

The Role of the Indian State in making Workplaces Equal and Safe for Women in the Unorganized Sector: A Sociological Study

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Abstract—Women have been treated as second class citizens since time immemorial. Male oriented norms in a male dominated society have dictated the dos and don'ts to women in every aspect of their lives, from conducting themselves in public to choices of reproduction to till their death. Based on secondary sources, it examines the existing national legal instruments providing protection to women workers. The public domain has always been seen as the male dominated with inadequate number of women venturing out to test the false waters of the workplace. It also highlights the role of the Indian state in making workplaces equal and safe for women by enforcing the various provisions of the Indian Constitution. Indifference faced by women at the workplace includes unsatisfactory pay for equal work, sexual harassment, lack of adequate sanitation facilities, unsafe roads and transportation, denial of promotions, inadequate work-life balance and so on. This paper pursues to define a critical and analytical perspective on the various issues confronting women at the workplace. The paper concludes with a few recommendations, which if implemented, could go a long way in empowering women and instill them with the much-needed confidence to take on the professional world on par with their male counterparts.

Index Terms—Unsafe, Inequality, Inadequate, Workplace, Harassment, Sanitary facilities

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present Global context workplace has never been equal for men and women in the present world. In spite of possessing equal education, experience and qualifications, women workers in most professions are paid less than that of their male counterparts. Sexual harassment of women regular phenomenon in every sector of working place. In tallying to these, women

are deprived of their right to maternity leaves and are often shown the door once they give birth. Advancements or the so-called promotions are often left without to deserving women who have to work doubly hard to prove their capacities. The top positions in most organizations and companies are usually occupied and manned by men folks despite the women possess much equal educational qualification and experience and even though they have capabilities to shoulder the company responsibilities. Women have been treated as second class citizens since time immemorial. Indian society is male dominated Patriarchal society. Here norms are set by the male members and they try to nudge women or they try to confine the women to the four walls of the kitchen. Hence, in the Indian society women are dictated the dos and don'ts to women in every aspect of their lives, from conducting themselves in public to choices of giving birth to the young ones. The public territory has always been seen as the male domain with limited number of women venturing out to test the treacherous waters of the workplace. This, nevertheless, is slowly changing as since the past few decades more and more women are joining the factories, institutions, work place, companies and breaking the barriers that previously prevented them from getting employment in some if not all sectors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STUDY

Mohapatra (2015) tried to unfold the extent of the plight of women workers in general and women working in the unorganized sector in particular. She said that women workers are easily marginalized and could not get any benefits from the new opportunities because of globalization and an open and competitive

world trade.

Dave (2012) studied about the problems of women who work in unorganised sector. In her paper, she used a Multi-Stage Stratified Random Sampling technique and explained the problems of women workers, their socio-economic conditions, wage patterns, wage discrimination and other difficulties which they faced at their workplace. The conditions of their work in the unorganised sector were unsatisfactory. Poverty, illiteracy, and indebtedness forced them to work for low wages.

Nasir (2011) in her paper reveals that in Aligarh lock industry about 80% of workers are Muslims and belong to aijlaf category (mean or lowly people). She reveals the impact of globalization on Muslim workers and their socio-economic status in society. Most of the workers live in poverty and face discrimination.

Devi et al, (2010) also mentioned the problems of women who work in the unorganised sector of the economy. They don't get equal wages like men for the same type of work and forced to take up low skilled jobs and as a result, they face sexual harassment at their workplace.

According to NSSO 1994, around 92% of women are in the unorganized sector whereas only 8% are in organized sector. The condition of women workers in this sector is miserable as they work for extremely low wages, long working hours, and unsatisfactory working conditions with total lack of job security and social security benefits; they are not protected by any government legislation.

Sharma et al, (2005) the numbers of women workers were low as compared to male workers and were paid lower wages than their male co-workers. Authors emphasize that various laws are enacted in India for providing job security but are not applicable to the workers of lock manufacturing industry.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this paper is to:

1. To know the employment opportunities for the women
2. To understand the problems faced by the women at their workplace.
3. To analyze the pay disparity faced by the women.
4. To investigate the measures undertaken by the state to solve the problems of women at the work

place.

5. To realize the recommendations set up the various organizations and institutions to improve the working status of women.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research paper is based on descriptive method. In order to do the objective study Random Sampling method is used to understand the problems of working women. Research was conducted in the month of July 2025. While doing the research Primary Data were collected from the working women by doing interview method. Secondary data collected from the newspapers, magazines, and internet. As the part of the study 50 working women were choosing from the Garment factory which is situated in the T Narasipura Taluk of Mysore District, Karnataka. Women who were working as tailors, supervisors and managers were interviewed and collected information regarding their problems experienced in their day-to-day work.

Issues and Challenges of Working women at their Work Place

For the working Indian woman, the workplace is complete with various issues and challenges that need to be confronted on a daily basis. The problems or the challenges may be discussed briefly here:

1. Gender Pay Discrimination:

There is no state in India where women get equal pay as men for equal work. India has the distinction of being the lowest ranked on gender parity, which includes pay parity, among the other nation. Out of 50 garments working women 42 of them consisting of 84% of them opined that they are getting very less pay compared to their male counterparts. The poor women lamented due to their family poor conditions they agree to work in the garments for long hours. But at their dismay the garments factory owners pay very less pay compared to the men workers. The women also allege that while joining they assure good salary but gradually when they get new employees, they offer less salary.

2. Issue of Sexual Harassment

According to one of the recent surveys conducted by Nimbuzz in the year 2024, a cross-platform mobile calling & messaging app, Indian women don't feel safe at their workplace. The survey, titled *Nimbuzz -*

Pulse of the Nation, reveals that "47% of women feel their top issue at work is sexual harassment vis-a-vis inequality in pay and unequal opportunities. Out of 50 women garments workers 22 of them consisting of 44% per cent of them alleges they face sexual harassment from the managers. The working women alleges that they are working as temporary workers as Cutter, helpers and packers. By looking at their helplessness and temporary nature, the managers ask sexual favors. If they did not agree they are threatened with sacking from the job or cut their salary or creating trouble during their working hours. Hence, the women replied if these persists, they are willing to leave their jobs and search for a dignified job.

3. Insufficient Sanitation Facilities

Clean and Hygiene sanitization is key necessary for women workers. The lack of adequate sanitation facilities at workplaces has negative consequences for women. Out of 50 women garments workers, 38 of them consisting 76% per cent of them replied there is acute shortage of washrooms and toilets exclusively meant for women. Even though if there are couples of toilets, they are not cleaned or washed or maintained properly. The women alleges that due to these unhygienic and untidy toilets they are vulnerable to the diseases.

4. Problem of Unsafe Roads and Transportation

Women in India continue to feel unsafe while using public transport, even two years after the horrific gang rape and murder of a young physiotherapy student in the national capital that resulted in nation-wide protests. Out of 50 garments women 44 of them consisting of 84% per cent of them responded that the garments factory does not provide any sort of transport facilities to them. The women allege that first of all their work is shift wise, i.e., first shift starts from morning 6 am to 2 pm and second shift starts from 2 pm to 10 pm night. The women replied the second shift is very grueling in nature, it is because after 10 pm they are unable to get any sort of auto facilities to reach their homes. Due to the inconvenient working time, makes them a scary job.

5. Gender based Discrimination

Women who were working in the garment sector claimed that they have experienced the problem of discrimination in their work place. Out of 50 women

respondents 38 of them consisting of 78% per cent, complained that garments industry is a male dominated working place. Hence, they optioned that they are dominated by the male members in every field of their working place. The respondent women complained that it is the male managers who assign their work, that too on their basis of gender. They aggrieved that women alleged that for male members they give comfortable jobs for female members they provide strenuous work like cutting and shifting the cloths from one place to place.

6. Poor Work-Life Balance

Work life balance is a term used to describe the balance between an individual's personal life and professional life. Work life balance is seen more as a women issue due to the traditional mindset, where the woman is considered primarily responsible for the smooth running of the day-to-day affairs of the family irrespective of her job profile and official responsibilities that is why managing work and family responsibilities can be very difficult for women. The dynamics of the work environment have exerted enormous pressure on working women as they need to cope with virtually two full time jobs – one at the office and the other at home. Such imbalance has a negative effect on personal life of working women which in turn have taken form of social hazards such as increasing number of divorces, infertility due to high stress levels.

State and Constitutional Safeguards for the protection for the Working women.

The Indian constitution guarantees equality for women before the law, and institutional support for women appears progressive, with many laws in place to protect a woman's right to work.

The Indian Constitution

The Constitution guarantees equality as a "Fundamental Right."

- Article 15 has provisions for women, children, and socially as well as educationally disadvantaged citizens. These provisions are not to be considered discriminatory.
- Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- The 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution guarantees women one-third seats in the Panchayats, while the 74th Amendment Act

guarantees women one-third seats in Municipalities.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

This law aims to prevent gender discrimination of wages, hiring, promotion, or training and can be circumvented through wage reclassification of skilled and unskilled workers. Often, regardless of the type or skill-level of a job, women are placed in the unskilled, lower-paid wage category, while men are placed in the skilled, higher-wage category. The Act includes:

1. Equal pay to men and women workers for same or similar work.
2. No discrimination in recruitment and service conditions, except where employment of women is restricted by the law (such as night hours or industry-specific restrictions).

Equal Remuneration (Amendment) Act, 1987

Amends the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 by increasing certain penalties for offenders, as well as creating jurisdiction for a trial of offenses.

Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Sexual harassment constitutes a gross violation of women's right to equality and dignity. It has its roots in patriarchy and its attendant perception that men are superior to women and that some forms of violence against women are acceptable.

Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946

- a. It is the responsibility of companies to prevent sexual harassment.
- b. Organizations must create a sexual harassment oversight committee headed by a woman.
- c. Organizations must initiate disciplinary action against offenders, and victims must be protected.
- d. Women workers must be made aware of their rights.

Factories Act, 1948

According to the act, the employer must provide childcare facilities for children below the age of six at workplaces where more than 30 women workers are employed. Prosecution against an employer for violating the Factories Act is uncommon, and inspectors rarely inspect the number of women workers employed or the mandatory crèche or childcare centers. In fact, on record, there is not a single case known where an inspector went to a worksite to check on the number of women employees. Also, employers bypass the Factories Act by employing fewer than 30 women or using part-time

and/or contract labor.

V. CONCLUSION

With a steady increase in the number of reported crimes against women, it is evident that there exist many more unreported cases because of fear and social stigma. Criminal jurisprudence testifies that sexual violence is an act of power as much as it is a manifestation of a sexual desire. Therefore, all the rights of women have to be respected, protected and fulfilled, be it right to property, right to health, education and life with dignity. The law and order has to look into these crimes specifically and effectively curb them with an iron hand. Lack of safety prevents women from fully participating in the public life. Thus providing safety or finding solutions also need to be observed within a framework of rights. Only then can women access the full range of rights of being a true citizen. We are the same country that rejoiced when P.V. Sindhu won an Olympic medal and marveled at Kalpana Chawla's space expedition. There are limitless possibilities that lie before a woman when she is provided with the right opportunities to nurture her talent and explore her potential. Let us give women the right treatment that they deserve and they in turn will give us endless reasons to be proud of.

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