

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities: A Modern Woman's Journey- A Review

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Abstract

In the present world, women play a catalytic role in community and nation building and thus considered as the backbone of society. Throughout ancient, medieval times, the central role of women in society has gained progress, balance and development nation-wide. Women in the 21st century are towards breaking barriers and seizing opportunities which will bring a drastic change in near future.

Despite of significant progress made in the subject of gender equality, there still exist big question tags in terms of violence, safety and security, wage disparities, biasness in leadership role, economic security, etc. Still, an empowered or self independent woman is not able to participate in the process of decision-making. Due to these challenges, women are not able to contribute fully to the society.

However, in current scenario, there exist a transformative opportunities for women. Several skill enhancing programs are being introduced to foster economic independence and empowerment. Women nowadays play a dual character because of different roles and responsibilities at home and workplace. Through various opportunities for women would mean equipping women to be self-independent in terms of finances, esteem and social identity.

The dual dynamic of emerging opportunities and with that ongoing challenges indicate the immediate need of argument and development of new laws and policies. There required a replacement of patriarchy with parity as the first step to bridge the gap of gender inequality. This grim situation should start from grass root level so that status of women can be uplifted in the society.

Keywords: Society, gender, women, safety, development, opportunities

Introduction

In the current world, technology and development is at its peak. However, women into the fabric of modernization, there are intricate threads of challenges that women continue to face and suffer.

A modern woman can be defined as women of contemporary times who do not let so-called gendered expectations framed by the society hold them back from their goals and desires. She is associated with education, enlightenment and has social consciousness.

In the historical context, in most of the cultures, women were typically tasked with roles centered on the household, emphasizing care giving and domestic duties. Have you seen your mothers working selflessly and non-stop 24 hours but the main point is they are still recognized as housewives only. The role of a homemaker is just as crucial as that of a family member who brings in a tangible income. If each task completed by a homemaker is carefully calculated, it is clear that their contribution is extremely valuable and of great significance.

Women in the 19th and 20th centuries advocated for suffrage, aiming to gain the right to vote and engage in public activities, ultimately resulting in increased acknowledgement of their rights.

On the other hand, there are still ongoing challenges as the work-life balance of women is hampered by a number of factors, including the conflict between work and time, stress, problems with travelling, people's attitudes towards their jobs, too many obligations at home and at work, a lack of coordination between the two, expectations from family members, etc. The acknowledgement of the significant contribution of women to development in the third world has not always been implemented in actual planning.

Now women are attempting to come free of the strain of housework and give way to their imagination, creativity, and business. The role of women in a changing society in India has also been shaped by social and political evolutions. The government policies, initiatives have provided measures and supported women entrepreneurs. Women are becoming more interested in becoming entrepreneurs these days.

This article explores the key challenges and opportunities for women today, highlighting the ongoing struggle for equality and the potential for transformative change.

Review of Literature

- **Bandekar & Krishna (2014)** The study concentrated on problems pertaining to women's lives and work-life balance trends. The survey discovered that the problems in women's lives were lack of education, financial limitations, family career, and competition in the current environment realized that a happy life requires hard work from both the husband and the wife.
- **Singal & Parvesh (2015)** This study focuses on how working women cope with work and family life in vocational schools and the stress levels of working women in the workplace. Data collected through questionnaires and distributed to each teacher, belonging to different disciplines. The research discovered that women educators experience typical stress when balancing their work and personal lives.
- **Sambit Parida (2016)** the research centers on the advantages and requirements of maintaining a balance between work and personal life. It involves collection of information from numerous secondary data. The research discovered that government agencies have offered limited policies regarding work-life balance for workers across various industries. On the other hand, private sector companies have introduced new policies to enhance the benefits for their employees.
- **Bhandari et al., (2010)** It is anticipated that the possible role of political parties in promoting the active involvement of women in making decisions will be fully utilized considering that simply reserving seats for women will not be successful unless the political environment is supportive of their development. This will be the only element that will assist in eliminating the divide between gender equality and gender prejudice within the Indian legislative bodies.
- **Mohanty Bedabati (2005)** Dowry abuse is more common among younger women, but its occurrence decreases as women age. The reasons for this decrease include parents meeting their in-laws' demands, developing a good relationship between the victim and the spouse, changes in the family dynamic due to having children, and the general acceptance of abuse as a normal part of life, along with the reluctance to report the abuse. Dowry abuse is not limited to any specific social group; it affects all social classes. It has also expanded to include scheduled castes and tribes, in addition to higher castes. Educating girls is a key factor in preventing and reducing dowry abuse, with higher levels of education leading to lower rates of abuse. However, the negative relationship

between education and dowry abuse is less noticeable in more developed regions compared to less developed areas.

- **Narasimhan Sakuntala (1999)** Women have not equally benefited from societal progress, and moreover, the improvements they have seen have not tackled the root of their socio-cultural disadvantages. Despite widespread discussions on the importance of empowering women, there have been no concrete, effective, or lasting solutions that could lead to a society founded on gender equality. Efforts to empower women should go beyond just economic changes, to also address and change the social dynamics that limit and oppress women. Women in rural Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities, a part of the rural poor, face not just financial challenges and lack of skills, but also a deeper need for self-confidence and drive. Economic development projects have not elevated their status within their families or communities, as they do not view themselves as active participants and citizens, despite their poverty and illiteracy, yet they still possess basic rights to fair treatment, justice, respect, an equitable share in development outcomes, and most importantly, access to information about their rights and the options they have to make choices and take decisions by themselves.

Globally, the gender gap in labor force participation has hovered at 30% since 1990, with men's participation at around 80% and women's at 50%.

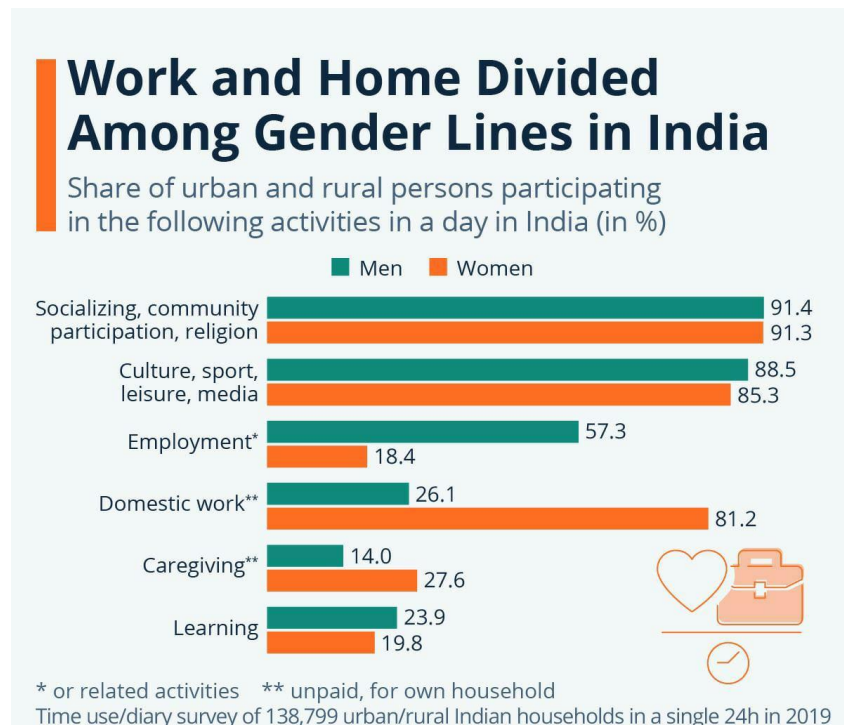
Labor force participation rates for women aged 25-54 in 2022 was **61.4%** compared to **90.6%** for men.

Major challenges faced by women in contemporary times:

1. **Sexual abuse and harassment:** The latest government report on crime in the nation states that 31,677 cases of rape—86 cases every day on average—were registered in India in 2021, while roughly 49 incidents of violence against women were reported every hour. Numerous women report being abused by family members or other relatives.
2. **Inequality in access to Education:** Women's education level still lags behind that of men even in the present era. Illiteracy among women is a significant issue that too more elevated in the countryside, where more than 63% of women are illiterate.
3. **Inadequate nutrition and imbalanced diet:** While efforts are being made by several parties to narrow the gender disparity in nutrition, females continue to bear the brunt of inadequate nutrition. Indeed, women and girls make up 60 percent of the 820 million individuals suffering from chronic malnutrition. The discrepancy exists due to the intricate connection between nutrition and gender.
4. **Low position and status:** From corporate boardrooms to courts and political leadership globally, the absence of women in top positions hinders advancements on topics like pay, humanitarian aid, and various types of discrimination.
5. **Effect of patriarchy:**
 - Economic Disparities:** Women often earn less than men for the same work, limiting financial independence and career growth. This wage gap can affect their long-term financial stability.
 - Career Limitations:** Women may face barriers to advancement in the workplace, including lack of mentorship, biased promotion practices, and stereotypes about their capabilities.
6. **Domestic violence:** "29.3 per cent of married Indian women between the ages of 18 and 49 have experienced domestic/sexual violence while 3.1 per cent of pregnant women aged 18 to 49 have suffered physical violence during their pregnancy," according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2019–2021 report.

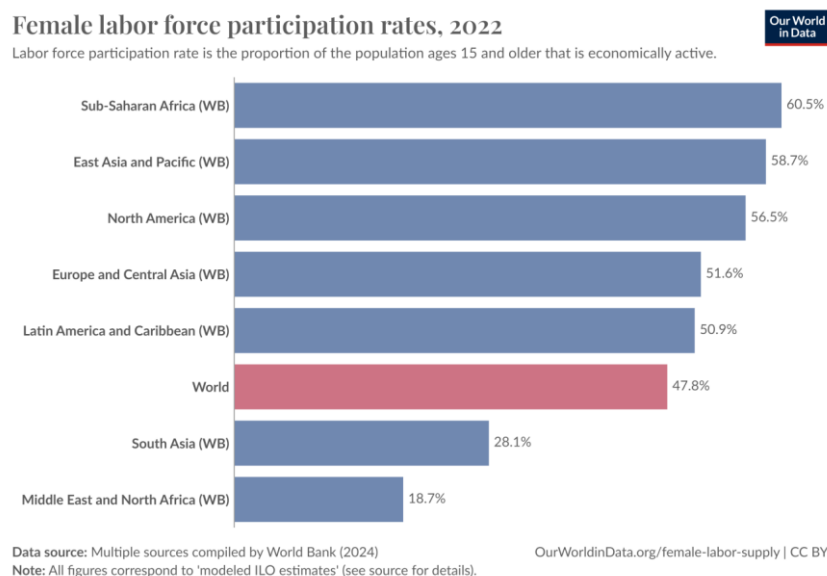
That is merely the number of incidences that women have come out with; many more often go unreported. Based on NFHS findings, 87 percent of married women experiencing marital violence choose not to seek assistance.

7. **Distinction with widows and single mothers:** India has the highest number of widows in the world. The impact of being a widow in India differs based on social standing, customs, religion, tradition, and time periods. Nonetheless, they are still bound by traditional customs, entrenched patriarchal practices, religious laws, and widespread bias in terms of inheritance rights. Consequently, numerous families from various communities in India continue to reject and ostracize widows.



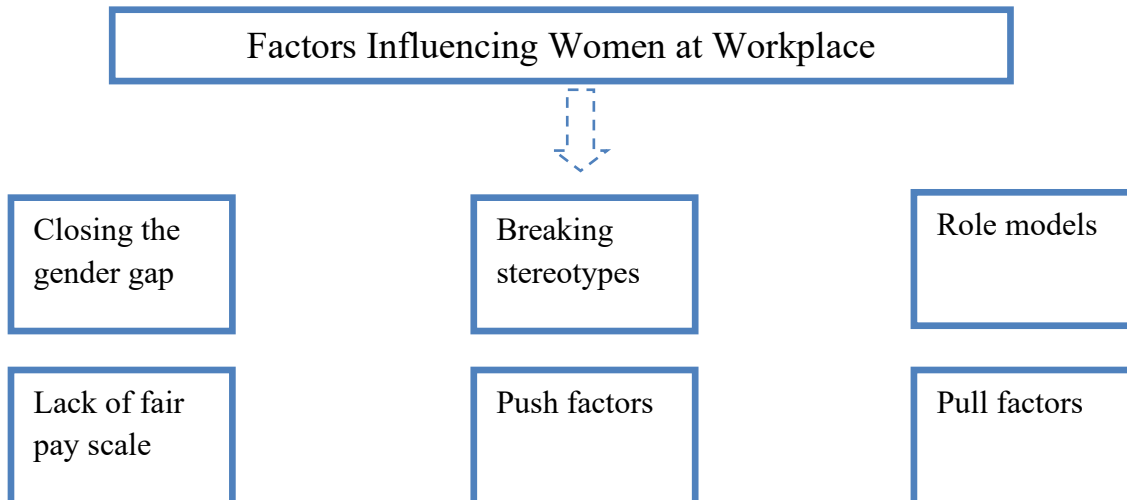
Source: Indian Ministry of Statistic

Women's participation in labor markets differs across regions and countries:



Data Source: Multiple sources compiled by World Bank (2024)

Factors Influencing Women Life at Workplace:



- **Closing the gender gap**

There are many fields in which women are seen as promising newcomers, a phenomenon that is often accentuated in other areas. There are no more roles that society has defined for women. This movement is for women in society to face challenges, problems, and stand firm against evil. Now, the gap is closing and it is not surprising that women will lead the businesses of the future, however, women still have to fight for the same opportunities as men, and however, as women are more likely to succeed, the competition to win is now much fiercer.

- **Breaking stereotype**

Until very recently, women's development and success were hindered not only by comparison with men but also by numerous stereotypes that confined them to their homes or lesser roles. Nevertheless, women courageously challenged these stereotypes, shattered the glass ceiling, and soared to success with remarkable bravery. Society had restricted women to very few professions by imposing various roles, but now, with the opportunity to defy these stereotypes, women have reconsidered their roles and no longer feel obligated to adhere to societal expectations regarding their occupations.

- **Role models**

Role models play a crucial role in shaping aspirations, confidence, and pathways for women, helping them envision and achieve their best selves.

- **Lack of fair pay and promotion**

Conventional workplace biases usually support masculine characteristics and actions, frequently leading women to be deterred from advocating for themselves or seeking advancement and equal pay.

There is a gender promotion gap issue in the corporate sector of India. A study of over 600 companies in more than 40 sectors found that only one out of every nine female employees was promoted in 2023, compared to one out of every six men.

- **Push factors**

These are negative aspects of society that drive women towards work life, such as limited opportunities for traditional employment, pressure from society and being told to put marriage and children first before their dreams.

- **Pull factors**

Factors that attract women to the workplace include various opportunities and supportive environments that improve their professional journeys. Parental leave and anti-discrimination measures, as well as mentorship and networking opportunities, form a strong system that motivates women to advance in their careers.

Opportunities to grab:

1. Advancement in Education

Enhancing Educational Opportunities: Empowering women by expanding access to education and vocational training equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to explore various career opportunities.

STEM Fields: Efforts to inspire women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are opening up fresh possibilities for creativity and influence.

2. Entrepreneurship and Economic empowerment

More and more women are starting and running businesses, playing a crucial role in boosting the economy and creating jobs. Improved access to financial services and investment prospects is enabling women to attain economic independence and command over their financial futures.

3. Political representation

Rising Involvement: More women are taking on political roles and holding positions of leadership, indicating progress in political representation. This change is vital for supporting policies that tackle issues specific to gender.

Campaigning and Activism: Female advocacy organizations and movements are leading societal transformation and advocating for gender parity in different fields.

4. Innovations in technology

Online Platforms: Technology offers women new opportunities to connect, educate, and stand up for their rights. Social media and online communities provide opportunities for women to come together and increase the volume of their voices.

Telecommuting: The increase in telecommuting options can provide women with increased flexibility, enabling them to better manage both their work and personal commitments.

5. International Efforts and Assistance

Global Agreements: International agreements and frameworks, like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlight gender equality and foster a conducive atmosphere for the progress of women. Several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international organizations prioritize women's concerns by offering resources, assistance, and advocacy to advance gender equality.

Ways to achieve personal growth as a woman:

First of all, remove what no longer serves you. Personal growth for a woman often requires a shift in mindset. These can be simplified in 5 steps

1. **Acknowledge that you are capable enough:** This is a process of transformation, although it does not happen instantly. Recognizing that your core identity is valuable and legitimate is extremely crucial.

2. **Go for doing minimal for others:** Deciding to quit can completely change the situation. Understanding that you can prioritize only what is important to you enables you to take a step back and embrace a more deliberate way of living. This represents genuine self-development.
3. **Sort from what is working for you and what is not:** This can be as easy as taking a clean sheet of paper and creating two columns: what benefits you and what doesn't. You can begin examining your life and career to determine what is energizing you and what is draining you.
4. **Determine your inner strength, knowledge and persuasion:** Draw your wealth of knowledge from diverse sources and persuade others with your positive actions and effective communication.
5. **Challenge and complete a specific target:** set clear and achievable goals, breaking them into smaller tasks. Create a detailed action plan and regularly track your progress. Stay motivated by celebrating small wins and remaining adaptable to any setbacks.

Conclusion

From the numerous study papers and articles, several issues encountered by female in present times were examined. These include striking a balance between work and family, living in a society dominated by men, overcoming socio-cultural barriers, being illiterate, lacking in marketing and entrepreneurial abilities, not having access to capital, losing technical expertise, lacking confidence, and having movement restrictions.

While women maneuver through the modern world, it is crucial to confront persistent obstacles and take advantage of new possibilities. It is essential for governments, businesses, communities, and individuals to work together in order to build a supportive environment for women to succeed.

Efforts to reduce the gender pay gap, address violence, and improve healthcare need to be continued and increased. Simultaneously, promoting the education, entrepreneurship, and political engagement of women can result in increased empowerment and advancement in society.

In the end, there is the potential for a fairer world in the future, where the full worth of women's contributions is acknowledged and appreciated. By confronting obstacles and advantages with dedication and creativity, society can progress towards increased gender equality and inclusiveness.

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