

## Topic: Women Remain on the Losing Side in Professional Life

### Outline

#### (1) Introduction

**Thesis statement:** In professional life, women encounter both facilitators and barriers on their path to success. However, they remain unsuccessful due to pervasive hurdles and systemic obstacles.

Although some meager efforts are done to incentivize them, they lag behind in professional advancement.

#### (2) Historical Perspective of Women Struggle in Professional Life

#### (3) Women Face Plethora of Hurdles in Getting Successful in Professional Life

(a) Face domestic restrictions while entering in professional life.

(b) Gender-based discrimination in hiring process hinders to start professional career

- (c) Gender-skewed job titles reduce female labour participation
- (d) Financially lagging behind man due to gender-wage gap
- (e) Career breaks hinder their promotion in professional life
- (f) Female facing workplace harassment is likely to quit job
- (g) Suffering from mental health issues due to work-life imbalance

#### (4) Women are Being Incentivized in Professional Realm

- (a) Work-from-Home jobs improve work-life balance
- (b) On-site daycare centers benefit the working mothers
- (c) Anti-Harassment laws are promulgated for their security
- (d) Special quotas for women ensure female inclusion in all institutions
- (e) Women participation in labour force increased comparatively

## (5) Women <sup>are</sup> Still Lagging in Professional Advancement

- (a) Work-from-home jobs further exacerbate mental health problems
- (b) Societal role associated with women undermine their professional responsibility
- (c) Harassment still prevalent due to lack of awareness and strict promulgation of laws
- (d) Quotas are too less to ensure <sup>adequate</sup> female representation
- (e) Women are underrepresented in technology sector and at senior managerial posts

## (6) Conclusion

### The Essay

Razia Sultan, daughter of Alutimish, was a woman of great calibre with high leadership qualities. Using his profound insight, his father nominated her ~~see~~ as his successor. When she came in power, she proved her through her skills of quality leadership. But the clergy and other nobles plotted against her favoring her incapable brother "Bahram Shah." Razia continued her efforts to protect the

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throne and <sup>by</sup> killed ~~the~~ <sup>no</sup> ~~with~~ them. This shows <sup>no</sup> (2)  
that how much opposition is faced by  
women on the path to success. It has  
been 7 centuries passed, but the situation  
is not much better than that time. Today,  
in professional life, women encounter both  
facilitators and barriers on their way to  
success. However, they remain unsuccessful due  
to pervasive hurdles and systemic obstacles.  
Although some meager efforts are done to  
incentivize them, they lag behind in professional  
advancement. Women face a number of  
restrictions while officially entering into professional  
life: domestic restrictions, bias in recruitment  
process, and narrow job opportunities. After  
successfully getting a job, they lag behind  
men in financial incentives and career  
opportunities. Moreover, workplace harassment and  
work-life imbalance leave them in a  
miserable situation affecting their mental health.  
However, it has been argued that women  
are very much being incentivized in professional  
life. This argument is supported by the  
fact that work-from-home jobs and on-site

daycare centers benefit the working mothers. Their protection against harassment is ensured by promulgation of anti-harassment laws. Moreover, various efforts are done to increase their participation in labour force such as setting quotas for women. The effectiveness of all these measures is evident from the increased women participation in labour force. Having said that, women still struggling in professional life. Work from home jobs further created issues for them. Anti-harassment laws fail to reduce harassment, <sup>and</sup> quotas fail to ensure representation of women as they are underrepresented in senior posts.

History bears testimony that women face gender-based inequality in every aspect of life. They were hardly treated as human beings in the past, let alone their professional success. Gradually, they started to realize their potential and called for opportunities to work in professional realm. Despite facing severe criticism and backlash from society, they continued their hard

work and won in every field. Now, the women are able to work side-by-side with men. Nevertheless, ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> still exist some negative forces which impede the women professional progress and development. There is a need to curtail such forces, so that women can freely participate in socio-economic development of humanity.

Women encounter domestic restrictions while joining the professional life after graduation. In Pakistan, it is very common that women are not allowed to work after being graduated. It is considered that, soon after the graduation, it is the right time for a woman to marry. Moreover, in-laws are also reluctant towards women jobs after marriage. Resultantly, many graduated women fail to officially start their professional career. Let us take an example of female doctors in Pakistan. Women outnumber men with 80% enrollment in medical colleges. Despite this, according to a study, 50% women doctors after graduation

either do not practice or left the job within a short period (Ali Raza, Unveiling the Obstacles Encountered by Female Doctors, 2023).

Hence, it is difficult for women to start their professional career due to restrictions from family.

Another obstacle women face while starting professional life is gender-based discrimination in recruitment process. Men are considered as better candidates as compared to women. Male candidates are less likely to quit jobs or request leaves; female employees are likely to quit job and request for maternity leaves. The employers take this factor into account, as leaving job or too much leaves of employees have negative effects on the productivity of the firm. That is why, male candidates are preferred over female candidates. According to a study, male and female managers are twice as likely to hire a male candidate than female candidate (verve.com, Gender

discrimination in Hiring process, August 2023).

In brief, gender-based bias in recruitment stage hinders the women to launch their professional career.

Gender-skewed jobs, further, curtail the women participation in labour force.

Many jobs are entitled as jobs for men only, which results in uneven playing field for female labour force. It is

manifested from the fact that the titles of many jobs are gender-skewed.

For example, salesman, fireman, and congressman. Apparently, these are jobs for men only. However, the use of neutral job titles allow the women also to show their abilities in such fields. Alternatives

of the given job titles could be sales person, firefighters, and member of congress respectively. In summation, female

labour participation rate is less primarily due to narrow playing field for women.



Women remain on losing side in professional life primarily due to gender-wage gap. Women earn less than their male counterpart. This leaves women financially in miserable situation. In the past, women were not even paid for their hard work. Although they get wages for their work <sup>today,</sup> these wages are still exploitative. Moreover, after retirement they get very less pension, insufficient to help them maintain their life. Gender-wage gap is prevalent globally; however, it is much higher in third world countries. Gender-wage gap for Pakistan is estimated to be 34% much higher than global average 20%. (Azhar Iqbal, Determinants of the Gender Wage Gap in Pakistan, 2024). Thus, female employees do not earn equal to their male counterpart.

Career breaks curtail the chances of promotion in female's professional life. Career breaks are indispensable for women due to their societal role.

They are compelled to take breaks for marriage, births of child, and responsibility of caring elders. On the other hand, male employees continue their jobs without any break and become suitable for promotion.

Moreover, after the breaks, women employees find extremely difficult to get on the track, resulting in frustration and mental health issues. Thus, taking career breaks and leaves proves to be a great setback in professional life.

Workplace harassment is the biggest challenge that women face in their professional life. Use of abusive language, condemning behavior, and sexual abuse from male co-workers and senior officers cause a great misery to female employees. Women, harassed at workplace, ~~are~~ either remain silent due to fear of losing job or call for justice. Unfortunately, the accused are not brought to justice most of the time. In such situation, affected women

tend to quit the job. According to a survey, 93% of women ~~at~~<sup>in</sup> public and private sector face sexual harassment (Saira Samo, *Confronting Workforce Harassment*, November 2023). This shows that harassment at workplace impede the progress of women in professional life.

Maintaining work-life balance remains challenging for female workers disturbing their mental health status. At work, they are obliged to work for long and inflexible <sup>working</sup> hours without any concession. At the same time, they have to perform the household responsibilities. Work-life imbalance, despite hard working, results in increased risk of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, mood disturbance and interpersonal conflicts. Many studies have revealed that work-life imbalance leads to higher risks of mental health illness. The matter of the fact is that women struggling

to balance their work and life responsibilities  
have ~~leaves~~ no time for them to maintain  
their mental health.

Despite all the given arguments, there  
is an opposite argument that women are  
being incentivized in professional realm, and  
chief incentive among others is availability  
of work-from-home jobs. After COVID-19  
pandemic, the trend of work-from-home  
jobs has risen. It is argued that  
it helps the working women to  
maintain work-life balance, as there is  
a lot of margin to manage the work  
and life responsibilities in flexible  
times. Moreover, the time which was  
previously wasted in traveling to workplace  
can be used to relax and maintain  
mental health status. Even after the  
pandemic, women workers like to  
prefer work from home jobs. Briefly,  
opportunities are being created for female  
professionals including the incentive of working  
from home.

On-site daycare centers help the working mothers to get reliefs from child care and focus on work responsibilities.

Child care demands 24/7 attention of mothers and it becomes difficult for them to manage the both responsibilities.

However, the recent rise of day-care centres <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ proved to be a great incentives for them. In daycare centres, child are given full attention, and a healthy environment is created for the healthy growth of child. This adds to the satisfaction of mothers. They believe in the day-care centres for their children care. Consequently, women participation in professional <sup>life</sup> and the quality of their professional life is ensured. Hence, women have gotten a great incentive in the form of day-care centres.

Promulgation of Anti-Harassment laws from the government is another great measure to ensure the security of women and their dignity at workplace. Almost

every government has passed laws to curb the workplace harassment. These laws empower the women to move forward in professional life without the fear of being harassed. These laws has build confidence among working women. In Pakistan, Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 provides legal protection to women against harassment at the workplace, and reforms the existing legislation regarding women's right to work in Pakistan. Hence, women have gotten legal protection and government backing against workplace harassment.

Another incentive <sup>given to</sup> taken for women is setting of quotas in all professional institutes to ensure women inclusions. It is a major breakthrough which helps women to display their capabilities in all those fields. Let's take an example of political profession. In politics, the

participation and representation of women is ensured by preserving of quotas for female politicians in legislative bodies. For example, in National Assembly of Pakistan 60 out of 336 seats are allocated to women. Similarly, in Senate 16 out of 96 seats are allocated to the female politicians. This quota guarantee the women representation in legislation process. In sum, allocation of quotas is proved to be a great incentive in professional life.

Those who favor the argument that women are not on losing side in professional life further support their argument by saying that as compared to the past, women participation in labour force has increased worldwide. After the industrial revolution, women labour force participation has risen. Governments and corporate organizations have taken practical measures to enhance the rate of women labour force participation. The

women's labour force participation is increasing in Pakistan as well. The development road map "Vision 2025" sets an ambitious target of an increase in <sup>women</sup> labour force participation 45pc by 2025 much higher than current level of 25pc. In brief, the rise in labour force participation is being observed which is a ~~major~~ great success.

Despite all the mentioned incentives, women still lag behind in professional advancements. The opportunity of working from home, instead of improving work-life balance, further exacerbates the work-life imbalance resulting in poor mental health. In case of work-from-home jobs, it is challenging to keep work life separate from personal life. Moreover, the pressure remains ~~always~~ high ~~due~~ as the work is always there. Due to high pressure, mental issues are increased such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and mental illness.



Thus, the argument that working from home improves women professional progress is far from truth. Moreover, the difficult access to internet and technology ~~area~~ creates problems for women. According to a study, approximately <sup>327</sup>~~326~~ million fewer women than men have access to smartphones and internet (OECD, Bridging the Digital Gender Gap, 2018). Hence, work from home is more difficult for women workers.

Societal norms associated with women role still undermine the professional role of women. <sup>In the</sup> The society, especially in sub-continent, roles are associated with men and women; men as bread-winners and women as caregivers. In Pakistani society, a mother is considered ideal if she is selfless, nurturing and always available which is practically impossible. In order to be a good mother, women have to quit their jobs or <sup>to give</sup> at least <sup>to give</sup> less than required

attention to their profession. In such a situation, achieving progress and success in professional life remains challenging. Hence, the entrenched societal norms impede the professional trajectory of women employees.

Anti-harassment laws fail to guarantee the women protection from harassment due to lack of awareness and their strict promulgation. Despite law-making against harassment, there is not reduction in harassment cases. Primarily, it is owing to lack of awareness of women regarding these laws. Due to poor education, women are unable to assess their rights and duties. Moreover, the laws are not strictly implemented to curb the workplace harassment. Consequently, women remain being victimized in professional ~~workplace~~ life. According to a recent survey, 93% of women in public and private sector face sexual harassment (Saira Bano, Confronting Workforce Harassment,

November 2023). This shows that the anti-harassment laws remain unable to protect women from harassment at workplace.

Allocation of quotas for women, although a step in right direction, ~~is too~~ ~~small~~ is insufficient to ensure women representation and participation.

Especially, in technology sector, where the margin of earning and promotion, ~~is~~ is higher, women lag behind men. Moreover, the allocated seats are not used to incentivize the professional career of women who <sup>are</sup> the most deserving. Instead, the quota seats are filled with ~~men~~ women in the relatives or friend circle of higher officials. Thus, the quota system is an inadequate measure to incentivize or foster the professional advancement of women.

Although, women labour <sup>force</sup> participation has increased, they remain underrepresented

at senior managerial posts. Women serve at lower levels only. In Pakistan, most of the women labour works in an informal sector such as agriculture and home servicing. This undermines their right to work in an fostering environment. They are hardly promoted or given rewards for their dedicated work. Some other pervasive hurdles also impede the promotion of women employees at higher posts. Resultantly, there is hardly any lady represents the higher office. According to the Global Gender Gap Index, women make up only 6pc of senior officials and senior managers in Pakistan (Samia Liaquat, A Caring Economy, July 2024). Hence, the underrepresentation of women at higher posts indicate the impediments women face in their professional carrier.

In a nutshell, female workers face a lot of obstacles which impede their professional success leaving them on losing

side. They encounter restrictions from family, gender base discrimination in recruitment and wages pay scale, harassment at workplace, and uneven playing field. All these factors, contribute to their poor performance and stunted progress. Some measures have been taken to improve the women contribution in professional life. They include "working from home" opportunity, availability of daycare for children, setting quotas, and ensuring protection against harassment. These steps are insufficient to incentivize female employees in professional life. Their inadequacy is manifested in their failure to improve women status in professional life. Women are still encountering a plethora of challenges in maintaining work-life balance, breaking the societal norms associated with women role, and protecting themselves against harassment. The latest meeting of World Economic Forum divert the attention towards underrepresentation of women at higher jobs and technology

sector. Being human creature, both men and women have equal human rights. Both enjoyed ~~to~~ equal basic human rights such as right to life, property, work, and movement. Thus, it is necessary to give equal opportunities and incentives to women <sup>as well</sup> in professional life. As Allah says in Holy Quran, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female, you are one of another." (03:195)