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Obstacles Facing Women in a Segregated Work Environment: An Analysis of Indian Culture

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Abstract

The study looks into how gender segregation occurs in many spheres of life, including the workplace, politics, life expectancy, literacy rate, labor force participation, gender pay gap, and occupation. It makes an effort to comprehend how gender distribution in the occupational structure is a problem and how gender segregation at work has prevented women from fully exploring a variety of career choices. It draws attention to how women are viewed as second-class citizens in India's patriarchal society, where they are ruled in all spheres of life and kept out of the public eye. The goal of the paper is to show how the public sphere, which is viewed as the domain of men, leaves little room for women to work outside the home and how they encounter many forms of workplace discrimination, such as sexual harassment, inadequate sanitary facilities, unsafe and crowded transit, denial of promotions, and so forth. The study presents data demonstrating a significant intra-household gender gap in women's preferences regarding political representation, lifestyle, and money. It aims to offer a critical and analytical point of view on the various problems that women face in their daily lives. It looks at the current international legal frameworks that safeguard female employees as well as how the Indian constitution, by its enforcement of numerous Acts and Articles, contributes to fair and safe working environments for women. The article ends with a few suggestions that, if put into practice, would empower women and give them the confidence they need to pursue careers outside the home.


Keywords:

Political representation, employment, sexual harassment, empowerment, gender discrimination, and segregation of women, seasonal work, Women's segregation, housework

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Segregation is the practice of keeping women apart based only on their sex and treating them unfairly at work in order to make them economically and socially dependent on males. One type of gender discrimination that has persisted to some degree in all communities from the beginning of time is the segregation of women. It is a recurring aspect of society and comes in different shapes. It entails the deliberate exclusion of women from particular sectors or professions due to their gender. It mostly happens at the levels of industry, role, and occupation. Because there are differences in women's access to education, jobs, and other resources that are essential for their social and economic growth, women are subjected to different forms of discrimination and segregation on both a social and economic level. The occupational segregation that results from their concentration in low-paying, unstable occupations is one way that this problem is expressed. They work in less traditionally male fields like teaching, nursing, seasonal work, and low-level administrative positions and are highly segregated. Conversely, men are overrepresented in full-time, higher-paying industrial jobs and in higher-paying jobs overall. Jobs in engineering and technology are listed by men. Traditional gender roles and male domination are prioritized by prevailing social and cultural conditions, which leads to women's exclusion from home income generation and increases their financial dependence on others. In this sense, males are viewed as the breadwinners and leaders of the workforce, and women are expected to take care of the family and run the home. The idea that women are somehow less competent and qualified than males and are not suitable for some types of job originated from this traditional and orthodox mindset. Within industries dominated by men, they experience prejudice in the recruiting process, promotions, and compensation. They are also underrepresented in fields like engineering, technology, and politics. Women's segregation from the workforce is a socioeconomic issue since it restricts their possibilities and weakens the workforce's overall strength and diversity.

Every family is forced to look for new ways to enhance the household income due to financial pressures, the skyrocketing cost of living, rising costs for children's education, and the enormous cost of housing properties. These considerations compelled women (homemakers) to seek employment, even in fields that were previously thought to be exclusively appropriate for men, such as working night shifts in call centers, BPOs, or other establishments, in order to provide for their families. More than any other country in the world, India presents a variety of hurdles to working women. The fact that males in India do not participate in housework or any other kind of household activities makes this clear. Women prepare meals, tidy the home, wash clothing, cook, and get the kids ready for school. Men handle very few tasks that are done

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outside the home. This implies that women bear the majority of the responsibility for managing the household. In Indian culture, a woman is seen as a homemaker and is responsible for all household duties. Their growing needs force them to work outside the home in order to make ends meet. In the marketplace, they were compelled to put in longer hours than males. Over the past three decades, women's roles have significantly changed in relation to men's since they now work from 9 to 5 jobs and take care of all household tasks. A working woman typically loses two hours of sleep per day and up to fourteen hours per week due to her early mornings spent preparing meals for her family, getting ready for work, and getting their kids ready for school. Some people who work in highly stressful environments are required to bring certain unfinished tasks home, which reduces their amount of sleep by a few hours. This results in less sleep as well as a more stressful way of living. The family dynamic is strained and frustrated as a result. At work, they experience harassment as well.

Given the country's heritage, it is clear that Indian society is patriarchal and views women as second-class citizens. There are few spaces set aside in the male-dominated public realm for women to pursue employment outside the home. Whatever the circumstance, they were told what to do and what not to do in every area of life. But over the past three decades, things have shifted gradually, with more women entering the workforce and overcoming obstacles that once kept them from finding work. There has never been gender equality in the workplace. Despite having comparable degrees, women are paid less than males in the majority of vocations. In every industry, sexual harassment of women is rampant. In addition, women frequently face discrimination and loss of their maternity leave rights after becoming pregnant.

Review of Literature

The sexual distinction between males and females, according to which they identify as either feminine or masculine, is referred to as gender. In terms of less or more to feminine or masculine, it relates to something that one does have that the other does not (Sikdar & Mitra, 2012). The term "gender segregation" describes a horizontal imbalance that renders women in an organization's workforce minority and forces them to deal with all the drawbacks of working in a field that is dominated by males.

Research also shows that the unequal distribution of productive talents, such as human capital, between men and women is a result of gender segregation (Wharton, 1989). For this reason, societies view the fields of engineering, construction, manufacturing, and information

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and communications technology (ICT) as dominated by men, while women dominate the service sector, which includes social work, health, caregiving, and education.

Issues that Indian working women face

On the other hand, gender segregation is detrimental to society. The primary factor causing gender segregation is occupation. There has always been a perception that the public realm belongs to men, and few women have dared to enter the dangerous world of the office. The following are the issues and obstacles that Indian women confront.

1. Psychological abuse:

In Indian society, there is a long-standing perception that women are less prolific, talented, skillful, and efficient in the arts than men. This method rejects the idea that women are unsuited for some jobs and welcomes them back. Despite the protections provided by the constitution, discrimination based on gender makes it difficult to hire new employees. This gave rise to the mindset that justifies paying people differently for doing the same task. Even after 61 years of independence, full equality has not been attained in absolute terms. Women in the business world believe that they need to do better than their male coworkers in order to succeed. Bosses and subordinates have higher expectations as a result, and they work more efficiently. Working in such environments naturally strains women more than it does males, which deters women from pursuing careers as much.

Because no one considers improving their technology abilities, it is simple to fire women from their jobs and hire other people. Rarely is maternity leave granted. Most trade unions do not rank women's issues as a top priority. Women have always been associated with childrearing and housekeeping. If a woman had control over her income, she could manage these issues, but most of the time, her wage is given to her husband, father, or in-laws. Therefore, in many cases, the primary motivation for looking for work is to gain independence. This is not where the narrative ends. With more and more women entering the workforce, sexual harassment—which was once considered an invisible issue—has grown to be a significant social issue.

2. Sexual assault

Regardless of a woman's status, physical attributes, or line of work, working women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. They experience sexual harassment at work and in other

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settings such as homes, workplaces, schools, trains, buses, and even police stations, where they go to lodge complaints against the harassers. The hearing about the law protector violating women's modesty sounds really alarming. In India's congested public transportation system, women are frequently the targets of physical harassment. They are mostly employed in low-paying service positions where men supervise them, providing men with the chance to take advantage of the women who work for them. A woman finds it extremely difficult to file a complaint if a higher-ranking officer asks for sexual favors from her. If they say no, the boss finds additional ways to get her to have sex with him. Their lives were sad and depressing as a result of these events. Many incidents of sexual harassment against women employed in institutions with a predominance of men have recently been recorded, including to top female officials. When a woman receives a promotion based on merit, her peers will quickly accuse her of receiving sexual favors. A woman may quit her work as a result of this mental strain or experience embarrassment.


3.Prejudice in the Workplace

It is evident that prejudice against Indian women occurs in all spheres of life. Sexual harassment, exploitation, discrimination, and other workplace atrocities are its main offshoots. Furthermore, women who work night shifts in large cities are more susceptible to their employers' sexual pleasure. This issue is more common among nurses in particular almost every day. Hospitals are not taking any measures to confront or resolve this issue. One of the main causes of the ongoing rise in workplace sexual harassment is the overt insolence of the current Indian legislation.

It has also been observed that women in India frequently lack opportunities for advancement and professional development at work. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 states that most working women should receive equal compensation for equal work; nonetheless, in most cases, they are paid less than their male counterparts. This typically occurs in manufacturing facilities and labor-intensive businesses, particularly in the private sector.

4. Insecure transportation options when traveling

The conventional, traditional mindset of Indian society prevents working women from juggling job and household responsibilities. Working after six o'clock is intolerable in many families. These families are greatly concerned about a woman's safety when traveling as a result of these working hours. A working woman is particularly affected by these issues because of how much her family and society observe her.

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According to an ASSOCHAM survey of 1000 female professionals, 80% of the households surveyed expect their daughters-in-law to put the needs of the home ahead of their official career. Numerous women are subjected to physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their spouses and in-laws. They even don't voice their complaints or inform others about it, especially if they are parents.

5. Prejudice Based on Gender

It is the term for sex-based discrimination against men and women that includes sexual harassment, discrimination against pregnant women, and unequal compensation for working-age women. Women experience discrimination based on their gender, which restricts their prospects, keeps them from reaching their full potential, and keeps them from becoming financially independent. Five out of ten female employees at India Inc. have encountered discrimination in one way or another, according to Team Lease Services. It is observed that there is gender discrimination in the workplace with regard to opportunity, pay, benefits, working hours, leave, and promotions, among other things. Significant instances of discriminatory hiring practices were reported in the report. According to the Team Lease survey, women who are pregnant or have young children face some disadvantages in the job, including during the recruitment process.

6. Disparity in pay between genders

The term "gender pay gap" describes the disparity in wages between men and women in the workplace, which can be caused by a variety of factors including discrimination, unconscious prejudices, inequalities in work experience and education, and occupational segregation. While claiming equal compensation for equivalent effort for women compared to males, it is purely hypothetical. For doing the same work, they get paid less in comparison. They are not allowed to work in administrative roles. In the nation, they are incredibly underrepresented in politics. They are not allowed near them.

Every society has several obstacles to universal equality of opportunity. India is ranked lowest in the world for gender parity, which also includes wage parity. In the Global Gender Gap (GGG) ranking, India was placed 135th out of 146 countries according to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2020 Estimates. According to the World Inequality Report 2020, women in India make up only 18% of the labour income, while men make up 82% of it. The primary causes of the gender wage gap are male employees' preference for promotions to supervisory roles over

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female employees, women's career pauses brought on by parenthood responsibilities, and other sociocultural influences.

Causes of Disparities in Gender

The following are the causes of gender segregation in Indian society:

- **Occupation:** Gender segregation and occupation are positively correlated. Women are only allowed to work in the service industry, such as in teaching, nursing, and customer service. Masculine vocations are assigned to men.
- **Culture:** Women are unable to work outside the home due to cultural restrictions. Men experience guilt when they permit their wives and daughters to work outside the home.
- **Religion:** Religion has a significant influence on women being confined to their homes.
- **Salary:** Women typically receive lower pay than males at the same job. They receive comparatively little pay because they are viewed as inferior.

Address the Issue of Gender Segregation

The Indian Constitution has attempted in a number of ways to address the issue of women being excluded from the workforce. Encouraging women to seek careers in industries that are dominated by males is one way to promote equality in the workforce and diversity at work inclusive initiatives. Policies have been developed in this area to guarantee that all employees, regardless of gender bias, receive equal compensation and opportunities. The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was enacted nationwide to address sexual harassment and violence against women. The aim of this legislation is to promote equal opportunities for women in the workplace and decrease instances of sexual violence. According to Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee women's equality, sexual harassment is defined as the abuse of those rights. These articles guarantee equality before the law, forbid discrimination based on caste, colour, religion, sex, or place of birth, and safeguard life and individual freedoms.

Overcome women's issues

- **Education:** Women learned about their rights through education. A widespread literacy program can lessen the issue. Priorities should be given to enrolling and keeping girls in school.

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- The goal of the vocational and entrepreneur development program is to enable women to become self-sufficient and self-employed at the national level.

- Husband's and other family members' attitudes: The media should work to alter them. A husband should show his working wife honour and respect.

Government initiatives to lessen gender inequality

Over the past ten years, the Indian government has undertaken a wide range of programs aimed at reducing the severity of the gender gap issue and empowering women in all spheres of life, including the social, economic, and political spheres. They are nonetheless a vulnerable and subservient segment of society, although receiving some protection and empowerment. The programs that we will mention below are geared toward women.

Large-scale projects

The goal of the 2015 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) law is to protect, preserve, and educate girls.

In 2017, Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) was established to provide rural women with employment and skill development possibilities.

In order to give working women in metropolitan regions safe and secure housing, the Working Women Hostel (WWH) was established in 2015.

The 2015 Sukanya Samridhi Yojana is centred on funding girl child marriage or higher education costs.

India's gender gap index for 2020

When examining data from the World Economic Forum, it is evident that India is doing well in the areas of health and education. However, it is regrettable to report that the country is falling in terms of income. The reason for women's full potential enjoyment in the education and health sectors is the growing GDP percentage share in these sectors. Women have only been given more power in these sectors. The measures implemented in the nation to maintain this vital component of society open to everyone, regardless of gender, are the cause of this improvement. Conversely, women lag well behind men when it comes to wage levels and work opportunities. In 2020, women are positioned at the lowest point, at 2.5, but men are positioned at 9.9 in the same year.

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Conclusion

India is a country where men predominate and where women experience a multitude of issues, including workplace exploitation. Their personal lives suffer greatly from the general state of existence, which impacts society as a whole. They are subjected to financial, emotional, psychological, sexual, and physical exploitation, among other sorts. In large cities, those who work night shifts are more vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace. Their primary concerns include sexual exploitation, mental harassment, workplace discrimination, dangerous travel facilities, gender-based discrimination, and the gender pay gap. Gender segregation and occupation are unquestionably related. This is explained by the fact that women control the service sector, which includes social work, health care, education, and other related fields, while men typically hold the majority of jobs in fields like engineering, construction, and information and communications technology (ICT). The primary factors that significantly contribute to the maintenance of gender segregation are occupation, culture, religion, and income. Although laws have been created to address the issue, they fall short. It requires specific action-oriented measures in order to completely eliminate the threat posed by the problem.

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