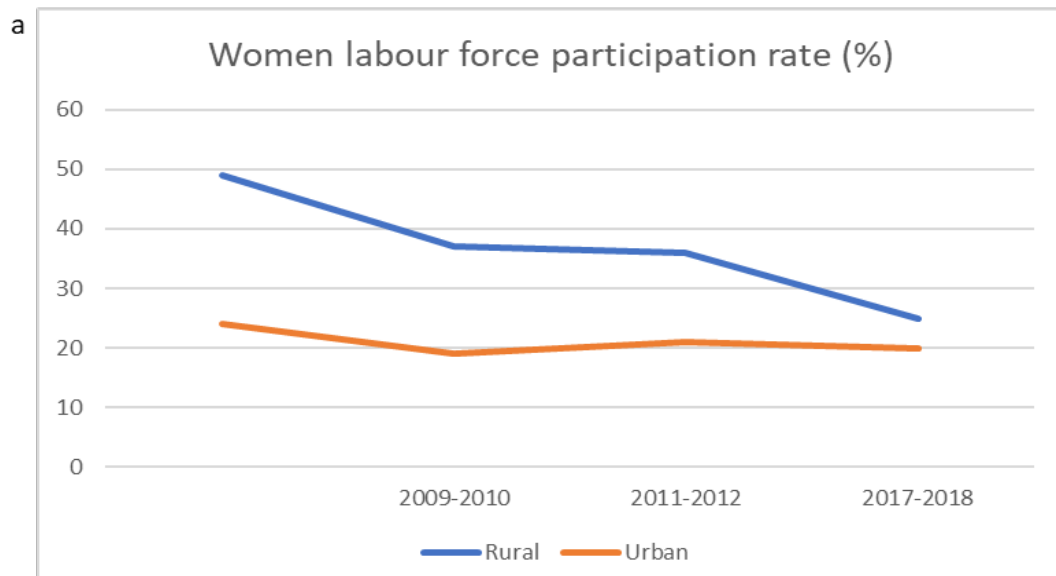


Fig. 1(a) Women LFPR

The decline may be attributed to increased attendance and higher participation of women in education. Insufficient formal wages and poor job opportunities are other reasons for the decline. The government is taking several initiatives to improve women's employability. These include the enactment of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 — which provides for enhanced paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks — making crèches mandatory in establishments with more than 50 employees and issuing an advisory to states under the Factories Act, 1948, to ensure there are adequate safety measures for women workers in night shifts. Many training and skilling programmes have also been launched to enhance women workers' employability³.

India's low LFPR was already a matter of concern in 2011-12 and placed India 12th from the bottom globally. Since then, the further fall comes mainly from rural areas—female LFPR crashed by seven percentage points, while male LFPR remained roughly the same⁴.

While some of the falls in women's workforce participation are explained by higher rates of

higher education enrollment, indicating that more young women are in higher education rather than working or looking for jobs, the data also points to a fall in working rates for older women.

While the LFPR for women aged 15-29 fell by eight percentage points between 2011-12 and 2017-18 to 16.4%, the LFPR for women fell by at least seven percentage points for every age bracket between 30-50 as well. The decline was highest among women aged 35-39 years (LFPR for this age bracket fell 9 percentage points to 33.5%). Among women in the prime working ages of 30-50, more than two in three women are not in the workforce, with the majority of them reporting that they are “attending to domestic duties only”⁵.

The average employed Indian woman worked 44.4 hours per week (in the April-June 2018 period) as against the developing country average of 35-36 hours, as per ILO estimates. But in both developed and developing countries, women perform the vast majority of unpaid household and care work⁶.

The unadjusted gender wage gap—the gap in the earnings of men and women in regular, salaried

jobs, without accounting for differences in hours worked and educational qualifications—was significant. In rural areas, a male salaried employee earned nearly 1.4 to 1.7 times a female salaried employee, while in urban areas, salaried men earned 1.2 to 1.3 times a salaried woman⁷.

Unlike the national data, the share of women workers in the IT-ITeS industry has risen significantly. In FY2020, it rose to 35% — 2X more than in FY2018. Women today account for 44% of our total net hiring. The industry is rolling out many initiatives to further boost its share. Our 'returnship programmes are targeted at women who wish to return to work after extended personal leaves. We have many programmes to further boost their participation like offering child-care facilities, pick-up⁸.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR WOMEN IN INDUSTRIES

Women have reason to celebrate their accomplishments in their longstanding efforts for equal treatment in the workplace. In nearly every field that was once a male domain, women are establishing a strong presence. Nonetheless, women still face challenges at work every day. Most of these major issues are nothing new⁹.

Women encounter mainly 3 types of major problems which are:

- Social
- Economic
- Organizational

In this research, we have interacted with HR Managers of several nonprofit organizations on this front and tried to make inferences from their perception on the based of our hypothesis.(See **Table 1**)

Table 1: Hypothesis

Segment	Hypothesis
Social	Due to social and house hold responsibilities Indian women it becomes difficult for them to give overtime to the organization as and when required. Which makes their employment bit unattractive henceforth LFPR is low
Economic	Despite of regulatory frameworks gender based pay gap still exists in the organization.
Organizational	Most of the POSH cases are being registered immediate after the result announcement of performance appraisal cycle.

RESPONSES

The sample size was approximately 50. Based on our interaction, we have received the response and categorized it as follows.

Due to the social and household responsibilities of Indian women, it becomes difficult for them to give overtime to the organization as and when required. This makes their employment a bit unattractive henceforth, LFPR is low. In response to this, 62% of the attendees given affirmative responses. While 22% denied that the rest had skipped the question. But one of the respondents shared an interesting data that in one particular organization (Profile: having ~2000 employees in eastern and northeastern states of India and approximately 14% of them are women), the average man works for 48 hours/week and for overtime a man contributes average 4 hrs a week excluding leaves. But for the women, the data is working hours are 44.5hrs/week, and overtime is

1.5hrs/week, which is comparatively 7% lower in working hours and 63% lower in overtime. It was also noticed in one-to-one interaction with several top leadership of NGOs that this is a known fact, and management is also not willing to offer additional Burdon to women and let them also be well aligned with their respective social and household obligations.

In the Economic hypothesis, all the respondents have differed to the facts; however, no organization provided the statistical data points to be validated with the same.

While as far as organizational hypothesis is being concerned, 50% of the organization denied participating as they were not facing a single POSH case in the last two years. This makes the overall respondent side less than 30, and it will be a bit early to draw reference for the same in our view.

CONCLUSION & WAYFORWARD

Based on our study, we could identify that 62% of respondents believe that social constraints associated with a woman are higher, which makes their employment a bit less attractive as compared to their male peers while coming to an economic problem, no organization recognized gender-based pay gap which is a good sign but needs to be probed with data. Organizational problems such as the linkage between registration of POSH cases and declaration of Performance results could not be validated as the respondent size was less than 30.

Wayforward: The entire above-mentioned hypothesis needs to be tested statistically. This was a qualitative survey; all the findings need to be

probed quantitatively for a better and accurate conclusion.

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