

Topic: Women Remain On Loosing

Side in Professional Life

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Women Remain on Loosing Side in Professional Life.

Essay

"For most of history, Anonymous was a woman," said Virginia Woolf. Women are still anonymous and unrewarded for their efforts and unacknowledged for their sacrifices in both domestic and professional life. In 21st century, women participation in every facet of life has become critical. However, women still remain on a loosing side in professional life. Despite many initiatives, gender equality is an illusion. They are under pressure to pursue female-dominated fields, no matter ^{what} they like. Most of the senior positions are filled with men, bypassing women even if they are eligible. They face work harassment, lack of economic freedom and frequent persecution in patriarchal society that stereotypes them if they go against the so-called norms. Those of the opposite view hold the position that twenty-first century has brought many opportunities for women. They are accepted for senior positions. Governments have taken many anti-harassment initiatives. There is a rise in economic freedom and campaigns and movements for change in favour of women cause. The reality, however, is in contrast. For women to win on professional side, there is still a long way to go.

Women participation in every aspect of life is important for proper functioning of any society. Women comprise half of the world's population, and, thus, half

of its potential (UN, 2020). However, women's participation in professional life is quite low. According to Gender Gap Report 2023, no country in the world has yet achieved full gender parity yet. The case with developing world is far worse. Discrimination against women is not exclusive to any particular areas but includes every facet of life. According to World Economic Forum, it will take 132 years to achieve gender parity globally.

Women suffer in their professional lives because they are forced to pursue female-dominated fields. As a result, they have to surrender their interests and continue with something that doesn't interest them and hampers their ability to excel in any field. A common example from a Pakistani society is forcing girls to pursue pre-medical in intermediate, even though they might be interested in engineering fields. Because medical sciences is a field that is dominated by females, parents prefer it for their female children. As a result, they lose interest and cannot perform well in their forced field. So, pressurizing females to pursue female-dominated fields can hinder their performance.

Another hindrance to women's progress in their social life is the issue of glass ceiling. Senior, executive and administrative jobs are exclusively for males. Females are preferred for soft

portfolios. In Pakistan, only 4.5% women hold senior, managerial and legislative roles (WEF, Global Gender Index, 2022).

In addition to this, another major issue women face in their professional settings is workplace sexual harassment. Sexual harassment often causes women to leave their jobs as they fear about their reputation. As per the statistics from the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment (FOSPAT), complaint rate for workplace in 2022 was 2169, with most of them from private sector. However, instances of sexual harassment at workplace must be more than these figures as most of the cases go unreported. In short, workplace harassment is another major factor that is a hindrance to women's successful professional lives.

Furthermore, women lack economic freedom and access. In most of the developing countries women have no access to what they themselves earn. When women are home-based entrepreneurs and their financial matters are in control of any male member of their family, they suffer consequentially; they are unable to invest in their projects and businesses. According to World Bank, 2.4 billion women globally do not have the same economic rights as men. As a result, women lag behind in their professional lives due to lack of economic freedom.

Another very significant issue women face while progressing in their professional life is patriarchal mindset and stereotypes they come across. In most of the developing world, patriarchal societies have not transformed. Women are under complete control of male members of their house and those who are not face some stereotypes. They are labelled as being uncaring and disloyal. As a result, they have to prioritize either their domestic well-being or professional. So, patriarchal society is a serious constraint in the course of women's professional win.

On the other hand, many believe that women have started their journey of professional victory. They claim that, with the onset of 21st century, women have ~~been~~ been free of many shackles. The world has many special and exclusive opportunities for women to help them choose fields and careers of their own choice. An important example is women special scholarship and training programmes that many universities worldwide offer. They help women from underdeveloped countries to train themselves in versatile fields. So, in contemporary world, career choices for women have increased.

Now, the world has started offering senior and executive positions to women. An excellent example

would be Kamala Harris, first ever female Vice president of the USA. Sheik Hasia Wazed is another example from developing world, who is serving as Prime Minister of Bangladesh since 2009. So, the trends are changing and the world is becoming more inclusive for women which is a win-win situation for professional women.

Moreover, countries are now taking strict actions against workplace harassment. There are many legislations that protect women against this heinous act. A developing country like Pakistan has passed its anti-harassment act in 2010, which is an excellent example of countries' taking strict actions for women protection. In a nutshell, it is undeniable that women have become much safer in their workplaces after such a legislation, resulting in increased prospects of women's progress in professional lives.

Women, in current time, are gaining economic freedom worldwide. There are many specialized programmes for women that ensure women participation in economic activities. An example worth quoting is from Pakistan is Benazir Income Support Programme. According to Federal former Federal Minister, BISP financial assistance is directly provided to women

as BISP prioritizes women empowerment. So, not only developed countries but developing nations as well have started prioritizing women economic empowerment that has positive outcomes.

Furthermore, there are many campaigns and initiatives for ^{social} change in favour of women cause. Women worldwide are vocal about their rights. These campaigns have positively influenced many laws and policies in favour of women. UN Women joins hand with many regional organizations to advocate women rights. For instance UN Women along with the Office of the Ombudsperson KP has developed a Toolkit to enhance the efficiency of anti-sexual harassment laws. In short, women cause has reached a very advanced level in which campaigns and initiatives have been launched for deeper level changes.

However, women are still struggling in their professional lives and no parity has been achieved among men and women in this aspect. Counter-argument do not hold water as reality suggest otherwise. Although, there are many exclusive scholarship programmes for advancement of women's professional lives they are not enough to address half of the global population women. need as equal-level freedom in choice of profession as men, as they are in equal ratio as male population.

Women make only 21% of the total Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce (WEF, Global Gender Gap Index, 2023). So, women are still not free to join professions without consideration of male-dominated or female-dominated fields.

Additionally, although some countries have installed women in higher positions, this case is quite rare. Most of the women are still hired for soft portfolio jobs instead of executive and administrative jobs. As of 2022, only 27.9% of the global population lives in countries with a female head of state. So, the claim of women parity in senior position is nothing but an illusion, and a rare case.

Moreover, the claim of increasing women economic freedom is not true in all the societies, but only of urban societies. Women in rural and patriarchal societies still lack economic freedom that limits their professional success. According to World Bank, approximately every 8/10 women in Pakistan do not have access to bank accounts. Only 11% women own their own bank accounts in Pakistan. So, women are not free even in terms of access to financial services and economic access.

Although, it is true that

Countries have legislated multiple laws and policies for protection of women, but most of them are not implemented on ground. According to FOSPATH, sexual harassment report/complaint have increased from 432 in 2019, to 535 in 2020. So, it is not untrue to say that although legislation for protection against sexual harassment at workplace exists, but only on papers rather than grounds.

With the onset of twenty-first century campaigns and movements for women rights have been more advanced and powerful. However, most of these movements do not achieve their goals due to patriarchal attitudes. They are misunderstood and misinterpreted. A fine example would be of Aurat March in Pakistan. It receives serious resistance from different circles every year. Despite some controversies attached to it, it is a movement for women's rights that must be given attention to, but it does not receive any broad level attention. In short, such movements are considered sin in patriarchal society and their implementation of their demands is impossible.

In a nutshell, despite the trends and slogans of gender equality of 21st century, the equality has been elusive. Women still remain the losing one in professional life. Women

under pressure to choose certain professions, glass ceiling, lack of economic freedom, workplace harassment, and constraints due to patriarchal society and gender stereotypes are unable to achieve professional victory. Despite the claims that there are special programmes for women and the time is unfolding in favour of women as they are achieving senior executive positions, economic freedom, legislation in their favour and different campaigns and initiatives, the women side is still losing. The claim exist on papers mostly, with zero to minimum ground implementation and efficiency to help women cause.