

## GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMAN EMPOWERMENT PRACTICES IN THE BUSINESS

*Dr. Sangeeta Pande,*

*Associate Professor*

*Adarsh College of Arts and Commerce, Badlapur*

### **Abstract:**

*The Coronavirus outbreak, which is officially called as Covid-19 which started in China has affected all over the world. Many countries in the world declared lock down. All the economic activities were greatly affected. It has affected economic, social life and also emotional wellbeing of a person. Women from all walks of life were also greatly affected. Some women were more stressed than men during the lock down ([https://times of India .Indian times .com](https://timesofindia.indianimes.com) 17 April 2020). According to a recent poll conducted on the E Times lifestyle twitter account, 61% of the respondents voted that women were more stressed than men during lockdown. The working women also suffered a lot balancing work from home and domestic responsibilities added to more stressful situation. In India gender discrimination is clearly visible in the responsibility sharing. Since long it was believed that domestic work and taking care of children is the sole responsibility of women hence she remains more burdened with work. In a new normal situation, it's time to think for the ways and different mechanism for easing the problems of women. This paper mainly deals with the problems of working women and attempts to find out the different practices of women empowerment.*

**Key Words**—Gender, Women empowerment, inclusive practices



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### **Introduction**

Dr Samir Parikh Director of Mental Health of Behavioral Sciences, Fortis Health care states that “Many women who are working in the companies, found it especially difficult and stressful at the same time working from home as well as doing household chores and other activities without much support from their partners. This has resulted from the absence of any



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self- corrective measures to correct Gender responsibilities”. In those homes where responsibilities are equally shared among the partners are living a less stress free life. But there are many unfortunate women who are living a stressed life due to the incorrect Gender roles and responsibilities. The simple meaning of Gender is the fact of being male or female. There is difference between the term ‘Sex’ & ‘Gender’. Sex refers to biological differences between two. However, gender is a wider term. Gender is defined as the behavioral cultural or psychological traits typically associated with one sex, as in gender roles. Many times while making explicit comparison between men & women the word gender is used e.g. Gender discrimination, gender gap, gender equality, etc. Here psychological & socio-cultural aspects are taken into consideration (Merriam webstar.com). In India Gender discrimination is seen in all the walks of life, sex ratio is adverse for females, the wage rate for female workers has remained very low, the exploitation of women workers is high. Although there are many legislations and programs for protecting gender equality and empowerment it remains on paper. This paper attempts to explore the inclusive practices that will help in women empowerment.

According to Amarty Sen ‘ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decision within and outside the family’ are the important variables for well-being of women. Empowered women can take appropriate decisions for herself and her family. Empowered men and women helps in social development. Women should be encouraged and supported to stand on their own feet. At all levels inclusive practices are to be included.

### **Woman Empowerment**

Diversity, equity and inclusion are the important factors in any organisation. For not only success of any organisation the diverse workforce, healthy work environment is important but also it is also required to attract and retain employees. The work force should include both men and women. For the socio economic development of a country both men and women should participate in economic activities. Inclusive practises for organisation is beneficial for employer as well as employee. If employees are empowered, then it will help in improving efficiency as well as productivity.

Oxford languages dictionary defines empowerment as authority or power given to someone



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to do something. It also states that empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and more confident in especially controlling one's life. Are today women free in taking the decisions of their life? There are some women who can decide about their life, their career, life partner etc. they can take decisions about what they want to achieve in life. However still there are many women in our society who are not able to take decisions of their life, for taking important decisions they have to rely on the male members of their family. They face various restrictions on their freedom and choices. In the male dominated traditional patriarchal society women were not allowed to go out and work independently. Her work was restricted to domestic work and rearing of children, taking care of elderly people in the house. However, increasing industrialisation, urbanisation development in technology, education facilities for women have changed this situation. The electronic household appliances have reduced time and energy of women. Many women felt that they can also contribute to family wellbeing by earning money. Those women who have freely chosen their path to be economically independent. They are leading on the path of empowerment. On this path they come across some obstacles. Empowerment is about cutting away the obstacles to true human flourishing. This paper makes an attempt to find out the various hurdles that a working woman is facing and also tries to give certain recommendations to solve the problems of working women.

### **Categories of Working Women and their problems**

The working women can be divided into four categories-a) Women working in unorganised sector, b) Women working in organised sector, c) Self –employed women d) Entrepreneurs. The problems faced by women in all these categories are different from one another, however there are some common problems which she faces as a woman to whichever category she may belong. It is expected that it's her sole responsibility to take care of child's all needs or household duties. Many women have to perform this double duty of taking care of all domestic work and balancing her work life.

Women working in an unorganised sector – According to the report published by the consultancy firm Deloitte, 95% of or around 195 million women are working in the unorganised sector or in unpaid labour. Majority of them are working in agriculture sector and others are working in mining, livestock, manufacturing industries such as beedis, matches, tailoring, readymade garments etc. These women are mainly uneducated, unskilled



and poor women. The common problems which they face are discrimination. They are given lower wages than their male counterparts, there are no fixed working hours, sometimes they are overloaded with work. Women working in unorganised sectors are more vulnerable to sexual harassment than the woman working in organised sector

Women working in an organised sector- The proportion of women in organised sector is less as compare to the unorganised sector. The woman working in various industries are generally unskilled or semi-skilled hence they are also not getting good wages. Generally, these women are given the routine or the work which is of monotonous in nature. There are some industries which are recruiting the skilled professionals like engineers, however they are not given all types of jobs but only in few processes they are involved. Compare to unorganised sectors in the organised sectors women enjoy more facilities.

Women who are self-employed- Self-employed woman works for herself rather than for others. “For self-employed workers, their share in the workforce fell from 47.7% to 34.7% in urban areas between 2004 and 2017. In the same period, the share of women workers in casual labour also declined from 16.7% to 13.1%.” There are many women who are in the traditional business of selling vegetables, homemade products like pickles, papads, providing food packets, weaving, stitching clothes at home etc. with increase in education facilities for women there is decline in this type of jobs. Many of these self-employed women were working from their own house. They were engaged in earning and giving their support for the welfare of the family, however their work is not recognised by the society. They mainly face the problem of funding and marketing of their products. Majority of them are not well versed with technology therefore they are lagging behind in the age of e-marketing.

Entrepreneur women – A self-employed woman having vision, goal and systemic strategy as well as ready for bringing innovation is called as entrepreneur. According to Peter Drucker, “an entrepreneur is one who always searches for change, responds to it and exploit it as an opportunity.” Women entrepreneurs are those women who are ready to take risks, they take initiative, are able to lead organisation, and also courageous to face the problems. Women with higher qualification, professional knowledge, always ready to help others can reach to the top position in business, and can also be successful entrepreneur.

There are two types those who are controlling the business or are at the topmost position,



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those who are at the lower positions Those women who have chosen to enter in the corporate world and who are having capabilities and talents to reach to the top position, however very few women are able to reach to the topmost position. According to the Fortune list of 500 companies published in May 2019, only 33 (6.6%) women were CEO. In the United States workforce, it has been observed that the number of women at the top position is lesser than men. Among the chief executives only 29% are women, in the management positions only 40.4% are women.<sup>1</sup> As the position is higher there are lesser number of women.

### **Recommendations for women empowerment practices**

For empowering women, it's very important that they should be economically independent. Economic independence improves their status not only in the family but also in the society. An earning woman's voice is heard, she is able to take rational decisions not only for herself but also for her family. Many of the social problems like dowry, Female foeticide, and child marriages have been reduced in those societies where women are working. We have to find solutions for reducing the agony of working women. Following are some recommendations suggested for improving the environment for working women.

- ❖ Legal Support to women – Women working in various fields should be made aware about their rights and various laws which are there for the prevention and protection of their rights. Women working in any organisation whether unorganised or organised should feel safe working there. It's duty of the employer to provide safe environment. Vishakha guidelines for preventing sexual harassment at workplace 1997 mentions that in every organisation there should be an appropriate complaint mechanism where women should be able to approach freely in case of any problems she is facing. All employers both private and public should ensure that sexual harassment will be prevented in their organisation, they are required to take appropriate actions for this.
- ❖ Awareness regarding Constitutional rights of women- All the women especially working women should be made aware about their constitutional rights. Prevention of sexual harassment and working with dignity is considered as the fundamental rights. Indian Constitution values the concept of liberty and equality. Article 15 states that there will be

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-united-states-workforce/>



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no discrimination on the basis of religion, language or gender. All persons will be treated equally.

- ❖ Inclusive practices – Manufacturing plants, corporate houses should take care of recruiting women in all fields. Project team should also consist of diverse group. Every team should consist of both female and male members. Some of the MNCs are recruiting female employees in the male dominated work field. At the workplace non-discriminative practices with regard to pay, promotional opportunities need to be practiced. Social security measures are to be taken.
- ❖ Awareness about Government Schemes—there are various government schemes which are specially designed for the benefit of women. There are many women entrepreneurs who are engaged in different business fields, these women need capital. For these women government has started various schemes, but they are not aware about it. There is a need to make them aware of all such schemes designed for women so that they will be benefitted by it. Special programs for Entrepreneurship development for women need to be organised and these type of programs are to be given larger publicity so that more number of women can participate in it.
- ❖ Special Provisions—Due to the impact of traditional patriarchal society the sole responsibility of taking care of a child falls on female, realizing this fact some of the corporate houses makes special provision of play area and day care center where the women employee's children are taken care of. This center should maintain quality and affordability both. There are various corporate houses and institutions where the provision of Sanitary napkins is made. In one of the insurance company female employees are given special leave during their menstrual period.
- ❖ Sharing Responsibilities--- There is need to change the mind-set of society, the traditional patriarchal customs are to be replaced by egalitarian values. Household duties are to be equally shared by all the members of family. One of the reasons given for low participation of women in workforce is her household responsibilities. Household work should be equally respected and it should be equally shared by male members of the family also. Mind set of family members need to be changed. They should cooperate with women.
  - To conclude with the suggestion given by Economic Survey 2020-21 presented by



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Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman, "In order to incentivise more women to join into the labour force, investment in institutional support to affordable and quality child care facilities, paid paternal leave, family-friendly work environment, and support for elderly care needs to be made,"

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