

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT

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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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**GENDER DISCRIMINATION AT WORKPLACE AMONG ITES EMPLOYEES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Though both men and women work, there are significant gender differences in the nature and conditions of work and wages. Besides wages, discrimination against women workers is also found at the level of recruitment, selection for skilled jobs and promotions. The present study analyses the gender discrimination at workplace in ITES (Information Technology Enabled Service) organisations in Coimbatore City, TamilNadu. The information was compiled from 200 ITES employees. The study reveals that a majority (83 percent) of the respondents are of the opinion that they have equal opportunity at workplace, 70 percent employees pointed that they get equal pay and 82 percent said that they get equal promotion. And around 67 percent said they are given equal leadership. The study concludes that though gender gap was reducing in giving opportunity at workplace, the level of recruitment, promotion etc., but it was still failing in providing higher authority to women.*

**KEYWORDS**

employees, gender discrimination, workplace.

**INTRODUCTION**

The concept of 'Gender Discrimination' has much wider coverage in the Indian economy. The underlying causes of these inequalities are centuries old traditions and the economic structure which is based on formal and informal practices/norms. Even elevated status of education as well as health does not let the women to make a free choice in their important decisions of life until they are economically dependent. This social discrimination is closely linked with the economic sphere as well. That is why the women are employed in low paid, insecure and low status activities. Due to social hindrances, women have very low horizontal as well as vertical mobility and have to remain contented with lower wages.

The era of liberalisation has registered an increase in labour force participation by women all over the world. Women comprise half of the Indian population and account for nearly 1/3rd of the total workforce. According to the information provided by the Registrar General of India, the work participation rate for women was 25.68 per cent in 2001. This is an improvement from 22.73 per cent in 1991 and 19.67 per cent in 1981. Though there has been an improvement in the work participation rate of women; it continues to be substantially less in comparison to the work participation rate of men. As far as the organized sector is considered, in March 2002, women workers constituted 18.1 percent of the total organized sector employment in the country as compared to 17.8 per cent in the previous year. There were about 49.35 lakh women workers employed in the organized sector (public and private sector). Of this, nearly 27.89 lakh were employed in community, social and personnel services sector. Plantations and factories were also important employers of women.

Though both men and women work, there are significant gender differences in the nature and conditions of work and wages. Other than wages, discrimination against women workers is also found at the level of recruitment, selection for skilled jobs and promotions. The employers are prejudiced against employing women, especially in jobs where workers have always been men. The problems of working women at work places are multiple and differ from woman to woman according to the nature of work and position. There is a general perception that women are less capable than men in matters of administration and decision making. Even though women perform well at managerial levels, only very meager percentage of them is at the top decision-making levels. Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's. Both in the formal and informal sectors, women face less favourable conditions, have less access to education, training and thereby have lower skills. Nandini Sahai, Director, Media Information and Communication Center of India (MICCI), noted that many women journalists are deprived of top positions in organizations due to gender discrimination. She also claimed women who go on maternity leave are likely to lose their jobs in 29 percent of media houses and are unlikely to get jobs again (Times of India, Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 2012).

Discrimination at work can come from either the employer or from the colleague side. Discrimination by colleagues can happen to new employees. They may face sarcastic stares or constant digs made at them by their colleagues during initial weeks. However, if it persists for a long time, it can affect not only the employee but also the employer. The effect on the employee can be huge or meager but the impact on organization remains for a longer time. An employee who is being discriminated witnesses' non cooperation from peers and negative feedbacks from subordinates. Discrimination leads to psychological and emotional disturbance, resulting in demoralization and descend in performance standards. It brings down the overall performance, and fuels more discrimination, which in turn increases the number of gaps in one's work further. Discrimination at workplace also affects the society. The socio-economic inequalities get widened and social cohesion and solidarity are eroded. It results in wastage of human talent and resources. The main indicator which indicates that gender discrimination has occurred in the hiring process involves the qualifications of the job applicants. While a slight difference in qualifications between a female and a male candidate does not automatically indicate gender bias (if a lesser qualified male candidate is hired instead of a female candidate), a drastic difference in qualifications has almost always been upheld by the courts as a sure sign of gender. The common cases of gender discrimination are

- Women are not allowed to progress even if they are talented to: they are kept at the entry level jobs by the employers.
- The men are often rewarded with higher incentives and salaries as compared to women, though the women in several cases have proved to be more deserving and hardworking and deserve a better position in the area of workplace.
- Promotion are generally handed to the male employees as they are expected to be more responsible and capable of handling the job which might be a debatable question as nowadays women are better off as compared to the men at top level of organization.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Alimi Baba Gana and Bukar Jamri (2011) analysed the effects of gender discrimination on women in Kashim Ibrahim College Of Education, (KICOE), Nigeria. The global gender discrimination against women in public and private organisations today dominated the world affairs, raises alarm, and attracts the attention of sociologists, managers and head of institutions on how to confront the phenomenon was the concern of the study. A descriptive research method and field survey were employed in this study using a sample of sixty-six (66) respondents of which thirty-three 33 were male and 33 from female lecturers. The findings of the study revealed that there was no or little gender discrimination against women in area of recruitment and in administrative interactions within the institution.

Darunchai Chaidarun (2011) studied female discrimination at Japanese workplaces in Bangkok metropolitan region because Japanese working system contain high female discrimination and gender inequality. The feminist research approach was used as the main framework, and the quantitative method as the main research method. For the quantitative analysis, the 120 e-questionnaires were sent to the Thai female workers at Japanese firms in Bangkok metropolitan region. There were 77 answered respondents. The findings revealed that the Thai female employees do not feel that they were discriminated, and high-salary women feel dissatisfied with their remuneration.

Kenneth Dowler and Bruce Arai (2008) in their study examined gender difference in the police work which was inherently stressful. The results indicate that male and female officers have conflicting attitudes about the amount and nature of gender discrimination within police work. The findings further suggest that female officers experience higher levels of stress. In addition, the results indicate a weak relationship between perceptions of gender related jokes and stress level for females. Nevertheless the most important stress for both male and female officers is the perception of job related problems.

Macarie, Felicia Cornelia; Moldovan, Octavian (2012) scrutinizes the phenomenon of gender discrimination in the labor force, focusing on women in managerial and non-executive positions alike. Due to different psychological mechanisms that are not mutually exclusive, individuals manifest discriminative behaviors against females. Career wise, gender discrimination leads to negative developments both from horizontal and vertical perspectives. From a vertical perspective, women are under-represented in top management (under normal conditions) or over-represented in risky managerial positions (during crises or downturns); even in the limited number of sectors where women are predominant in the labor force, men have better odds of being promoted. From a horizontal perspective, women generally receive lower salaries (or equivalent forms of compensation) than their male counterparts (taking into account other factors). The crux of the argument was that, although women have shown increasing interest in their professional life (by their proportion in the labor force, higher levels of education attained and increase of the average age for starting a family), they do not receive equivalent career benefits.

Xiangyi Zhou, Jie Zhang and Xuetao Song (2013) studied gender discrimination in hiring markets. The authors sent 19,130 fictitious matched resumes in response to professional employment advertisements posted on major Internet employment boards in China for positions such as engineers, accountants, secretaries, and marketing professionals in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Wuhan, and Chengdu. The results showed that, in general, state-owned firms tended to prefer male applicants. Foreign and private firms tended to prefer female applicants. On one hand, this evidence supports the hypothesis that economic reform and the market economy may mitigate gender discrimination. On the other hand, this evidence was consistent with statistics that describe discrimination based on gender segregation and information asymmetry that originated with higher ratios of female workers in foreign and private firms. With respect to regional income disparity, the study found that the differences in gender discrimination between first- and second-tier cities were not significant. This result indicates that economic reform exerted limited mitigation effect on discrimination.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the first phase of IT revolution, women mostly found jobs in the lower end work such as data entry and word processing, and assembly of electronic components. However, as manufacturing advances and manual jobs become obsolete, women found new opportunities in services such as information processing, software development, and call center support. It is undeniable that Indian women have made significant inroad into the higher value added segments of the IT industry. There are about 38 percent female software programmers, largest of any demography. However, it is believed that female programmers at times face discrimination in compensation and promotion.

Though IT sector has offered equal employment opportunities to the gender groups, differences are noticed in the types of activity that men and women software professionals specialize in. Surveys among the software professionals showed that a high concentration of men exists in export software firms, while women are present in higher proportion of domestic low-end and IT-enabled services. This implies that at the entry level itself there is a marked gender differential in access to employment in this sector. In addition, during personal discussions, both men and women indicated that due to domestic responsibilities a few women were able to cope with the work intensity in high-end activities. The interviews reported that IT-enabled services provide shift-based work, which women prefer.

Gender discrimination at work place is still very much alive and kicking. Moreover most studies were carried out on gender discrimination in organized and unorganized sector. However, in BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) and IT (Information Technology) which are the emerging areas of working atmosphere, not many studies have been done on the issues of gender discrimination. It has changed the working environment which had its origin only in metropolitan cities and recently it has emerged into smaller cities and towns. In this sector we face homogenous group of people in age, education etc., and it will be the most perfect area to analyze whether the issue of gender discrimination is prevalent in this sector and suggest ways to eliminate the same.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the socio-economic profile of the respondents
2. To ascertain the extent of gender discrimination in employment with regard to promotion, and facilities enjoyed by the respondents.
3. To examine the problems faced by male and female respondents.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was based on primary data, which was collected with the help of an interview schedule which includes questions on demographics, employment details, benefits, working conditions, occupational, relationships (including any form of harassment) and best practices. A total of 200 sample respondents were selected having an equal representation of 100 male and 100 female employees of ITES Companies from the four zones of Coimbatore city. The data was collected during the period January – March 2013. The data collected were tabulated and analysed by using simple percentages and factor analysis.



**EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

The socio economic profile of the respondents is presented in Table- 1.

**TABLE -1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS (in percentage)**

S.No	Particulars	Male	Female	Total
1	<b>Religion</b>			
	Hindu	83	79	81
	Christian	13	17	15
	Muslim	4	4	4
2	<b>Marital Status</b>			
	Single	88	77	83
	Married	12	23	17
3	<b>Community of the respondents</b>			
	General	17	13	15
	Backward Class	56	76	66
	Most Backward Class	18	11	14
	Scheduled Caste	9	0	5
4	<b>Type of the family</b>			
	Nuclear	90	91	90
	Joint	9	9	9
	Extended	1	0	1
5.	<b>Size of family</b>			
	2	10	6	8
	3	38	41	39
	4	49	42	46
	5	3	11	7
6.	<b>Age of the Respondents</b>			
	21-25	74	65	69
	26-30	20	26	23
	31-35	6	9	8
7.	<b>Education of the Respondents</b>			
	UG	76	88	82
	Diploma	18	10	14
	PG	6	2	4
8.	<b>Occupation of the Respondents</b>			
	BPO	74	73	73
	IT	26	27	27
9	<b>Family Income of the Respondents</b>			
	Less than 20000	27	13	20
	20001-40000	51	63	57
	40001-60000	17	16	16
	Above 60000	5	8	7

Source: Field survey, 2013

Among 200 respondents surveyed, a majority (81 percent) irrespective of their sex belong to Hindu religion. Community-wise distribution shows a dominance of backward class (66 percent) followed by general community (15 percent) and most backward class (14 percent). A maximum of 165 (83 percent) respondents were single. Thus, the ITES organization prefer more of single employees rather than married people because it is easy to make them work for long hours, and to complete the project on time. Gender-wise, 88 percent of males and 77 percent of females are single. Due to modernization, the emergence of nuclear family was high rather than joint family. The table -1 shows that maximum (90 percent) respondents were from nuclear families.

Age-wise Classification reveals that 92 percent of the respondents belong to the age group 21 -30 years. The proportion of respondents above the age of 30 years was quite negligible (8 percent). Thus, there was predominance of younger generation in ITES companies. About 82 percent of the respondents had completed under graduate courses, 14 percent have completed Diploma and 4 percent alone have completed post graduate courses. Thus ITES organizations preferred more of under graduate completed employees especially in BPO and only in IT organizations the preference was for post graduate courses. A maximum of 74 percent male and 73 percent female respondents are from BPO and only 26 percent of male and 27 percent female respondents belong to IT organizations.

An analysis of income becomes the key stone of any study as it is the important measure of economic welfare. Desai (1957) and Kapur (1970,1973) state that though the economic factor was one of the most important reason for women to work, they also work because they want to have an individual status of their own to satisfy their intellectual and achievement needs, creative work, recognition and fame. Based on income classification, majority of the male (51 percent) and female (63 percent) respondents belong to families earning a total income of Rs.20000 to 40000. The average family income of the male respondents was Rs.30000 and that of female respondents was Rs.37000. The average income of the male respondents was 12,963 and the female respondent was 13,314. Thus in ITES organizations the respondents are provided with good payment.

The employment details of the respondents are presented in table – 2.

TABLE – 2: EMPLOYMENT DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENTS (Figures in percentage)

S.No	Particulars	Male	Female	Total
I	<b>Total Experience of the respondents</b>			
	≥ 2 years	65	52	58
	3 to 4 years	17	30	24
	5 & above	18	18	18
II	<b>Job you wanted</b>			
	Yes	84	78	81
	No	16	22	19
III	<b>Team work satisfaction</b>			
	Highly satisfied	44	40	42
	Satisfied	52	55	54
	Not satisfied	4	5	4
IV	<b>Team work pressure</b>			
	Yes	8	23	16
	No	92	77	84
V	<b>Equal opportunity</b>			
	Yes	85	80	82
	No	15	20	18
VI	<b>Equal onsite job</b>			
	Yes	79	54	66
	No	21	46	34

Field survey, 2013

A majority of 65 percent of male and 52 percent of female respondents have 2 years and less than 2 years of experience. And a minimum of 18 percent of male and female respondents have 5 years and above experience. The proportion of females was more (30 percent) than the male (17 percent) with 3-4 years of experience. It shows that females stick to the job rather than male respondents.

Majority of male (84 percent) and female (78 percent) respondents are working in the job in which they are interested and only 16 percent of the males and 22 percent of the females have expressed their dissatisfaction with the job. The high income initially motivates them to enter the ITES companies, but the odd timings and stress induce an urge in them to move to banking sector, teaching, Government job, and to IT organizations from BPO. It is interesting to note that the proportion of respondents expressing their dissatisfaction were more among the females.

In ITES organization, the employees do their work through team work. A maximum of 52 percent of male and 55 percent of female respondents agree that they are satisfied with their team members. And less than 5 percent have expressed their dissatisfaction. A majority of 92 percent male and 77 percent female respondents said that they do not have pressure while working in a team. Only a minimum of 8 percent male and 23 percent female feels pressure because of team work.

A majority of 85 male and 80 female respondents said there is equal opportunity for both male and female employees in their organization. Only 15 percent of the male and 20 percent female respondents think there was no equal opportunity given to them, which shows the gender discrimination was present though the intensity was less in the ITES organization.

About 79 percent of male and 54 percent of female respondents agree to the statement that they have given equal opportunity for onsite job. Around 46 percent of female employees stated that they are not given equal opportunity for onsite job. Thus, gender discrimination was seen in providing onsite job.

The details regarding promotion of ITES employees are given in Table -3.

TABLE -3: PROMOTION DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENTS (Figures in percentage)

S.No	Particulars	Male	Female	Total
I	<b>Equal pay</b>			
	Yes	74	65	69
	No	26	35	31
II	<b>Equal Promotion</b>			
	Yes	83	80	81
	No	17	20	19
III	<b>Equal opportunities</b>			
	Sometimes	19	28	23
	Always	76	64	70
	Never	5	8	7
IV	<b>Equal leadership</b>			
	Sometimes	25	35	30
	Always	68	65	66
	Never	7	0	4
V	<b>Equal decision</b>			
	Yes	81	81	81
	No	19	19	19
VI	<b>Women given high jobs</b>			
	Yes	23	52	37
	No	77	48	63

Field survey, 2013

About 74 percent of male and 65 percent of female employees agree that they were given equal payment in their organization. A few of the respondents, 26 percent of male and 35 percent of female employees stressed the point that there was discrimination in the pay scale.

A maximum of 83 percent of male and 80 percent of female respondents agree that they are given equal promotion. And about 76 percent of male and 64 percent of female respondents said that equal opportunities have been given in their workplace. But a minimum of 5 percent of male and 8 percent of female stressed that they are not given equal opportunity. Around 19 percent of male and 28 percent of female stressed that only sometimes equal opportunities are given for male and female respondents.

About 68 percent of male respondents and 65 percent of female respondents stressed that they are given equal leadership and about 25 percent of male and 35 percent of female respondents stressed that equal leadership in organization was given only sometimes. And 81 percent of male and female respondents agree that equal opportunity was given for both male and female employees to take decision. About 77 percent of male respondents stressed that women are not given higher level jobs. And 52 percent of female employee said that women are given high level jobs. It implies that maximum of 63 percent of respondents stressed the point that women are not given higher level jobs.

All the factors in the table pointed out that the presence of gender discrimination was seen in the ITES organization in certain aspects like providing on-site jobs, monetary payment and higher level jobs.

#### FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis was used to identify the problems at workplace faced by male and female respondents in the ITES organization. The problems and their respective labels are given in the table – 4

**TABLE – 4: PROBLEMS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE LABELS**

Label	Problems faced by respondents
X1	Monotony of work
X2	Lack of appreciation
X3	Supervisor / Team Leader shout at workers
X4	Transport to and from work
X5	Harassment by Colleagues/ Supervisors
X6	Sexual harassment at work
X7	Long working hours
X8	Over stress / Tension
X9	Leads to health problem
X10	Poor Working conditions
X11	Low payment
X12	Uncertainty about continuity of the work
X13	Lack of Vertical Growth

Source: Estimation based on field survey, 2013

These thirteen problems were subject to factor analysis technique to find out the main factors which act as hurdles for the respondents at their workplace. To determine the reliability of applying factor analysis, Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test was applied and presented in the Table- 5.

**TABLE – 5: CRONBACH'S ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST**

Gender	Male	Female	ALL
Measure			
Cronbach's Alpha	.896	.846	.876

Source: Estimation based on field survey, 2013

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test for male and female respondents showed alpha value of 0.896 and 0.846 respectively. It proved that the factors were reliable and Factor analysis test can be applied. To determine the appropriateness of applying factor analysis the KMO and Bartlett's test were computed and the results were presented in the Table - 6.

**TABLE – 6: KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST MEASURES**

Measure	Male	Female	ALL
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure	.847	.700	.836
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			
(i) Approx. Chi-Square	633.683	645.360	1131.158
(ii) Degrees of freedom	78	78	78
(iii) Significance	.000	.000	.000

Source: Estimation based on field survey, 2013

KMO statistics for male respondents was 0.847, female respondents 0.700 and for all respondents 0.836. It signifies higher than acceptable adequacy of sampling. The Bartlett test of sphericity was also found to be significant at 1 percent level providing evidence of the presence of relationship between variables to apply for factor analysis.

The principal component technique was used for extracting factors and the number of factors to be retained was based on latent root criteria (ie) variables having Eigen values greater than one. Varimax rotated factor matrix results for all problems faced by respondents are presented in the table - 7.

**TABLE – 7: FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE PROBLEMS FACED AT WORKPLACE**

Factors Label	Male			Female				All			
	F1	F2	F3	F1	F2	F3	F4	F1	F2	F3	F4
X1			0.913				0.834				0.894
X2			0.733				0.839				0.753
X3								0.656			
X4								0.638			
X5	0.761			0.850					0.851		
X6	0.780			0.737					0.784		
X7		0.787				0.866				0.888	
X8						0.688				0.633	
X9		0.828				0.864				0.765	
X10	0.708			0.820					0.743		
X11	0.723				0.843			0.739			
X12					0.812			0.743			
X13	0.688				0.778			0.702			
Eigen values	4.08	2.51	1.85	2.67	2.54	2.22	1.97	3.12	2.17	2.11	1.62
Percentage of variance	31.42	19.30	14.22	20.57	19.52	17.07	15.16	23.98	16.68	16.19	12.43
Cumulative percentage of variance	31.42	50.72	64.94	20.57	40.08	57.15	72.31	23.98	40.66	56.85	69.28

Source: Estimation based on field survey, 2013

For male respondents, factor 1(F1) has significant loadings for seven dimensions namely Harassment by Colleagues/ Supervisors, Sexual harassment at work, Poor Working conditions, Low payment and Lack of Vertical Growth. Factor 1 was more powerful because it explains nearly 31 percent of the variance out of 65 percent. Factor 2 (F2) has significant loading for two dimensions namely, Long working hours and Over stress / Tension and accounted for 19 percent of variance and factor 3 (F3) had the lowest significant loading for 2 dimensions namely Monotony of work and Lack of appreciation and accounted for only 14 percent of the variance.

For female respondents, factor 1 (F1) has significant loading for three dimensions namely Harassment by Colleagues/ Supervisors, Sexual harassment at work and Poor Working conditions. It explains the maximum of 21 percent of the variance out of 72 percent of the total variance. Factor 2 (F2) has significant loading for three dimensions namely Low payment, Uncertainty about continuity of the work, Lack of Vertical Growth and explains 20 percent of the variance. Factor 3 (F3) explains three dimensions namely Long working hours, Over stress / Tension, Leads to health problem and explains 17 percent of the variance. Factor 4 (F4) has the significant loading for Monotony of work and Lack of appreciation and explains only 15 percent of the variance.

For All respondents, Factor 1(F1) was more powerful and has significant loading for 5 dimensions namely Supervisor / Team Leader shout at workers, Transport to and from work, Low payment, Uncertainty about continuity of the work, Lack of Vertical Growth and explains a maximum of 24 percent of variance, Factor 2 and 3 (F2 & F3) has an equal significant loading of 3 dimensions and explains 17 and 16 percent of the variance followed by the factor 4 (F4) which has the least significant loading for 2 dimensions namely Monotony of work and Lack of appreciation and constitutes 12 percent of the total variance.

The overall inferences drawn from the above analysis are

- (i) The most severe problem faced by both the male and female respondents in ITES organizations are harassment at work, sexual harassment, Low payment, Uncertainty about continuity of the work, Lack of Vertical Growth.
- (ii) The least problem faced by both the male and female respondents in ITES organizations are Monotony of work and Lack of appreciation

## CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that 85 percent of male and 80 percent of female respondents agreed to the statement that equal opportunity has been given in their organization. About 68 percent of male and 65 percent of female respondents stressed the point that they are given equal leadership. About 77 percent of male respondents stressed that women are not given higher level jobs. The most severe problem faced by both the male and female respondents in ITES organizations are harassment at work, low payment, uncertainty about continuity of the work, lack of Vertical Growth. The Gender gap is reducing in the modern era. But still, discrimination among women workers are found at the level of recruitment, selection for skilled jobs, promotions and providing higher authority. The employers are prejudiced against employing women; especially in jobs where workers have always been men. There is a general perception that women are less capable than men in matters of administration and decision making.

## SUGGESTIONS

- Workshops and seminars should be organized for women to enhance their skill and knowledge.
- Women should participate more in ICT policy making in order to ensure that gender issues are being addressed.
- A law has to be passed ensuring that in all organizations certain percentage of female employees should be present.
- Policies should be geared towards including more women in ICT decision making positions at the highest level.

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