

Study on Psychological Well-being of Working Women

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Abstract:

In the last few decades, the society has seen a rise in the number of women successful in politics, business, technology etc., but still most women face discrimination. Nowadays, women are employed at almost all areas of profession but working women face many problems by virtue of their sex. Working women face innumerable challenges and issues both at home and workplace and they are subjected to physical, sexual and mental exploitation and torture. In addition to all the above, today they face safety and security issues as well as discrimination. One of the issues that has been increasingly reported across organizations over the last few years is workplace harassment. The purpose of this study is to understand the various challenges faced by working women in India. The key socio-economic factors contributing to working women's safety and security will be considered. With the real time data that has been gathered from various sources the possible strategies to promote working women's work and family life were explored. The challenges faced by women in the fast paced work life, like mental and physical health problems, challenges in balancing the employment and family care, discriminatory treatment in the workplace, will be focused by using methods such as face to face interviews, pretesting questionnaires and the internet using google forms . The study will help us to explore potential solutions that could help the working women to experience a higher degree of security in workplace and family life .

1. Introduction:

Every organization is committed to provide equal opportunities and favorable treatment, regardless of gender, age, language, marital status, family status, pregnancy status, sexual orientation, disability, skin color and parental status. Organizations are taking various measures to increase the awareness and importance of women's health. Every year, February 12 is observed as the World Sexual & Reproductive Health Awareness Day internationally.

Harassment is improper and unwelcome conduct that causes offense or humiliation to another person. Workplace harassment and violence can occur over social media and online. Working Women must keep all online interactions respectful. In addition to occurring at work, harassment and violence can occur at work-related functions such as out of town meetings, office parties and conferences. The harassment can be committed by anyone, including the supervisors, co-workers and subordinates and they can be women also. If an action is unwelcome and uninvited by the recipient, it could be considered as a harassment.

1.1 Interpersonal Misconduct in Workplace against Working Women

Ethics & Compliance Initiative's Global Business Ethics (GBE) Survey 2018 revealed that 5% of employees had faced all the below three types of behavioral misconduct within a year.

➤ Abusive Behavior

This is the behavior that creates an intimidating and annoying work environment for working women in their workplaces. The working environment becomes a hostile environment when the female employees forced to endure the illegal conduct of other male employees. This includes the working women receives threat from their supervisors to fire them with the measures like negative performance reviews, poor rating etc. Many working

women experiences isolation at work environment by the supervisors and other co-workers.

➤ **Sexual Harassment**

The sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance from the working women for any job-related benefits. Most of the working women who are vulnerable to sexual harassment are young, single or divorced, financial dependability etc. Sexual harassment can be in any of form of behavior such as physical, verbal and non-verbal. Workplace inequality must be solved to eradicate sexual harassment.

➤ **Discrimination**

Many studies reveal that women are treated unfairly in the hiring practices, firing practices, promotions, flexible working hours, workplace meetings, social events etc. Pregnant women were forced to step down or even getting fired or demoted in many workplaces.

1.2 Organization's role in harassment free workplace

Every organization should make sure no one feels uncomfortable in the workplace. The management of the organization have additional responsibilities to create and maintain a respectful workplace and free from harassment and bullying, which will contribute to any organization's culture of integrity and respect. Ethics & Compliance Initiative's Global Business Ethics (GBE) Survey 2018, highlighted that most of the harassers were in the middle level or senior level of management than the lower level employees. Worldwide data from that Survey also revealed that nearly one in four employees had experienced at least one type of harassment in their workplace. According to that survey, nearly half of the employees from the leadership team in the organizations committed the misconduct behavior in their workplaces. It is observed that the sexual harassment and discrimination in United States is approximately more than 12% each. The most troubling part of finding is that most of the complaints of sexual harassment at the workplaces are against middle or senior level managers and supervisors. Organizations should not tolerate harassment of any kind. It relies on the employees to keep the workplace safe and respectful and free of any harassments. It should be committed to creating the work environment where all employees feel supported and positioned to succeed. Harassment can negatively impact the organizations. Potential consequences for organizations that fail to protect against harassment include employee discontent and a decline in morale, which can increase employee turnover and make it difficult to hire new employees. These organizations might also face damage to brand reputation and high costs, including money spent on legal fees, fines, judgments, and settlements, as well as costly court-ordered prevention and correction programs. Organization should create the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust within the employees so that workplace harassment situations wouldn't arise. Each organization should invest in programmes and policies that support family needs so that women employees can be their best at work and in life. #MeToo and #TimesUp movements are started gaining attention from working women for their allegations of sexual harassment in their workplaces. Women were encouraged to speak out the all kinds of sexual harassment and all workplace issues.

1.3 Leadership's role in harassment free workplace

As a member of leadership team in an organization, he/she can help watch out for and prevent harassment before it starts, notably by talking with their team, and by really listening especially to women. Here are five ways how:

1. Talking about respect and fair treatment at team meetings and at any special gatherings once in a month.
2. Rewarding and recognizing employees who "do the right thing" by speaking up or who contribute to creating a respectful culture.
3. Allowing employees take the initiative and share thoughts about how to improve workplace culture.
4. Talking with women employees one-on-one and ask them whether they feel any kind of harassment in the work group and the organization.
5. Instead of literally asking them, having a conversation with each employee every quarter or so about how things are going in general.

1.4 Employee's role in harassment free workplace

The kind of bias towards working women in the workplace can make hostile work environment for them. Imposing someone physically, whatever may be the intent, will contribute the uncomfortable workplace. Posting or sending inappropriate pictures can create and unfriendly work environment. The kind of quid pro quo favors in exchange of career advancement is a harassment.

Employees should be respectful to all their coworkers and behave professionally. Each employee's role in preventing harassment, helps to create a positive, supportive, productive and respectful workplace. Employees should not be silent accomplice when they witness any unwelcome incidences and prompt reporting ensure the situations will be addressed as quickly as possible. Everybody should be proactive in noticing and addressing potentially harassing situations. Employees should seek the advice or guidance about actions or behaviors that are unethical and act accordingly. Employees should always be committed to do what is good , prosper and right in their workplaces. Employees should have set of personal ethics that should guide them in their actions with their coworkers. Employees should aware of the consequences of their unethical behavior.

Demeaning, degrading or humiliating remarks or action are unacceptable in any workplace. But it is important to realize that harassment is not always direct or obvious. In many cases it is subtle. Most of the employees would never deliberately harass another person. But small, seemingly harmless actions or remarks can add up to create a situation that could be considered hostile. Even a joke, prank or compliment can lead to or contribute to harassment. The attitude of the male employee must show that he respects the other women enough to accept their reaction to his behavior.

Here are the few guidelines for the employee's behavior with women colleagues.

- Never make any comments that contain sexual references or innuendoes.
- Touching someone in a way that has sexual overtones is never appropriate in the workplace. Keep any physical contact brief, including normal business contact such as shaking hands or patting someone on the back.
- While it's important to select clothing that suits a working environment, it's never appropriate to ogle or make comments of a suggestive nature, no matter how someone is dressed.
- Displaying materials that contain sexual content is inappropriate in the workplace.
- Jokes, teasing, or sexual innuendoes may seem to be accepted, but they can easily cross the line and become offensive.

- What should you do when someone tells you that, intentionally or unintentionally, you have offended them? Never say “I was only kidding,” or “I didn’t mean any harm” -- even if that feels true to you. Apologize, and stop the behavior at once.

2. Review of Literature

In the present age, education, awareness and opportunities for women are ever increasing rapidly. The government has also introduced various schemes where women get benefitted and they use the services to the utmost extent. The status and position of women is strengthening in every sphere of their life. The efforts that women take to strengthen their roles both at home and work is awesome and worth explaining. But, she belonging to a weaker community faces a lot of problems in spite of her playing multiple roles as a mother, teacher, and caretaker of children and elderly at home which adds up the individual’s stress level. Negative mentality and physical stress are the outcomes of work home conflict [1]. H.L. Kaila [2] points out in his research that woman with high multiple roles end up with high stress in being absenteeism at work place, decreased job satisfaction, intention to leave work and less interest in the activities of home. Opie and Henn [3] have suggested that women with high levels of consciousness suffer more with work-family conflicts than with low levels of consciousness. Khan [4] found that family involvement and work involvement are directly proportional to each other. A person successful in family will also be successful at work. Kandel et al. [5] studied the impact on mental health of working women because of multiple roles that were utterly disparate in nature. Working women finds it very difficult to manage the various roles simultaneously as each role has different kind of pressures and impacts in their workplace. These role conflicts cause various negative effects on the mental health of working women as there is no motivational simulation and less physical strength. Verbrugge [6] proved factors such as employment, marriage, and parenthood have a positive impact on physical and psychological health of women. According to him, working mothers have a greater sense of control, self-esteem and good physical strength when they like both work and home life. In his conclusion, he responded that women playing multiple roles have not incurred any negative effects on their health as women who are socially active are more healthier than non-active women.

According to the LinkedIn Survey[7], four in five working women in India believe that they have negatively impacted with promotion, career growth and work offer because of the strongest gender bias in their workplaces. LinkedIn surveyed more than 10,000 women in across APAC region including 2285 women in India, more women in India still contending the gender bias on their career development when compared to the APAC region. As per the LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2021 report, 69% working mothers face discrimination due to familial responsibilities.

3. Significance of the Study:

The study focuses on the following research problems and challenges faced by working women in the workplace and in the family:

1. Balancing between paid employment and family care.
2. Occupational Safety and health related problems of working women including work-life balance and gender pay gap.

3. Verbal and psychological harassment and women who are all affected by offensive conduct by others in the workplace.
4. Violence prevention by promoting gender equality by challenging the stereotype that give more priority to men than women and the male hegemony.
5. Causes for Workplace stress among working women includes sexual harassment, inadequate child-care arrangements, overwork and job insecurity.

The study attempts to address the following key research objectives:

1. To explore the various barriers that are hindrance to women in their workplaces .
2. To find out possible solutions that could help the working women to deal the workplace stress.



Today, women are employed at almost all areas of profession

Fig.1 Major Challenges faced by working women

but working women face many problems by virtue of their sex. Since ages, women have been playing vital roles in their household. Now, women are recognized for their values in the workplace and are engaged in wide range of activities of work in addition to their routine domestic work. Building a society where women can breathe freely without fear of oppression, exploitation and discrimination is the need of the hour and ensure a better future for the next generation.

The main objective of the study is to understand the problems and issues faced by working women in Bangalore, India. The key socio-economic factors contributing to women's status, safety and security will be considered and the study will be based on primary data collected at Bangalore and to find out possible solutions for working women to balance work and family life.

Many researchers have linked harassment in the workplace to mental ill health that increases absenteeism in the workplace and also increases drop outs from work. According to 2018 CareerBuilder survey, many women who experience sexual harassment continue to keep

quiet. Of those who have been sexually harassed, 72% of them are not coming forward to report the incident, and 54% of them are not ready to confront the person responsible for the harassment. Women are at greater risk for sexual harassment from supervisors in male-dominated occupations. In 2017, a Pew Research Center survey found that 28% women had experienced sexual harassment in the gender imbalance workplaces where their workplace has more men than women.

4. Challenges in workplaces

If the male workers categorize the female workers into different groups and treat them differently, the experience of women from one such groups would not be indicative of the experience of women in any other groups [8]. It is difficult to understand the nuances of workplace dynamics in this kind of selective harassment behavior of male workers. indicative of one of the groups. There is a significant increase of women employees in many industries nowadays. Many women now hold positions of leadership roles. Women can pursue their passions fearlessly in many roles in most of the historically male dominated positions and roles. Women can face harassment when they deviate from perceived gender norms, such as assuming positions of authority and/or working in traditionally male occupations. Researchers discovered that women who are subjected to workplace harassment are more likely to experience financial stress, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover intentions and actual quit rates than women who are not subjected to harassment.

4.1 Male dominated industries and occupations

It is difficult for women to excel in gender biased industries and occupations where it is believed stereotypically male-dominated. The career development opportunities for women, in such industries and occupations are less. The stress and anxiety are more in male-dominated occupations when compared to women in working in other environments. It is difficult to accept masculine cultural norms and working like ‘one of the boys’ in the male dominated environments. To cope up with working in male dominated environment, women either distancing themselves from other colleagues or leaving the industry. Male dominated occupations have more respect, higher pay and more fringe benefits to male than female employees.

4.2 Work-life Balance

Maintaining a balance between the responsibilities of women at work and life is not an easy task as it involves various other factors such as financial values, career path, time management etc. Working women will benefit from flexible working hours and approaches that allow them to balance work and family obligations. Women should have more flexibility in terms of scheduling and working hours. Work and family imbalance results in increased level of stress, family strife, violence and divorce in many families.

4.3 Other factors

Some research shows that newer employees are more likely to be harassed at work than those who have worked at the organization for over 10 years. The various factors like young, less educated and minority that increase the likelihood of being harassed in their workplace. Women aged between 18 to 25 have a slightly higher risk of being harassed than the lowest risk group, women aged between 46 to 50.

5. Methodologies to handle Harassment

There should be multiple training methods to determine the possible harassment situations and create awareness to overcome such situations. Various case analyses, commercially reduced videos, and an open-ended questionnaire should be used as teaching approaches. When recordings were paired with case analysis, the contents were found to be more sensitive to instances of possible sexual harassment. Suggestions for sexual harassment training programmes that are based on scientific evidence should be made available.

Working women can prevent workplace harassment by:

- Treating others courteously and professionally
- Being familiar with the various types of workplace harassment
- Recognizing where workplace harassment can occur and who can be a harasser
- Reporting improper conduct or harassment that you experience, witness, or suspect

It may be possible to reduce the risk of harassment in male-dominated companies by changing the male/female ratio in the workplace. Workplace harassment can be reduced by increasing organizational diversity and the proportion of women in the top levels of an organization.

6. Limitations of the Study

The study has not focused on widows, divorcees and part-time working women and their workplace harassments. The nature and duration of harassment from superior, fellow workers and other people like patients, clients, students, passengers etc., varies as the role of working women varies.

7. Conclusion

Women are entering the workforce with higher hopes and dreams of future success. There are several barriers in their workplace that slow down their progress and growth. Organization must address also those problems to make a harassment free workplace for the women so they can put their consistent effort for their organization's success. Future work of the study can focus on e-harassments and also statistical techniques can be employed to perform analysis on workplace harassment.

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