

## **Workplace Environment for Indian Working Women: Its Importance, Related Problems and their Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

Earlier the prime duty of Indian women was restricted to household chores only, but with urbanization, industrialization and achievement of education they got opportunities to take up jobs outside home. Their entry in professional world is comparatively new, but they have proved to the world that they are as competent as men. They are ambitious, educated and are working at different positions in various professions. They play a vital role in the development of country's economy. Their contribution cannot be ignored at all. In spite of the fact that their role is so important, even then there are several problems which they face at workplace. This article throws light on the importance of good workplace environment for working women; problems faced by them there and also presents solutions which can help them to deal with those problems. Pleasant workplace environment makes the work enjoyable. On the other hand, if it is negative it makes the work stressful. Problems at workplace are source of stress for women and restrain them from doing duties smoothly. It is necessary to identify these issues and find appropriate solutions to make environment of the workplace healthy.

**Keywords:** Workplace, Environment, Organisation, Harassment, Stress, Performance, Discrimination.

### **INTRODUCTION**

While looking for a job what attracts everybody the most are salary and perks. Although these are of utmost importance but one more factor which holds high significance is the workplace environment. There is no doubt that getting high salary is every employee's dream but environment of the workplace is equally important because it is the workplace only where the employees spend most of their time. A pleasant workplace environment helps not only in getting the best out of employees but also holds them for long time in the organisation.

Despite their efficiency, women face many challenges at their place of work. Often they have to deal with the issues of sexual harassment, psychological stress, unequal pay and lack of security. These problems need to be solved in order to give

them opportunity to reach their full potential.

### **IMPORTANCE OF PLEASANT WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FOR WORKING WOMEN**

Workplace environment, particularly in case of women is considered the most important factor in a job. Women have the dual responsibilities of home and office. They juggle between responsibilities of these two fields. Tension in one field may affect the other. Long working hours, official tours, sexual harassment, discrimination between male and female employees at workplace irrespective of their qualification, unequal pay and so on are the matter of concern. Their performance gets affected if they are confronted with any of these problems in the organisation where they work.

Office is the place where one spends most of the time in a day. It is not wrong to say that office is like a second home. Positive or supportive attitude of employees creates pleasant atmosphere and helps in reducing stress among staff and makes work enjoyable for all. Negative workplace environment is a source of stress and pulls down their performance graph and to spend even a single minute in such a situation becomes difficult. Working under inconvenient condition results in low performance.

Workplace environment positively or negatively affects physical and mental health of women employees. To work in a positive environment is a source of enjoyment. Sometimes it happens that the mere thought of going to office makes us unhappy. The reason behind it can be the stressful environment in the office. Thus it can be said that the workplace environment determines the performance, comfort level and engagement of employees.

### **BENEFITS OF PLEASANT WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT**

- It helps to improve performance and motivates the employees to perform better.
- It holds employees in the long run. If women are happy and satisfied with the workplace, they will like to continue their job for long time.
- Positive environment at workplace attracts efficient candidates.
- Environment has direct relationship with the health of employees. Good environment has positive effect on health and stressful environment has negative effect. Pleasant environment helps in sound health, which in turn reduces absentees. If employees are healthy they will avoid being absent. Thus the office work will not suffer due to their absence.
- Cheerful environment keeps them happy and energetic.

### **PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN AT WORKPLACE**

#### **Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual harassment is a major problem which women face at their workplace irrespective of their position. Whether they are at higher level or at lower level they are confronted with this problem. Sexual harassment makes not only the environment of workplace unsafe for women, but also hampers their dignity. They do not feel free to work in an unsafe environment.

“Sexual harassment at workplace is neither new nor rare, yet it is not reported or even talked about enough. Most working women face sexual harassment at workplace in some form or the other. It is there, yet never acknowledged” (Dey, 2013) [1].

“Sexual harassment is intimidation of a sexual nature. It is any type of unwelcome sexual advance, from a crude joke to aggressive sexual bullying (physical, verbal, or both)” (Johnson, 2013) [2].

“The two most commonly recognized types of sexual harassment are what we call quid pro quo and hostile work environment. Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment is, essentially, when someone at your job tells you that they will fire you or inflict other negative consequences on you (such as holding back salary increases, promotions, shift, or work assignments) if you will not have sex with them or perform a sexual favor for them. Hostile Work Environment Sexual Harassment, on the other hand, is the creation of an antagonistic environment, expressed in sexual terms. This might include statements of a sexual nature expressed by coworkers and/or supervisors, comments made about your appearance, staring in a suggestive manner, inappropriate touching, or even the presentation of pornography in the workplace” (Johnson, 2013) [2].

#### **Psychological Stress:**

Sometimes women are considered less efficient as compared to men. They have to work harder to win the appreciation at workplace. They feel stressed when their efficiency is suspected even if they are well qualified and efficient. Due to this they feel stressed. As a result they are not able to give their best.

“Though women have entered various jobs and professions, they are not yet regarded as sincere professional workers. First, they are regarded as women and then as workers” (Buddhapriya, 1999) [3].

#### **Lack of Good Security:**

Due to lack of good security at workplace women are less willing to work late in office. Late working hours of office are the matter of worry for many women as well as their families. This affects their performance as well as their promotions.

#### **Unequal Pay:**

The issue of unequal pay is of vital importance. Although this does not happen in all organisations but in some of them the efficiency of women is doubted. It is thought whether they will be able to perform their job with same sincerity like men or not, will they be able to handle the given responsibility properly? As a result they receive less pay in comparison to male employees.

“A woman is paid a lesser salary than a man due to the assumption that a woman will not put in as many hours of work as a man will! This assumption primarily drives employers to believe that a man deserves a higher pay than his female counterpart at a given post.” says Albino Mascarenhas, Head of HR at a media firm. (as cited in Biviji, 2011) [4].

#### **Poor Toilet Facilities:**

There are some basic facilities that a workplace must have; this includes arrangement

of toilet facilities. In some of the offices this basic facility is not so good. Their poor arrangements affect adversely the health, comfort level and job satisfaction of employees. Dirty toilets with poor arrangements of water, hand wash, toilet paper or dustbin for disposing sanitary waste disappoint female employees to a great extent.

## **WAYS TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FOR WORKING WOMEN**

### **Good Interaction:**

It includes interaction with colleagues, subordinates, and seniors. Women employees are as important as male employees. There should be a good interaction between all the employees without discrimination on the basis of gender. All employees should feel free to share their problems with each other.

Women employees should be given an equal chance to discuss their thoughts with seniors about official matters. It is important to make them feel that what they say and the suggestions they give are of great value. In this way they will feel more connected to the organisation and thus will be more motivated.

### **Team Work:**

Team work is the key for developing positive environment at workplace. It strengthens the relationship between fellow employees. All individuals have certain qualities. Everybody should think himself/herself as a part of team.

“Every organisation is based on the concept of ‘team work’. Its common goals can be realised through team work. In many situations it is found that organisations owe their success and development to a team of committed work force committed people who work in a team” (Moshal, 2006) [5].

### **Free From Sexual Harassment:**

In order to improve workplace environment, it should be made free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment at workplace should be unacceptable. Strict actions must be taken against it.

### **Recognizing Hard Work:**

Recognizing hard work doesn't mean to give rewards every time, in fact, a few words of appreciation and praise are enough. It is right that female employees get paychecks for the job they do, but if their hard work is recognized it encourages them to work better with more enthusiasm. Their efficiency should not be suspected. Full faith in their caliber should be shown. Women are working shoulder to shoulder with men.

### **Arrangement of Good Security:**

Security of women should be given priority. Proper arrangements of safe working environment should be made. They should have surety that where they are working is safe for them so that they work there fearlessly.

**Equal Pay:**

Without doubting the efficiency of any employee on the basis of gender, all should be given equal pay for equal work. Although the discrimination in pay is not faced by women in all organisations but wherever this happen should be stopped.

**Physical Conditions:**

The physical environment of the workplace should be comfortable as it affects the employees. Cheerful and comfortable environment at workplace helps women to do better in their job. Arrangements of good furniture, proper light, clean toilets facilities (with arrangements of water, hand wash, dustbins) and ventilation should be made.

**CONCLUSION:**

It is important to treat women as valuable employees and pay attention to their problems. Importance should be given to their capabilities and efficiencies. Their problems at workplace should be given priority and put to an end to provide them an environment where they can use their potential to the full extent. Pleasant work place environment is more productive. Also the laws which are made for their protection should be implemented strongly. Every individual should try on his part to make workplace environment good. Although the steps are being taken to solve these problems which has brought good results also, but still efforts should be made to eradicate them completely.

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