

Women Remain On The Losing Side In Professional Life

Outline :

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement :

Despite a large number of women, entering acquiring professional education, women remain on the losing side when it comes to professional life owing to disparities and discriminations both inside and outside work place. In order to keep pace with the fast forward world, women's participation in work must be ensured at all levels.

2- ~~Women~~ Frailty, Thy Name, (is no longer) Women : A Brief Overview of Women All Over the World

3- Women In The Workfront : Key challenges and Hurdles

- The global landscape of women's empowerment
- The harsh reality of gender disparity
- Gender Pay Gap : call for Equity

- Work-family Balance = A Real Struggle
- Work-Place Harassment: A Silent Call for Help
- Societal Norms and Early Marriage: The Many Ways of Deprivation

4- Consequences of Excluding Women from Workforce

- Loss of Economic Momentum
- Under-utilization of Potential Human Capital
- Women - In the Whirl of Over Independence
- Effect on family Well-Being

5- Helping Women Thrive: A Call for Social Change

- Reducing ^{biases in} Working Environment
- Equity in terms of income and opportunities
- Ensuring Safe Work Environment
- Increasing Work Time flexibility & paid leave

6- Conclusion

Caught amidst the struggle of maintaining a balance between work and family, women often find themselves pushed to a corner. For centuries, women have fought the battle of their rights at domestic, social as well as political fronts. Women empowerment and participation in work force is considered a sign of open-minded societies and progressive economies. Everywhere in the world, women are strongly encouraged to work alongside men yet the faces at key positions in both government and private sector remain stubbornly male. So, despite a large number of women acquiring professional education, women remain on the losing side when it comes to professional life. owing to gender disparities and discriminations both inside & outside work place. In order to keep pace with the fast forward world, women's participation in work must be ensured at all levels.

Women hold up half the sky. They are no less competent than man. In the 21st century not a single state can imagine to make progress without utilizing the accumulated potential of it's women lot. Though intentionally neglected for most of the period of history and often deemed as fragile and frail creatures by the ignorant, women all over the world have come a long way in their fight for basic right against the patriarchal social stereotypes.

Earlier, women were restricted to unpaid labour within the confines of their land and household. The 19th and 20th century; however, saw a potential rise of women work force owing to increasing demand of labour in industries. Women have always actively participated at social and political fronts and played an undeniable role in changing the course of history. Be it the role of leadership, business entrepreneur or a mother, they excel in all.

More than often the topic of women empowerment invites considerable debate among different masses of society. Women empowerment refers to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. In today's world, the need to empower women, is usual than it was ever. The overall economic well-being of a nation depends on its workforce and the importance of women in this regard cannot be denied. Empowering women in economy and closing gender gaps are key Agenda for sustainable development goals particularly Goal 5. Despite the active propagation of women rights globally nothing concrete has been achieved. Mindsets remain patriarchal despite progress on paper.

"All women work, but not all of them get paid." Economist Claudia Goldin's 2023 Nobel Prize winning work demonstrate the global landscape of women empowerment. Women have had always a fair share of household work and child-rearing but lacked appreciation and acknowledgement almost everywhere in the world. A study has found out that compared to men, women are more engaged in unpaid domestic service. Women's unpaid work is responsible for 7.5% of GDP all over the world. Moreover, women face more discrimination and challenges at workplace compared to men they need to prove themselves. So complete is the devaluation of women in our society that our little girls and women are raised on a steady diet of misogyny.

Despite all the progress the world has made so far, the harsh reality that women in most parts of the world are still facing disparity and gender discriminations even at work places. This is true particularly in third world countries like Pakistan where women make 49% of the population and where discrimination against women is deeply rooted in it's culture. This patriarchal system is sustained and practiced under the name of Islamic teaching. ~~AS~~

Women find it increasingly difficult to find a safe workplace in a male-dominated society. According to 2023, World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report Pakistan has been ranked 142 out of 146 countries with a 57.5% gender disparity.

While women have made strides in advancing gender equity in workplace, gap persists. Women are paid less compared to their counterparts. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data - women's earning were ~~83%~~ less than 83% of men's in 2020 with an even wider pay gap for women of color. Women often have to face biasness solely because of their gender. In most parts of the world women earn less, get promoted less frequently and continue to be under-represented in the highest leadership position in business and industry. As per a rough estimate only 10% women in Pakistan hold leadership position.

It is a common held view that women are responsible for maintaining household and parenting. Men, for most part, remain unbothered about household chores. Involving women have to shoulder the responsibilities both at

work and at home. Caught amid the piles of work sheets and laundry and dishes, they have little time to spare for themselves. Women literally struggle to maintain a balance at both fronts as both require full time attention and lots of energy. Many a times, women fail to do so and finding it difficult they resign or leave the job. This is the single most important reason that women are not able to be a part of work-force. But that is not always the case, many ~~peo~~ women despite inflexible work hours, discrimination at workplace and family life continue the hassle but that too at the cost of their physical and mental health.

Women not only face discrimination at workplace but more often are the victims of sexual harassment, a thing that many women chose not to speak over. This is yet another discouraging aspect of life of a women as worker. A general survey conducted among women workers in Pakistan reported that more than 60% working women have faced workplace harassment at some point of their career which is quite alarming. Under such circumstances, it is quite understandable why there is a decline in female participation in workforce.

In many a societies, women are bound by cultural values and norms that often preach and limit women to her house. If a woman succeeds in breaking these shackles, she is married off earlier with the expectation to limit herself to her family and household. Most young women in an effort to adjust in their married life, quit working. More than often, they are forced to do so by increasing domestic burden. ~~Marriage~~ Early marriage and strict societal norms and high expectations set towards women bound them within their household and yet increases their economic dependency on men.

Women participation in work and labour market ensures economic progress and development.

Women make half the world's population.

Utilizing the potential of this skilled yet under-represented work-force can help

developing countries to explore new paths of growth and economic development. With

respect to Pakistan, a report by World Bank says that almost only 22% of women are

employed in Pakistan. If participation rate of women in workforce is equal to that of men,

Pakistan's GDP will increase nearly one-third

, suggests IMF. Women therefore can play

a great role in setting country ~~#~~ us to the path

of development. Aqbal puts the vigor and vitality of women in the following words ;

"It is the very existence of women that gives universe its colors."

But when women are not given equal share and opportunities in society, this deprivation results in economic depravity.

Excluding women from work force can impact the overall momentum of an economy, ^{leading to} loss of labour and potential skills, that could be put to good use. This may also lead to a decrease in work-place diversity.

Exclusion of women leads to the loss of valuable contributions to innovation and productivity. In societies, where work force is dominated by men there are little chances of inclusivity. Women thus can contribute in a significant manner within a society.

Now a days, when women are openly embracing new and diverse fields and ready to work at different social, political and economic fronts, countries and societies are harnessing this potential and talented workforce to their benefit. However in societies where women are

deprived of job opportunities, this potential human resource remains un-utilized. Creating a vacuum within market that urgently calls for a fill in, otherwise threatening the economic stability of the country.

When women faced biasness in workplaces they often resign bowing to the unfair & discriminatory attitude. As a result they become dependent on their family members.

This over-dependency not only shatters a woman's confidence, make them vulnerable but also deprives them about the right to speak or decide for themselves. Unfortunately, the very basics and norms of our society remain anti-women with the aim to oppress and limit women as much as possible under the false disguise of religion and societal pressure.

Again, when women are expelled from work force it marks a permanent question on her household life. Many a houses are dependent upon the income generated by both husband and wife and in some cases women are the sole bread-winner of the house. When women are not welcomed in the job market and all doors are

opportunity and earning are closed for them, they
are left with no options but to sit at
home in vain and in most cases ^{seek for} ~~get~~ under-
paid and in-formal labour jobs

No struggle can ever succeed with women
participating side by side with men. Women's
empowerment is a valuable instrument for driving
social change and uplifting millions of people.

No doubt, the efforts and contributions made by
women are often undermined by some extreme
societal sections yet women, deemed as vulnerable
and frail creation of God, have endured
all wrongs but never submitted before the circumstances.
Many a women of steel have made their
praiseworthy contributions in the ~~paths~~ of different
areas. Fatima Jinnah, Begum Rana Liaquat,
Malala Yousaf Zai (the youngest Nobel Prize winner),
Nigau Johar (Pakistan's first woman general),
Justice Ayesha Malik (Pakistan's first judge
of Supreme Court) are ~~among~~ few among many
names of brave women who have defied the
social stigma. ~~She~~ he was right when he described
women as;

".... the leading instrument in the grand
orchestra of life"

No doubt, women are facing biases at work but in order to ensure their full participation in work place, it is important to take initiatives both moral and legal to reduce biases and discrimination against women. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and opportunities in this regard. In addition, Pakistan is also a signatory of conventions on gender equality including that ensure equity at work place.

Surprisingly, despite chanting loudly for women's rights and actively advocating for feminism, in many western countries women face disparity in terms of ^{low} income and fewer opportunities for women at workplace. By providing women same opportunities as man, organizations and companies can ensure their equal participation. Such opportunities provide women more incentives to work.

Similarly, ensuring a safe work environment is another crucial factor for maintaining a steady work-flow. Providing women legal protection through legal instruments both inside and outside work space can be an imperative step to ensure women's safety. Such measures

greatly improve women's confidence at work and they are able to participate freely and share innovative thoughts. Thus proving themselves as a useful member of society.

Moreover, there is a need among companies and organizations to introduce policies and programs sensitive to the needs of employees. Providing women paid maternity leave and granting women with children a flexible work schedule can also help boost women's employment rate. Most women are reluctant to work in corporate due to their inflexible working hours. Such measures can make a great difference and help increase number of women in these areas.

In conclusion, one must admit that despite the odds against women, they remain resilient and are ready to participate actively in the workforce. Unfortunately, at present, in most of the developing countries including Pakistan, women face discrimination and disparity. Unrealistic comparisons are made between male and female workers. Due to this women often are reluctant to enter into job market. Moreover there is considerable difference in wages and promotion opportunities. Because

of these reasons it is frequently heard comment that women remain on the losing side ~~of~~ in professional life. Though there is some truth to it ~~but~~ but that is only one side of the coin. Women if provided with equal opportunities can prove to be a valuable asset for both economy as well as ~~the~~ society in general. Faced with acute economic crisis, time is ripe for Pakistan to harness the potential of women that make a substantial portion of its population.