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FEMALE WORKFORCE - A MISSING PILLAR OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has put many challenges to the third world countries and one of the biggest challenges is to adopt the capitalism approach over the socialism ideology. This compelled the policy makers to align the national economic policies with the global policies. Further as a strategy to counter the influences of globalization policy makers in developing economies were compelled to invest on neglected strata of the human resource development-females working force. In the developing countries Women particularly are facing discrimination, oppression, violence, limited access to basic needs and employment and hence were without any choice but to become active member of workforce and real contributor to national income. The development of country is now dependent on development of both genders and in fact all the developing countries are investing heavily on female workforce. All of a sudden it was equally difficult for male to accept and give equitable role to women. The research paper tries to measure the changes in the psyche of women in India, ever since the wake of globalization. It explains the reasons for glass ceiling effect, although there has been a significant growth in their status.

KEYWORDS

Empowerment, Female workforce, Globalization, , Glass ceiling, Human Development.

INTRODUCTION

No country or society can achieve its potential without adequately in developing the capabilities of women and encouraging the empowerment of women. India, though known for feminism- gender equality both in private and public sphere is still a distant dream as the issues of women are neglected. Women have a strategic position in human Resource Development (HRD) as they are the ones who are primarily involved in the upbringing of the young and managing households. The education of females brings benefits not only to individuals but also to the society in a number of ways. An educated mother tends to ensure that their children in turn are educated and become effective members of society. They safeguard children's health and nutrition and also tend to be better household managers, moreover, more informed producers, consumers and traders.

Though women play a key role in Social development of a country but still they are facing the challenges of coping with a male chauvinistic milieu. Despite global commitment from different global organizations including United Nations for the development of women folk, hardly any significant change in their status has been noticed in some member countries (table 1.1). It is ironical that in the 21st century, third world countries are still trying to tackle the basic minimum standard of living such as drinking water, shelter, sanitation and health. As per the Human Development Index (HDI) 2006, on gender-equity scale, Norway stands at the top, whereas India is still stagnant at position 127th rank and even shifted back to 134 rank in the recent HDI-2009 (Anonymous, 2006; 2009).

The statistics indicate that women are discriminated against in many spheres and in different societies. In developing countries they invariably work harder than men. They contribute to the economic activity and to the welfare of society through household jobs, child-rearing, educating children and working in the agri-fields. Most of this work is either undervalued or ignored altogether. They do not get compensated for their work. In most countries they do not have equal property rights. In developing countries, the discrimination extends to jobs, education, health care, food property rights, access to credit, income and power.

TABLE 1.1: STATUS OF WOMEN WORLDWIDE.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are female. • Women do 67% of the hours of work done in the world. • Earn only 10% of the world's income. • Own only 1% of the world's Property. • Women are paid 30-40% less than men for comparable work on an average. • 60-80% of the food in most developing countries is produced by women. • Women hold between 10-20% managerial and administrative jobs. • 60% of the 130 million children in the age group of 6-11 years, who do not go school, are girls. |
|---|

Source: 1-7

Women in one or other way are considered to be an institutionalized commodity both in India as well as at global level. Even in developed societies, where women enjoy the maximum civil liberty, still they continue to face problems with the opposite dominating gender, be it in the form of husbands or men at the work place. In the underdeveloped or conservative society, the degree of exploitation is both diverse and intense. In its extreme form it takes the form of outright violence both physically and sexually. Even in US, women "opt out" of full time work at a higher rate than men, (Barbara & Pease, 2002) as many

researchers have attributed it to the glass ceiling problem existing in the organizations. A survey in Japan in the early 1990's showed increasing disagreement by both men and women with the traditional belief that man should hold jobs and women should stay at home to do house work. The disparity between men and women, can take many forms. Indeed, gender inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but is incongruent and interlinked problem (Anonymous, 2002). There are about seven types of inequality reported all over the world in the form of mortality, inequality, natality inequality, basic facility inequality, special opportunity inequality, professional inequality, ownership inequality, educational disparity and household inequality (Amartya, 2001). In all and essential aspects of economic development, women have been left far behind.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Even though the women form almost half of the population in India, yet their status in economic, political or social life leaves much to be desired. Despite concerted efforts by the government through the constitutions, legislation and various developmental plans, visible and invisible inequalities still continue (Mir Parvez et al, 2010). The expansion of liberalized global markets has been a refracted process. The main stream proponents of globalization focus on one side of the mirror, ignoring its opposite dimension. In the refracted mirror of globalization an analysis of its contradictory opposites is equally important to understanding the whole, especially from the standpoint of gender. Even after several years of planned development in India, the status of women in our country is low and their socio-economic conditions are much more depressed than that of men.

GENDER RATIO

The declining level of sex ratio in India has been a cause of concern for decades (Anonymous, 2010). As gender ratio is falling continuously from 972 females per 1000 males in 1901 to 924 females per 1000 males in 2010, the preference for a son has been an established fact in Indian Society. The bias against females in India is related to the fact that "Male is called upon to provide the income; and is the ones who do most of the work in the fields. In this way male are looked upon as a type of security. With this perspective, it becomes clearer that the high value given to males decreases the value given to females". The sharp fall in the child sex ratio especially has pointed to much more alarming phenomena of modern medical technology. With the sex ratio dismally skewed towards males, changing India's ingrained gender bias against the girl child has already imbalanced the population distribution of gender in the Human Development Index (HDI).

GENDER EQUALITY

The under developing countries are experiencing a one sided and distorted development process which has resulted in an uneven speed. Although the uneven nature of globalization and its unequal impact on developing countries is of the grave concern- the issues of gender-equality particularly in developing countries are ignored. Gender equality is an important issue of human rights and social justice. Women represent half the resources and half the potential in all societies -efforts to promote greater equality between men and women, can also contribute to the overall development of human society. It has been clear for decades that women workforce in many parts of the world make key contributions in areas of economic development such as agricultural, health, education and water resource management. The Gender Inequality Index in the Report shows that Indian women face greater gender inequality than their sisters in many of its less prosperous and more backward neighbours, including Pakistan and Srilanka.

EDUCATION

A one year increase in women education is associated with a 9 per cent decrease in the mortality rate of children of five years age group hence a significant indicator for human resource development. Further improved education also encourages women to participate more in community development activities which often provide increased income-earning opportunities. As better educated women have better educated children, benefits are passed on from generation to generations (Anonymous, 1991). The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is no doubt a step forward towards the Universalization of educational goal, but needs a lot for proper implementation and evaluation of the programme.

WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

The consequences of the global forces that go under the labels of 'globalization' and 'economic reform' have led to relative decline in the unskilled wages, increased risk, declining bargaining power of unskilled labor. Moreover, women are worst sufferers whose contribution in terms of unorganized sector is highest. Since big multinational Companies have taken over the global scenario, and the Indian SME sector is not able to compete in terms of quality. No matter how in the rear they are, right now the situation has changed in the wake of globalization. Once, women participated in the development process, they are providing their ability at par with men. The dismal skewed gender diversity ratio in Indian corporate is a reality and is more because of existing social system rather than anything else (Yasmin, 2011). There is no doubt that Indian companies now-a-days have broken the long slumber and are boosting the morale, reducing attrition level, providing certain benefits like Crèche's, Work From Home (WFH), yoga classes etc. especially to women workers. According to research report firms with female representation on the board garnered sustainable profits as opposed to the ones with none (Yasmin, 2011). For urban females, "services" sector accounted for the highest proportion (36 percent) of the total usually employed, followed by "manufacturing" (28 percent) and "agriculture" (18 percent) (Anonymous, 2008). Work opportunities for women in urban services and manufacturing sector probably exist (table 1.1) but there is need for facilitating and improving their Work Force Participation Rates (WFPR) through better education, skill development and removal of gender associated hurdles. Companies also prefer employing women because females have proved to be cheaper work force.

TABLE 1.1: WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES (WFPR)

	1983	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05
Rural Male	48.2	50.4	47.8	48.8
Rural female	19.8	21.9	20.4	21.6
Urban Male	47.3	49.6	49	51.9
Urban female	10.6	12	11.1	13.3

Source: NSSO (2008) Survey on employment and unemployment/planning Commission

Labour force or economically active population is that segment of the population whose function is to produce goods and services demanded by the whole population. Usually, those aged 15-64 years considered to be productive age-group. However, not everyone in the productive age-group is effectively in the labour force. Labour force participation of women has been a topic of interest for labour market specialist as well as feminist economist for some time now. All over the world, to a large extent, pattern of work participation and education are different for men and women. Generally, male participation rates dominate over women's activities recognized to be 'economically productive' despite the longer hours of work women generally put in at home and outside in various activities. India is no exception. It is seen that there is a dearth of educated female population in India. Also, majority of rural and urban females are illiterate showing the discouragement of empowering women to contribute economically in a country.

The analysis of the latest data in global employment trends for women shows that in 2007, 1.2 billion women around the world worked, almost 200 million or 18.4 per cent work more than ten years ago (Anonymous, 2008). But, the number of unemployed women also grew from 70.2 to 81.6 million over the same period and in 2010, women at the global level still had a likelihood of being unemployed than men. The female unemployment rate stood at 6.4 per cent compared to the male rate of 5.7 per cent. The report shows clearly that most regions are making progress in increasing the number of women in decent employment but that full gender equality in terms of labor market access and conditions of employment has not yet been attained (ibid). In addition to the skewed ratios, there is evidence of an increasing informality of employment as well, viz home based, contract and casual labor. Research findings show that on the lower rungs of corporate career ladder, fully 41 per cent of highly qualified scientists, engineers and technologists are women. But the drop-out rates is huge, moreover, 52 per cent of these talented women quit their jobs (Hewlett, 2008) hence, women as a category of workers need special focus and analysis. In the current scenario, contribution of women is systematically undermined and relegated to subordinate roles and are concentrated in the lower end of the spectrum, where they are paid minimum and can be attributed to the fact that 96 per cent of the women workers are still in the informal sector (Anonymous,

2002). Further, their work is insecure, irregular and often unrecognized as they have to balance their children, home and work, but their income never commensurate with their work. In India the number of female executives occupying top positions across power corridors and corporate boardrooms is abysmally low-out of 1112 directorships of 100 companies listed on Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) of India, only 59 or 5.3 percent are held by women which is lower than the percentage of women directors in countries like Canada (15 percent), the US (14.5 percent) Hong Kong (8.9 percent), Australia (8.3 percent) and UK (12.2 percent) (Yasmin, 2011). The number of women IAS officers in the country is 572 out of the total of 4671 (Dhall & Sharma, 2008). According to an International labor Organization (ILO) (2006) report, 75 per cent of the world's activities are executed by women, but they own mere 0.01 per cent of the total assets and earn only 10 per cent of world income (ibid). Significantly there are no women CEO in the 30 top companies According to a study of 149 Indian companies undertaken by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) in 2006, women constitute 16 per cent of junior level managers and only 4 per cent in senior managerial posts. Further, only 1 per cent of the organizations have women CEOs (ibid). It is clear from above discussion that women are lagging behind in all spheres of life. They are less empowered section of society (Singh & Thapar, 2009). However, the countries that figure out how to fully unleash the untapped talent of women entrepreneurs will have a marketed competitive advantage (Danner, 2011). Coupled with this is the complete lack of access to skill training and technological know-how. Moreover, there is also an absence of any widespread system for social security, mass legal awareness, work place relaxation, and health and safety measures for women workers, which further cumulates to their vulnerability. India is rapidly being branded as an unsafe destination for women around the globe (Datta, 2010). The question of changing attitude towards women is a big challenge and needs a lot of conscious efforts to a deep seated cultural shift.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The World's largest democracy has been one of the primary countries who witnesses a meager women participation in the political field and India felled in the lowest quartile with respect to the number of women in parliament with 9.1 percent in 14th Lok Sabha with respect to other countries like Rwanda (56.7 percent), South Africa (44.5 percent), (Anonymous, 2008) in politics. The Congress party, led by a woman and supposedly pushing for reservation for women, has only 10 per cent of women among the candidates announced so far. For the BJP the proportion of women candidates is even lower at 7 per cent. In other words, female officers in India's highest bureaucratic echelon constitute mere 12 per cent and as far as the cabinet ministers are concerned only two women find place, which in percentage terms works out to be a mere 6 per cent (Dhall & Sharma, 2008). Among the 30 chief ministers in the country, only four are female. Women's inability to reach to the top positions is a global phenomenon and India is no exception and most of the times it is because of glass ceiling effect and can easily understood with the help of diagram shown below. Although as per the statistics and number India lacks far behind in women participation in politics but still India has produced women politicians who has always able to snatch the limelight and grabbed the headlines from her male counterparts.



TABLE 1.2: STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

- Female share of non-agricultural wage employment is 17%.
- Participation women workforce is 13.9% in urban sector.
- Participation women workforce is 29.9% in rural sector.
- Women's wage rates constitute only 25% of family income.
- In no Indian state do women & men equal wages in agriculture.
- Women occupy only 9% of parliamentary seat.
- Women occupy less than 4% seats in High courts & Supreme Court.
- Women are less than 3% administrators & managers.
- 245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read & write.

Source: 1-7

GLOBALIZATION AND GLASS CEILING EFFECT

Friedman (2008) has rightly said that "Socialism collapsed because it did not allow the market to tell the economic truth. Capitalism is going to collapse because it does not allow the market to tell the ecological truth". Globalization has improved the lives of billions of people through capitalism mode but it has left out billions more. This has also increased economic interdependence to a great extent as no nation can exist in economic isolation. An improvement in Information, Communication Technology (ICT) the diminution of tariff and non tariff barriers has made the world a "global village". Though globalization brought many benefits to the third world countries in general and India in particular, but has also led to poverty, increased work-load stress in the labor force and global environmental destruction. People in developing world have great needs but cannot be expressed in ways that matter to market (Chawla, 2009). No doubt more than three fourth of the world population live in developing countries, but they enjoy only 16 per cent of the world's income while the richest 20 per cent have 85 per cent of global income (Mahajan, 2006; Anonymous, 1995). The third world countries being reactive rather than proactive were without any option but to adopt the new global compulsions of change so as to streamline their economies with the New World International Economic Order (NWIEO). The development of last three decades also indicate that remarkable progress has been made in a number of directions, but the fruits of development were not uniform and were not percolated down to needy and deserving strata of the society. In the recent The Global Competitiveness Report-(2009-10) India ranks 49th out of 134 countries (Anonymous, 2009). Even though some benefits have reached to the poor, but new problems emerged in the form of deteriorating social fabric, environmental degradation etc.. In adopting these changes, all the sections of the society in general and women in particular were sufferers.

The discussion on the topic revealed that the following factors are responsible for the low socio-economic status and poor political participation as well as less empowerment of women.

- Lack of education.
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of political will
- Lack of proper implementation of women related to laws and legislation.
- Lack of proper implementation of policies and programs initiated for the betterment of women.
- Lack of gender culture
- Lack of social and economic empowerment.
- Lack of community of people participation.

- Lack of gainful employment opportunities.
- Inefficient accountability mechanism relating to women's rights.

SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATION

In India the improvement of human development indicators is not only the prime need (Matoo & Mir, 2006) but creation of congenial socio-economic and political environment is also equally important for the fullest possible utilization of vast, untapped reservoirs of human energy (Singh, 1999). Hence the issue revolves round long term sustainable policy for a human development and especially women folk cannot be inactive recipients of measures to improve their status. In the era of globalization the empowerment cannot be imposed from top, rather it is a bottom up process as women must empower themselves. However, they need assistance and facilitation from top which will promote women's inherent strength and positive image hence enables them to face any difficult situation. The female workforce which is the main pillar of Human Resource Development, their capabilities can be improved, only if equal opportunities are provided to them so as to become active participants in all aspects of society. Moreover equal opportunities should be not only pledge the equal access to education and employment opportunities but also the establishment of more facilitative structures.

Global competition has forced third world policy makers to think differently about their countries development as benefit of globalization are great, but are distributed unevenly and the worst sufferers are women. Further, the global forces have severely influenced the nature of work in the third world countries including India and at the same time growth in private and service sector have provided opportunities for qualified women to occupy lower and middle level management posts. These changes have paved the way for their taking up and aspiring to move more towards senior management positions. Still the glass ceiling continues to limit women's access to senior management (fig. 1.1) and to management positions in those sectors and areas which involve more responsibility and higher pay. A trend is moving towards a more workaholic culture which was a shock to the existing socialistic economic pattern. Though development started percolating down by adopting the capitalistic approach but much success has not been achieved on the poverty eradication front. Women which constitute almost half of the total population in the world, so is the case in India also, but their representation in gainful employment is comparatively low (Ramya, 2006) and their condition is still pathetic. Labour market inequalities between men and women explain many of the difficulties women face in pushing against the glass ceiling.

It is rightly said the "Nature gave women too much power, but the law gives them too little". The problem is not about the existence of laws that safeguard women's right, but about translating their *de-jure* rights into *de-facto* ones" (Anand, 2006). Unfortunately many Acts in various legislatures could not bring the expected social reform (Sivamurugan & Anbumani, 2006). In fact it was due to lack of awareness and literacy among the women section. Issue of gender equity and justice assumed added significance in the context of awareness movement organized for women (Ashappa & Sultana, 2009). With the women's concern gaining prominence in both governmental and non governmental organizations, women's issues became important on the agenda of all politically parties. The recently constituted commissions for women both at central and state levels are acting as platforms to ventilate the issues of women. India as such is a "mediated society" where our ideas, knowledge and, values about the world come from via media (Althusser, 1971). The media therefore have a very strong influence on us both as individuals and society (Patnaik, 2005). So the media which is right now representing just few million people of the 1.2 billion people should give voice to voiceless by adopting trickle-up rather than trickle-down approach (Tejpal, 2009).

The phenomenon of Individualism has set in and women want to be more independent and their expectations, desires have increased as the globalization has provoked women to leave their houses in search of work. In the emerging capitalism economy, a single person cannot support the whole joint family which in turn has given the emergence of nuclear families in the third world countries. Consequently, this has also impacted the population because parents cannot afford to have more than one child. Women in India have introduced themselves in careers and positions that were not even thought of as an option before the 1990's. They have a career in different job streams as in Defense sector, BPOs, Aviation Industry, Administration, Technical organizations, Engineering and many more. Hence, are equally successful in every field and proving to move forward. Female executives have gone up the ladder mostly in the services sector, especially in the banking sector (Ibarra H. & Obodaru O, 2009) as the first generation has taken off and more women will get into coveted positions soon. Initially the service sector was the most preferred destination for women, but in the coming years more and more women will excel in manufacturing sector too. There are already examples of famous names like Ms. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw of Biocon and Ms. Indira Nooyi of PepsiCo as the chiefs of branded manufacturing organizations. In general, information Technology (IT) offers many new possibilities that offer women in developing countries a lifeline for economic, social and political empowerment. IT can certainly contribute to finding solutions for fulfilling women's basic needs and access to resources (Dhanabalan, 2008), which will develop into the competitive edge (Porter, & Victor, 2000). Also the corporate sector should play a dominant role in terms of adopting "creative capitalism" approach in their business operation (Gates, 2009 & Yunus, 2009).

Further, for the women to reap the benefits of globalization there is tremendous need to provide quality education, better health facilities and mass awareness about the legal rights supported by good governance in the country. It is important to impart skills which will deal with both women's 'practical' interests (e.g. poor nutrition) and will at the same time rework the 'strategic' interests so that their long term opportunities should also be taken care of. The principle of equality between men and women should be more widely promoted through the news media to change the attitude. Macroeconomic policies should encourage employment of women, availability of information to women about employment or self employment opportunities and other incentives to increase their participation in productive activities. Strategies need to be evolved for facilitating productive work.

As the pace of economic growth becomes faster and as the demand for skill workers increased markedly, the mode of government intervention in the market becomes more direct and even crude.

India needs to reengineer its policies so that more opportunities are opened up for the female folk. The need of the hour is that large scale awareness of women's issues with active participation and involvement of all women and men supported by creating an enabling environment to enhance self-confidence and autonomy of women. Sufficient education and vocational skills and broaden the skill base of women workers are necessary conditions for women's attainment of professional and management jobs. Training programmes have to make women recognize clearly how society structures their perceptions and must promote critical analysis among the female folk (Deepti, 2006) and encourage them to think independently and challenge unequal gender relations and exploitations.

The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women is the key agent of sustainable development (Anonymous, 2001). Denmark and Norway are considered the happiest nation of the world, is because of the equal status (Shekhawat, 2008) and equal opportunities enjoyed by the women. Empowering women is prerequisite for creating a good nation as their thoughts and value system leads the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. This is possible only when there is change in the mindset of the male counterpart so that they visualize the female as a 'human being' rather than a 'commodity' and also in day to day life the word "Housewife" should be replaced with "House maker" or "home maker" as it has developmental orientation rather than subordinate connotation.

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