

Issues and Challenges of Women Employees in Indian Technical Industries

R.Vettriselvan, J.Rengamani, Fabian Andrew James, R.Srinivasan, S.Poongavanam

Abstract: *Since independence Indian society travelled a long way to reach the remarkable place in the modern world by its own culture and tradition. In India, Women constitute nearly half of the population and play a major role in the economic growth aspects of the family and nation by their unconditioned support in different aspects especially in the technical reforms. The future of mankind is thus linked to the development of women's potential in the development phase. After independence, the Indian constitution has given the equal opportunities to men & women on paper as a Act yet women remain secondary to men. This study aimed to picture the issues and challenges faced by the women employees in the modern world with reference to the technical industries. For the study purpose focus group discussion were conducted among the 50 women employees in the different types of technical enterprises and the study results were narrated in the different headings. This study found that mostly women are feeling insecure in the work place due to many reasons but they are working the industries to prove themselves to the society in terms of various aspects such as fulfill the economic needs of the family, social recognition, passion and enjoy the social freedom from the traditional society. This study suggests the society and industries to treat all the gender in equal and maintain the social balance. Further, more number of industry specific studies are needed in this area to picture the reality of the women workers in the society and the modern world.*

Index Terms: Human Rights, IT Sector, Technical Industries, Women, Work life balance .

I. INTRODUCTION

In ancient India, women had a status of dignity. This was lost in the medieval period because of socio-political changes. Today, their status is measured by means of indicators such as sex ratio, literacy, work participation et al. there are signs of hope on some fronts but on others, there is a decline in status [1]. India has come a long way since independence. Women, who constitute nearly half of the population, play a very significant role in the homes and outside [4]. The future of mankind is thus linked to the development of women's potential. According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "To awake people it is the woman who

must be awakened. Once she is on the moves & the nation moves." After independence, the constitution has given equal opportunities to men & women on paper yet women remain secondary to men. Women are said to be the weaker segment of the society and passive beneficiaries of the developmental programmes [2]. A common myth about women says that they are non-workers. (National Perspective Plan for Women-IX). Human Rights, the rights that one has simply because one is a human being, are held equally and inalienably by all human beings. They are the social and political guarantees necessary to be protected by the modern state and modern markets Technically, "Human Rights mean the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforced by courts in India" (Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, section 2 [d]). Human rights are those minimal rights, which every individual must enjoy by virtue of being a member of the human society irrespective of any other consideration [1]. Conceptually, the term 'Human Rights' has two meanings: First, human rights are those inherent and inalienable rights which are due to a person simply because of being human. These are all the moral rights, which are derived from humanness of every human being by birth, and they aim at ensuring their dignity in their lives [3]. Second one is human rights are the basic rights that pertain to legal rights of the every human of the nation. Legal rights are established according to the law making processes of societies, both national and international [3]. In the modern world scenario, both the moral and the legal aspects of rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual represent the core of Human Rights [10]. We can define Human rights in generally as those rights which are inherent by birth in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings in this society[4]. Hence, this study tries to find out the status of women employees in the technical industries by identify the issues and challenges faced by them.

II. RIGHTS OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES

- Right to equal remuneration for Equal work
- Right to equal employment for women
- Right to medical attention and primary health care
- Right to safe drinking water
- Right to good working environment
- Right against torture and sexual harassment
- Right to association
- Right to participate the cultural life

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- Right to rest and leisure
- Right to work and receive adequate wages
- Right to be free from gender discrimination
- Right against caste discrimination
- Right to freedom of religion
- Right to health
- Right to freedom of opinion and expression

These rights are vested in women employees themselves and are not granted by any government in the world. Democracy, free and fair media and judiciary facilitate the implementation of these rights in the society and work place [5]. Lack of these basic rights in the work place leads to the women employees work as life/work without humanity. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all the human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of the government [6]. Equal rights of men and women are mentioned in the preamble to the charter of the United Nations [9]. Most of the democratic countries were accepted and followed the preamble of the UN related to human rights especially for women.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the basic rights of women employees
- To study the issues and challenges faced by the women employees in the technical industries
- To suggest suitable measures to improve the work life balance of women employees in technical industries.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study followed qualitative approach for its nature of study to fulfill the study objectives. For the study purpose Tamil Nadu in India was selected as a study area to collect the information from different sector women employees. Focus group discussion format was prepared and collect the information from the women employees working in the technical industries. Each sector totally 50 women employees were selected to collect the information for the study purpose. The information collected from focus group discussion were grouped and presented in the summary form to discuss the issues and challenges faced by the women employees in the technical industries.

V. MAJOR THEORETICAL RESULT

The issues and challenges faced by the women employees were grouped and start discuss with the general problem and move on to the industry specific problem to highlight the major issues and challenges

GENDER INEQUALITY

Human gender is biologically determined as women, men and transgender, the gender roles of women and men are socially constructed, and such roles may change over the time to time and vary according to geographical location and social context for the gender mainstreaming strategy. The word gender is used sociologically or conceptual category and it is given a very specific meaning as sex of the human being. In its new incarnation, gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man, women and transgender, the way

societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles from the family set-up. It is used as an analytical tool to understand and compare the social realities with regard to women and men participation and also contribution. The term gender refers to how women are perceived and expected to think and act, according to the situation particularly in socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. The concepts of gender enable us to state that sex is one thing, but gender is quite another aspect [7]. Every human being is born as male or female, or our sex can be determined simply by looking at our genitalia or behaviour. However, every culture has its ways of valuing male and female and assigning the different roles, responsibility and attributes to them in the different stages of life. All the social and cultural setup responsibilities are “packaging” that is done for girls and boys from birth onwards is “genderies” finally.

Differences between men’s and women’s achievements and active participation are a result of socially constructed gender roles by the tradition [8]. To change women’s position in the society is necessary to challenge the patriarchal structure and ideologies of the tradition and culture. In India, due to reforms now widely recognized that women must be empowered and that the systems and ideologies, which keep them subordinate, dismantled. People’s organizations and movements (like the women’s environment, Human Rights and NGO movement) have been questioning development thinking, challenging hierarchies of caste, class, role and gender and they have been trying to create alternative thinking and practices. Gender plays the major role in the employment. Gender division of workers/employee refers to the allocation of different roles, responsibilities and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women do and are capable of doing. Due to the technical revolution many of the women getting employment opportunities in the technical industry especially in IT sector. Different tasks and responsibilities are assigned to women and men according to their sex-gender roles and not necessarily according to their individual preferences or capabilities in general and building construction work in particular. Gender division of Employee leads to hierarchies and inequalities because men’s and women’s Employee are not valued or rewarded equally. Even now, equal pay for equal work is not the norm in most countries and women are the first to be fired when recession hits the work place.

PROBLEMS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION

One of the major factors affecting wages and salary is male and female sexes. Despite the acceptance of the principle, “Same work and same wages”, practically there is a difference between the wages paid to males and females for the same type of job in industrial and agricultural sector. In the industrial and agricultural sector, males are preferred, because it requires strength that is more physical and some type of work requires better skills and so women are being paid less in the industrial and agricultural sector.

STATUS OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES

The life of women employees in Indian industries is full of challenges with a number of social constraints. They are cheap and easily available in the Employee market. The management often pays them less than the standard wages set by the government. They are treated roughly at the workplace. Due to the subordinate social status, they cannot assert their rights and protest against unfair treatment. The social relations of women employees are contextually specific and often vary in response to changing economic circumstances.

In India lower income women, essentially, undertake reproductive, productive and community managing activities. Due to their triple roles and their subordinate position in the society, women need practical gender needs (PGNS) and strategic gender needs (SGNS). These needs are related to gender divisions of Employee, power and control, legal, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies. Appropriate policies including welfare, equality, anti-poverty, efficiency, empowerment and awareness of all concerns are very important to fulfill these needs of employees. From the emergence of the garment industry, about 2 million job opportunities have been created. The industry is now employing about 1.5 million employees, of which 90 percent are women. The reason for employing majority women is that the company can pay lower wages to them than men employees. This is as super exploitation of women workers. Due to the increase in income, the consumption pattern of garment employees has changed to some extent, leading to a positive socio-economic impact on their lives and on the society.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES

In these days, the responsibility of women is not limited. Not only does she contributes to household activities, but also contributes to economic activity, e.g agriculture sector and animal husbandry; at the same time, the contribution of women is important in fisheries. It is desired that this contribution from women in the economic activities increase. For this, there are reasons. First status of working women is better, secondly, there is increase in the income of the household and their women are an important part of the total human work force. They work in all kinds of economic activities. As the number of women's work force increases, national and international organizations are forced to develop an ideology planning specifically for women. They change the conditions of employment, working conditions, working hours, etc. The International Employee Organization has suggested several important resolutions like maternity, security for women working during the night and underground in mining, working conditions, hours of work and wage related things. India has adopted almost all these solutions of the International Employee Organization. Still women employees are suffering from several problems despite the efforts of the ILO and the implementation by Government of India. Working hours, conditions of work, terms, types of job and other situations are not favorable to women employees. Unorganized workers still face many problems and the problems of unorganized women workers are more serious and severe.

WAGE/SALARY RELATED PROBLEMS

The wage rate they are getting is an important factor to be considered. Most significant problems of women employees are related to wages. There is a difference between the wages of men and women working in same kind of environment and doing the same kind of work. Women do get less in wages and salary as their kind of job is different. They work in less important or primary sectors, where the possibility of getting good wages is less. For the fewer wage given to women employees, the social and traditional system is responsible. The International Employee Organization, in its special report on why women gets less wages and salary, says that the only constant factor that affects the women Employee is wage rate. For this, there are two reasons: there are inadequate facilities for training of women and women are less interested in increasing their skills and traditional sectors in which women work are below standard. It is understandable that women get low wages and salary in traditional sectors.

The Committee on Textiles Industry of Bombay Government has reported this in its report: "Problems of women employee should be examined differently. Australia, Canada and America have decided on minimum or basic wage rate for women. Their evaluation standards are different from male workers". However, a Committee favoured a lower wage and salary rate for women employees engaged in road construction and building construction. In a judgment handed down to Madras Cotton Textile Mill, the Judge observed, "The women is being paid less in wages compared to the male. This difference is not desired. There is no reason to pay less to women. Principle of same wage rate for same job is not implemented practically".

VI. PROBLEMS OF RURAL WOMEN

In the mid-eighties during the Seventh Five Year Plan, the focus was on economic development of women; new structures were created for this purpose. The Women Development Corporation was one such structure created at the state level. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) recommended the setting up of these corporations and, in pursuance of the plan; several states have set up these corporations. The objectives of these corporations are manifold. They include creating awareness among women, training and skill development, technical support, financial assistance, arranging loans, consultancy, providing marketing facilities, coordinating and integrating women development programmes. In some states, women development corporations are also known as "Women Finance Corporation"; they usually work under the Department of Women and Child Development in their respective states though most of them are registered either as companies or as societies for operational purposes.

PROBLEMS IN CONSTRUCTION WORK

The status of women employees in brick kiln, quarry and mine. These workers were stratified as migrated employees and local employees.

The study highlights the extractions of the contractors or intermediaries or brokers, absence of even minimum amenities like potable water, irregular working hours, low wages and sexual exploitation. Low wages, bondage to intermediaries and insecurity of women employees. The wage differences between men and women in construction work. It is found that, though the women employees carry as much load as men, the contractors pay women at a lower rate only. It is still worse that the employee contractors get the thumb impression of these illiterate women in the register, often paying them less than the stipulated rate.

PROBLEMS FOR BUILDING EMPLOYEES

In general, women building employees are deeply concerned about conditions of work. Pay inequalities, invisibility as producers and earners, blocked opportunities of advancement for want of skill, frequent relocation, lack of freedom to plan their work, hard and long working hours and coping with multiple roles result in a high level of stress. It generates attitudes of passive acceptance of helplessness and misery and conformity, rather than reaction (The Second National Commission on Labour Report, 2002). Most of the women entered the construction sector due to poverty or by chance but not by choice. Women employees carried out most of the difficult work, eg., carrying bricks, rocks or mortar in a head load. Hardly any of them performed some type of skilled work, including masonry, carpentry and painting. Hereditarily men alone engaged in masonry, carpentry and painting works. Women worked as unskilled manual employees in the construction sector.

VII. PROBLEMS OF URBAN WOMEN

Recent days most of the people were shifted their locality into urban places especially women due to better wage and salary. In urban places the problems and challenges faced by the working women are multidimensional and may be broadly classified into three types such as environmental, social and psychological problems and challenges. In the environmental sphere, a working person, especially a married one, has a dual responsibility of looking after her home, husband and children on one side and her job on the other; this creates a lot of strain for her. Women are also burdened with multiple responsibilities. Her sincerity towards all the responsibilities itself is a cause of trouble. Further, the efficiency of a working person is always suspected. The co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the superiority of a woman. Her subordinate males do not like her authority over them. They are also sexually exploited and taken advantage of by their male bosses. This is often done by placing the promotion or increment before them and assigning comparatively more work to do. This results in overloading and they feel exhausted. They are often regarded as "temporary employees" and are not taken seriously by their employers. In spite of several Acts being passed for the benefit of women employees, they are often full of loopholes and ambiguities, which the employers take advantage of. In addition, they are not aware of their rights under these Acts. In case of contract employment, the employers often avoid payment of maternity benefit and other facilities by not entering the names of women

employees in the register. In addition, they are often threatened with dismissal or non-payment of salary if they do not report for work soon after childbirth.

VIII. WOMEN IN ORGANIZED SECTOR

Women are the mother of the race and the liaison between generations. The women have sustained the growth of society and moulded the future of nations. In today's complex scenario, women have a pivotal role to play. The modern woman has broken her bonds, which have jeopardized her social and economic freedom and has emerged as a challenging power, in all employment categories and divisions of the work scenario in this modern world.

IX. PROBLEMS IN TECHNICAL INDUSTRIES

- a) Exploitation of women in technical sector is on the increase, irrespective of salary
- b) No job security for women employees in these industries. After marriage and childbirth, a lot of them are compulsorily thrown out of job. During job reduction due to restructuring or modernization etc., invariably women are the first target.
- c) Women are being forced to work even in late nights in some sectors. In some places, there is no specified/stipulated working hour; without any protection, women are asked to work in night shifts in the most insecure conditions.
- d) Young women are often being subjected to sexual exploitation in workshops.
- e) Even the basic facilities like first aid, medical facilities are not provided to them. Provision of separate toilet facility for women is not treated as an important necessity.
- f) Laws enacted after bitter struggles like those that Equal Remuneration Acts, Maternity Benefit Act, Factory Act and Plantation Act are not implemented properly. There are lacunae in the legislation and the implementation of these laws.

PROBLEMS IN IT SECTOR

The problems of women IT employees are different and specific when compare to the other sector. Their position is very bad in comparison to other women employees in the organized sector due to difficult work shifts and poor job security. Not only do the women IT sector employees face more problems than other organized sector workers do, they also get comparatively less job security and high work pressure than the women workers in organized sectors. They have to work hard but they are not being paid well. They have more serious problems and specific difficulties than male employees. The major problems of IT sector women employees are:

- a) There are inadequate employment opportunities for women IT professional. They get very less employment opportunity due to high work pressure. They do not get permanent employment.

- b) IT Sector Women employees are less paid compare to work done by them. They have to work at very low salary apart from few companies. For the same kind and type of work, women employees are paid less compared to male employees.
- c) The health standard of IT sector women employees is weak and it affects their maternal health also. They have to perform different types of duties at home, in family and in office. This affects their health. They do not get nutritious food and proper medical care in case of illness. After delivery, they do not get proper time or rest which affects their overall health.
- d) IT Sector women employees mostly works in the night shifts and it affects their health. In addition to office work, they have to work at home. They have to take care of children, social gatherings and so on. This working condition adversely affects the health of the women employees and her daily life.
- e) IT sector women employees do not enjoy their maternity due to the high pressured working environment. They do not get proper rest after childbirth. They also do not get proper food after the delivery. Leave salary is not paid properly and most of the women IT workers were asked to relieve the duty in advance join as fresher after the delivery.

Many social sanctions prevent them from seeking employment in the market place. The health standards of IT sector women employees are weak. They have to perform different types of duties at home, in family and office. This affects their health.

X. SUGGESTIONS

More focused policies and provisions have to be made by the government to ensure the safety and equality in workplace. It's mandatory for the industries to follow the provisions made by the government for women without fail. Women have to come forward and register their complaints against the violation of duties and responsibilities in the workplace to safeguard them. Man also needs to understand the importance of women in the society and their lives and how they are contributing more than the man. Gender sensitization program should be provided to all the counter part of the women.

XI. CONCLUSION

Women are not only the workers as like male; they have lot of responsibilities and duties to be performed in the office and home. Today, the Indian Government is committed to improving the status of women in India. The Indian Constitution provides not only equal rights and privileges for all citizens but specifically mentions the need for making special provisions for women. Since the First Five Year Plan, various welfare and development schemes have been introduced to improve the living conditions of women and to increase their access to and control over material and social resources. This study highlighted the issues and challenges faced by the women employees in the

different sector. Government is able to make more policies and provisions to safeguard the women but it's only possible when men come forward and help them to reach the highness in the society by their unconditioned support. So, it's a duty of every man to treat the women as equal when compare to them not only in workplace and also in society. Further, more empirical studies are needed in this area to improve the standard of living of Indian women in different aspects.

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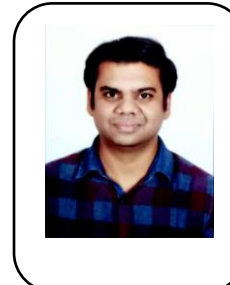


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