

**GENDER DIFFERENCES AT WORKPLACE: AN  
EMPIRICAL VERIFICATION FROM A SURVEY OF A  
RESIDENTIAL COLONY IN DELHI**

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**ABSTRACT**

New technologies have brought about a fundamental change in the labour market by providing and enabling the environment to absorb women in the labour force. However, gender differences persist in the labour market. Women face more problems at the workplace as compared to men. This study verified the gender differences at workplace drawing from a survey data of a random sample of 452 young people in a residential colony in Delhi. The findings indicate that work-life balance, income, social interaction at the workplace, job change and reasons for leaving the previous job varies significantly with gender. Overall the job satisfaction varies significantly according to gender. Traditional social practices which are nurtured at home are reproduced at the workplace and push working women in a disadvantageous position in the labour market in Delhi.

**Keywords:** Gender differences, income, job satisfaction, social interaction, work-life balance.

**INTRODUCTION**

Information and communication technology has brought about a fundamental change in the labour market. Growth in the services sector has changed the gender profile of the workplace. The work opportunity brings about gender transformation in women lives as they escape from the domestic fate of their mother's generation. It has allowed women to work at par with men. Even employers feel that women are more suitable for some jobs because they are considered to have better skills than their Men counterpart. However, a substantial number of these jobs are part-time, meeting both the needs of employers. However, women have to make a balance between work and home. The new economy has thus resulted in 'feminization of work' (Blackwelder, 1997; Caraway, 2007). However, the feminization of work is not accompanied by gender parity in the labour market.

Although the share of women in the labour force is increasing gender differences in the labour market persists. The origin of the problem lies in the process of socialization, whereby women are trained to maintain household work. So despite being employed in the labour market, women are expected to do the household work as well, and this results in role conflict and role strain. Work-life balance seems to be a big challenge for working women. Several other organizational factors also add to the problem. The traditional inequalities between sexes, which is nurtured in the family, is reproduced at the workplace as well. So women are expected to behave in specific ways, and any departure from that is labelled as deviant. Women remain part-time, irregular and casual workforce, in general, in the labour market. Only a few women can make a smooth transition to satisfying work; most of the women remain in the state of transition and are never satisfied with their job despite changing jobs several times.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In traditional settings, the women's job is not considered crucial, and they had little negotiating power. However, the globalizing world brings many opportunities for women. New technologies, it seems, disrupt the traditional pattern of sex-typing and thereby open up opportunities for changing the sexual division of labour (Wajcman, 1991). It has widened the scope for expressing women's agency. They continue to forge their presence not only in the government sector but also in the corporate world. It has hit hard on the traditional stereotype that 'man is the bread earner and woman is the homemaker'. Making the right balance between work and home is not only the responsibility of women. Both husband and wife take time out of their work to share and do the housework. Even men take such responsibility like cleaning, taking care of child, shopping and at times cooking as well. Increased participation of women in the labour market led to the decline of the notion of Men breadwinner and an increase in the number of dual bread-earner household (Jones, 2009). It can be assumed that Delhi also has a similar situation. More and more young couples are sharing the housework; the tradition 'segregated conjugal role' is gradually giving way to 'joint conjugal role' (Young & Willmott, 1973). However, women still have to bear a considerable burden. Women have to bear the burden of maintaining the responsibility of both the housework.

Work-life balance refers to the balance between work roles and family roles. It depends on fulfilment, satisfaction and energy available for the multiple roles that an individual fills (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Because of women's more significant time commitment to domestic activities, they are more affected than man by the inconsistency between work and family responsibilities. As a result, they change the job and settle with a less satisfying job to make a balance between home and work life.

The also has to make many compromises at the workplace to survive in the job market. As compared to men, women tend to speak more formally and politely and use less profanity (Henley, 1977); this refers to *affiliative speech* which is typical of women as against *assertive speech* which is mostly adopted by men (Tannen, 1994). Women are also expected to be modest in nonverbal or symbolic communication. They tend to nod and smile more than men do, and their voices tend to be rated higher in warmth than men (Johnson, 1994). Such expectations make social interaction at the workplace difficult for women as compared to Men.

As against women, men tend to control and show power in their interaction with others to advance their position. They are overt, do not hesitate to criticize others, and issue directives to get things done. This style of interaction makes men more efficient at work, which in turn helps them to make career advancement and earn more than women. Gender stereotype also exists in the workplace, which prevents women from being as overt as men; this is the reason that only a few women reach the higher echelons at the workplace. Even at the entry-level, negotiating a salary offer or job conditions requires an assertive communication style. Women's more significant affiliative tendencies work to their disadvantage; they start their career with a low salary as compared to men (Babcock & Laschever, 2003).

Men have a greater tendency to hold on to traditional views about women. They show embarrassment with women who do not fit in the traditional feminine role. Women who conform to gendered stereotypes tend to be liked by others and viewed as sociable, but they are not necessarily viewed as competent (Lindsey & Zakahi, 2006). The interaction style that is viewed as a sign of strength, dynamism and buoyancy in man is viewed as unsocial for women. So women have to face stiff resistance and discomfort either way.

On the one hand, a woman whose communication style is not affiliative is seen as violating gendered expectations (Carli et al., 1995). On the other hand, if a woman adopts a traditional and feminine mode of interaction, then she is viewed by others as lacking competency. Overall, women have low job satisfaction as compared to men.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

This paper is based on the data collected from 452 young people in the age group 18 years to 29 years in a residential colony in Delhi. The survey was conducted from February 2012 to May 2012. The survey was primarily helpful to collect data from a large number of young people in a small period. A list of all the young people who were working in the residential colony was prepared. After that, 500 respondents were selected through simple random sampling for administering the interview schedule. However, only 452 respondents could be successfully interviewed. They were asked questions on various aspects of the transition to work and work

satisfaction. Their responses were used to test the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Experience of work-life balance varies significantly with gender.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Income earned by Men and women differ significantly.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Social interaction at the workplace varies significantly according to gender.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Job change varies significantly with gender.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Reasons for leaving previous varies significantly with gender.
- H<sub>6</sub>: Work satisfaction varies significantly according to gender.

The variables used in this study have been defined below.

1. Gender: This is a dichotomous categorical variable: Woman and man.
2. Job change: This is a categorical variable which has three categories: continuing with the first job, changed one job and changed more than one job.
3. Job satisfaction: To capture job satisfaction four statements were given to the respondents: I enjoy autonomy and independence at the workplace; There is secure and accessible communication between management and employee; Management recognizes employee's performance; In general, I am satisfied with my job. Respondents were asked to give their response on the scale varying from 1 (very less extent) to 4 (very great extent). The score obtained by adding these four responses measures job satisfaction. More the score more the job satisfaction.
4. Work-life balance: This is again a dichotomous categorical variable (yes, no) which tells whether work-life balance is a challenge or not.
5. Income: This is the monthly earnings of young people in Rupees.
6. Social interaction at the workplace: The respondents were asked to answer three questions regarding difficulty they face in social interaction at the workplace: To which extent do you face difficulty in interaction with coworkers? To which extent do you face difficulty in interaction with subordinates? To which extent do you face difficulty in interaction with superordinates? Options for these questions were coded 1 (very less extent) to 4 (very great extent). The total of these three questions gives the score for social interaction at the workplace. More the score more the difficulty in social interaction at the workplace.
7. Reasons for leaving the previous job: This variable captures the reasons for leaving the previous job.

SPSS version 22 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used for key variables used in this study. Tables have been described in terms of the per cent distribution for categorical variables and mean and standard deviation for scale level data. Further, for categorical variables,

Chi-square tests and for scale level variable t-test have been used to test the significance of hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>8</sub>).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Chi-square tests and t-tests were performed to test the six hypotheses mentioned above. Table 1 summarizes the results. The table indicates that more proportion of women (84.1 per cent) experience that work-life balance is a challenge than Men (25.8 per cent). A chi-square test was performed to find if the experience of work-life challenge varies according to gender. The test reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between women and Men about the experience of work-life balance:  $\chi^2(1, n = 452) = 140.26, p = 0.000$ . So the data supports the first hypothesis.

It can be noted that the average income of women in rupees is 16573.25 (SD=8761.95) and that of Men is 22067.80 (SD=11386.63). To test the significance of the difference in earning between women and Men, a t-test was performed. The result shows that there is a significant difference between men and women as far as income is concerned  $t(450) = -5.27, p = 0.000$ . So the second hypothesis is also supported by the data.

Further, the score of social interaction at the workplace for women is 9.45 (SD=2.77), and that of Men is 7.74 (SD=2.24). Again t-test was conducted. The result shows that there is a significant difference between men and women as far as social interaction at the workplace is concerned  $t(450) = 7.09, p = 0.000$ . The third hypothesis also stands true.

**Table 1: Characteristics of respondents by gender**

Variable	Women	Men	Degrees of freedom	Significant test
All subjects (n = 452)	34.7%	65.3%		
Work-life balance is a challenge			1	$\chi^2=140.26^{**}$
No	15.9%	74.2%		
Yes	84.1%	25.8%		
Income	16573.25 (SD=8761.95)	22067.80 (SD=11386.63)	450	$t = -5.27^{**}$
Social interaction at the workplace	9.45 (SD=2.77)	7.44 (SD=2.24)	450	$t = 7.09^{**}$
Job change			2	$\chi^2=12.86^{**}$
Continuing with the first job	24.2%	14.9%		
Changed one job	42.7%	35.3%		
Changed more than one job	33.1%	49.8%		
Reasons for changing job			4	$\chi^2=125.75^{**}$

Low income	38.2%	33.9%		
Poor working conditions	7.0%	28.2%		
No career advancement	4.5%	22.4%		
Balancing work and family life	26.1%	0.0%		
Continuing with the first job	24.2%	14.9%		
Job satisfaction	11.06 (SD=3.76)	12.19 (SD=3.36)	450	t = -3.25**

Source: Field survey; \*\* Significant at 0.01 level; SD = Standard deviation

The table further indicates that there is a significant difference in job change according to gender. Both women and men tend to change jobs frequently. However, men change jobs more often than women, and this comes out to be significant according to the chi-square test:  $\chi^2 (2, n = 452) = 12.86, p = 0.000$ . So the fourth hypothesis is also confirmed.

The table also makes it clear that even the reasons to leave previous job changes significantly according to gender. A chi-square test reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between women and Men about the reasons for leaving jobs:  $\chi^2 (1, n = 452) = 125.75, p = 0.000$ . The fifth hypothesis also stands confirmed.

It can be noted that the score of job satisfaction of women is 11.06 (SD=3.76) and that of Men is 12.19 (SD=3.36). To test the significance of job satisfaction between women and men, a t-test was performed. The result of shows that there is a significant difference between men and women as far as job satisfaction is concerned  $t (450) = -3.25, p = 0.000$ . The sixth hypothesis is also confirmed.

Many studies also describe that women face more difficulty in social interaction at their workplace than men because of various reasons. Women generally use such an approach to social interaction that helps them to stay inclusive at the workplace. For this, they express support and conformity, especially with their coworkers and superordinates.

Young men and women change jobs for different reasons. The data clearly shows that 26.1 per cent of young women respond by leaving the job because they fail to make a balance between work and family life. However, no young men leave the job because of this reason. It can further be noticed that more men change their job because of poor working condition and because there is no scope for career advancement. However, women continue to work even in poor working condition and with no career advancement as long as they can make a balance between work and family life. Most of the women are not satisfied even after changing their job. Although many women also change job because of low income but a job change does not necessarily increase their income level. However, in the case of men job change enhances their income or improves the prospects of career advancement. Unlike Wajcman (1991), the empirical data support new

technologies have failed to change the traditional sexual division of labour. There is little hope that segregated conjugal role will give way to the joint conjugal role. Working women still bear the burden of running home. Men workers expect women to be submissive, polite and soft-spoken. This expectation may be a big hindrance in smooth social interaction at the workplace. Traditional social practices which are nurtured at home are also reproduced at the workplace resulting in inequality between men and women.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Although more and more women are also entering the working world, they are facing more difficulty. Making work-life balance and social interaction at the workplace are two significant challenges for working women. Working does not relieve women of the household chores. To make a balance between work and family life women respond by leaving their job or by joining another less paid job. Social interaction at the workplace is again a challenge for women. A stereotype view operates in the workplace, making the women difficult to interact freely with their coworker, subordinate and superordinates. Limited and restricted social interaction also adversely affects women's negotiating power and career advancement. Most women succumb to the challenges and end up with lower salaries, slower career advancement and low job satisfaction.

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