

GENDER DISPARITY AT WORK PLACE IN PAKISTAN: REALITY OR MISCONCEPTION IN OPERATIONALIZATION

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Abstract

Gender Disparity is vehemently observed in every sphere of life all over the world. However, the rate and intensity varies from one region to the other. It has been observed that gender disparity is quite vivid in developing countries of the world. The reason is that economic pursuits and chances are not equal in those countries. Therefore, the economic burden is usually on the shoulders of men folk. The women are usually assigned women chores taking care of household assignments. Therefore, they are of lesser importance because their nature of job is considered unproductive and less measured. Pakistan is one of the developing countries of the world, hence as in almost all developing countries of the world, in Pakistan also women are generally relegated and neglected segment of society. As a result, gender disparity and gender discrimination is a common phenomenon. The present paper attempts to evaluate the status of women and causes of women disparity. The main focus of the paper is on Pakistan but the discussion has been made as per situation in developing countries of the world.

Keywords: *Gender, Work Place and Operationalization*

Introduction

Gender disparity at workplace is generally observed all over the world. However, the practice is more common in developing countries of the world. Different reports suggest that men by nature are more egoistic and due to their stereotype behaviour women find themselves trapped. This type of behaviour is noted in different reports conducted (UNDP, 1997). The report also confirms that

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gender disparity at workplace is very much vivid in development sector, where economic pursuits are different for men and women. It has been observed that women are psychologically and sociologically segregated at the place where they work (UNDP, 1997). United Nation Human Development Report (1990) also supports that human development and workplace experience is as per gender. It suggests that such experience is enrooted specially in 3rd world countries where illiteracy and poverty create a general atmosphere for different treatment in development at workplace. This report also compared the general discussion comparing urban and rural areas of 3rd world countries. In rural areas women although contribute a major part of work but the disparity is quite noticeable where they work shoulder to shoulder with their men folk.

The United Nations (1995) in another report on the basis of a detailed research conducted on the status of world's women also reports more or less the same opinion that women are neglected at the place where they work. Psychologically and sociologically they are harassed and general impression is deliberately created that they are at not part with men folk so they are given lesser importance and even less respect at workplace. The report further suggests that educational pursuits and work opportunities are different for men and women.

It is generally believed that gender disparity is being observed since last many years. This is supported by a study conducted by International Labour Organization. The main focus of the study, however, was on the economic conditions of rural women. It is also observed that due to the industrial revolution some changes have taken place in some fields. That study considered that women are the poorest of the poor in 3rd world countries because economic conditions are not good enough to meet basic needs. As a result, women folk have usually to suffer because major portion of income is usually spent on men who usually have economic hold in the

house. Those men have also authority to spend money at their own disposal. As a result, men usually spend major part of their income at their own and women have no say in spending their earned money. This indicates the level of socio-economic disparity in development (ILO, 1980). The economic pursuits at workplace and labour marked are disproportional and gendered. It has also deep historical roots debated by economists and sociologists.

Adam Smith's theory of productivity and Karl Mark's approach are good examples of injustice at workplace. The philosophy given by these two economists pinpoints clearly the disproportion at workplace. The gender inequality is propounded in their philosophy, that indicates the gender disparity is not new phenomena but is rooted in history taking place since last many centuries. Gender disparity at workplace is manifested in different shapes and manifestations. Sometimes, women are sexually harassed and are not given a due opportunity to prove their capacity and efficiency often and then the women are kept in under stress and pressure. Men's gestures also create many problems for women because those are not culturally acceptable for women.

Research Methodology

The present paper is based upon the data taken from secondary sources. All literature cited here is taken from books, periodical journals, and research reports. The subject matter of the article is concerned with overall gender discrimination in Pakistan. Therefore, with the help of literature attempt has been made to give personal touches for reaching a solid conclusion.

Gender Disparity in Pakistan

Pakistan is a 3rd world country where gender disparity is observed in almost all spheres of life. The current economic conditions of the country are not good enough to meet the basic needs of men and

women on equal footings. Poverty and economic injustice is found as it usually is observed in developing countries of the world. The gender disparity at workplace has roots in culture and rural economics of the country. Pakistan is agriculture country where major portion of economy comes from agricultural output. Unfortunately, the rural areas of country are considered economically backward and culturally dominated by Sardar, Choudries and Chief- Taints who hold and hijack the rural economy and the culture. In rural economies women work with their men usually harvest and cultivate the crops. Therefore, they have to shoulder triple responsibilities taking care of their homes, look after cattle and then coming to the fields to work with their men folk.

Due to poverty and illiteracy in rural areas women find themselves in different world where they have to face many problems. Those problems are different by nature. First, women are supposed to work physically as their men folk are doing with the same speed and vigor. Secondly, culturally they remain submissive and polite towards their men to save themselves and their chastity from other men who generally work with them in the same field. It is quite different for them to face men's gestures and comments. The situation is very different and awkward. In the end of day unfortunately they have nothing to get any financial award because money is taken by their fathers, brothers, or husbands.

Local culture, customs and traditions also play havoc with women in rural areas of Pakistan. Women in those areas are considered just a show piece very easy to be blackmailed and sexually harassed. Tribalism and feudalism again play a key role promoting male dominance at the work place. Feudal approach is that as females are physically sensitive, they are considered not capable for doing physical work. Local culture is also not supportive for women. Their social mobility remains restricted. The culture pronounces informally and formally that women need not to interact with men freely and frequently. If any woman does so it is considered that she

has violated the cultural code of that community and locality. Therefore, women find themselves trapped in various situations deeply rooted in local traditions and customs.

In Urban areas of Pakistan the situation is little bit better as compared to rural areas. However, in urban areas the working conditions for women are not terrible. In government sector jobs especially in educational institutions the situation is better than the other jobs in private organization. Therefore, women usually opt for teaching jobs than other managerial type of jobs. More or less the problems and disparity is observed in cities or developed towns of Pakistan as it is in almost all developing countries of the world.

Gender Disparity in Employment

In Pakistan women work and contribute a good part of household economy. However, their work is not recognized and they are paid lesser than men. Different studies suggest that women work almost sixteen hours in a day (Qadri & Jahan, 1982). They shoulder many responsibilities at the same time. In villages and small towns women wake up early in the morning, feed cattle, prepare breakfast, go to work at lands. When they come back, they take care of their families. It indicates that women do tuff jobs than their men folk. Pakistan is basically an agricultural country and villages constitute the major part of the population. Unfortunately, although women work from dawn to dusk but their work is not considered as important. Mostly they do unpaid works and if there is any payment in some cases it directly goes into the pocket of their men folk. In Pakistani culture women have almost no right over spending their own income at their own.

In cities, however, the nature of job and employment is different. Women in some cases also have managerial type of jobs in cities of Pakistan, but their status is of secondary nature. The discrimination at workplace is quite gender oriented and noticeable.

Gender Disparity in Income

Income disparity at workplace is a common phenomenon all over the world. It has been observed that women are not paid as much as men usually are paid (Hedman et al., 1996). Various studies indicate that women are engaged into agriculture, community services and factory sectors. However, agriculture is the main sector where majority of women work. Another biggest sector for women to work is manufacturing and committing service (ILO, Labor force statistics 1993/94, 1997/98).

Pakistan is an agricultural country. In villages vast majority of population work in agriculture sector. Different researches suggest that although women perform a better work in agriculture than men but they are less paid and also segregated than men (Behrman & Zahang, 1995). Siddique & Siddique (1998) in another study also reaffirmed that women are discriminated and less paid than men in Pakistan. He has given many examples and reasons of less income for women.

Gender Disparity at Workplace

In Pakistan gender discrimination at workplace is a common phenomenon in industrial and agricultural sector. In agricultural sector women have almost nothing to say about their remuneration they get. The remuneration paid to women in agricultural sector is of almost less and sometimes nothing. The social environment is of such nature that women usually find it very hard to save their sanctity and chastity. The reason is that they are supposed to work taking care of their cultural codes and ethos. In cities women also work in offices and industries. They do the same work as their men folk but they get less payment. If they work as managers but their promotions and other benefits are usually blocked and sometimes suspended. Therefore, it can be mentioned that working conditions for women are not as suitable as for men.

Gender Disparity Due to Attitude

Men reinforce their superiority in many ways. In Pakistan cultural customs and laws are not favourable for women. Feudalism and tribalism prevail in almost all parts of the country. Feudal approach is that women need to be considered as the property of men. Therefore, men are entitled to have all the rights over women. They can restrict social mobility of women as they want. Men can order women to work at their whims.

Gender Disparity Due to Physical Violence at Workplace

Women sometimes are physically beaten by men if they refuse to work in agriculture or industry. They are also sexually harassed. Sometimes, women are subjected to physical violence and sometimes killed in the name of honor. Such type of practice is mostly found in pre-modern or less developed communities of the world (Thor, 2002). In Pakistan local customs and traditions play havoc with women and allow men to beat women wherever and whenever they want.

Discrimination against Women in Socialization

Parents maintain gender discrimination generally through different treatment to daughters and sons. Parents believe that boys are more important than girls. Some parents are more likely to bounce to infant son, hold him up in the air, and generally play with him more vigorously than they would with a girl (MacDonald & Parke, 1986). Parents tend to cuddle girls, treat them gently, and provide them a verbal stimulation through cuckooing, talking and singing to them (Flavia, 1999). Parents reinforce gender disparity in early childhood through the selection of clothing for infants and children. Mostly parents dress boys in boldly coloured “rough and tough” clothing and girls in softly coloured “feminine” clothing. They purchase girls’ sweatshirts that are decorated with hearts and flowers or

female characters such as Mickey Mouse, Tweedy Bird, or Pocahontas. They purchase boys' sweatshirts that feature male superheroes, athletic motifs, or characters such as Mickey Mouse or the Lion King.

Parents further reinforce gender stereotyping and gender distinctions by the toys and the task they may assign to sons and daughters in later life. Toys and games can help to develop different type of skills and encourage boys and girls to participate in gender-typed activities. For example, parents buy block and buildings sets, vehicles, sporting equipment and action toys such as guns, tanks and soldiers for boys. In contrast, for girls dolls, doll clothing, dollhouses, play cosmetics, and home make items such as dishes and miniature oven are bought (Leaper, 1994). Boys are assigned maintenance chores such as throwing out the garbage, cleaning up the yard, or helping father or an older brother. Girls are given domestic roles such as shopping, cooking and clearing the table, and doing laundry (Weisner et al., 1994).

Gender Discrimination: Ethnocentric Approach

Almost since the beginning of this world, everyone is taught that one's way of living is good, moral, civilized, or natural. In the same way every one of us is being taught that other people's ways of life are not good. As a result, ethnocentrism is natural with the perception that one's own culture is superior to that of others. It exists in every society east or west. In North America people consider it psychologically very dangerous for the children in non-Western traditional developing countries to sleep with their parents until they reach puberty. On the contrary, the people who belong to traditional societies take it very harmful leaving their old parents to live alone as it is in the West. Ethnocentrism feeling are so deeply rooted that it even affects physical health. If culture prohibits eating something and is eaten, then we become sick (Harris, 1985). For instance, Pakistani culture prohibits using wine if someone drinks

the chances of sickness are greater. Likewise, many Western people get allergic if they use something prohibited by their culture.

Ethnocentrism is a term which is coincided with universal syndrome of attitudes or looking at things as per his/her particular narrow approach. The attitude generally accepts ones own culture or things better than the others (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). The members or followers of that particular group or culture take their particular language, race, tribe, and family the most valuable (Sumner, 1963; Hirshfeld, 1996; Kurzban, Tooby & Cosmides, 2001).

The majority of the researches in social science especially sociology are conducted in Western world. Those are purported as universal happen not to be objective, and non-ethnocentric. It is human nature that every one of us interprets the things as per ethnocentric lenses. Mostly those researches are based on narrow and particular angle. Most of those are irrelevant or less relevant to the rest of the world. Even those scholars who have the experience of having study in developed countries recognize the out rift in research results. Therefore, the theories or research results of the developed world are not necessarily applicable or acceptable to all. Feminism theories also vary from one region to the other. Therefore, due to the ethnocentric approach gender discrimination has been made controversial and different in different regions. Women are physically beaten and discriminated everywhere in the world but due to the cultural illustrations they are elaborated differently.

Conclusion

Gender disparity at workplace is a common phenomenon in all parts of the world. However, the rate and intensity is quite different from one part of the world to other. In developing countries of the world due to many reasons such disparity is quite vivid and noticeable. Pakistan is also a developing country where gender disparity at workplace is commonly found in agriculture and

industrial sector. Agriculture is backbone of the country and the key source of economy output. Therefore, women are found working with men in lands. But their work is yet to be recognized and their social status yet to get due reorganization. However, in cities working conditions at workplace are better and women's social status is better than their rural counterparts.

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