

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY URBAN WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA

A Dissertation

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This is to certify that the project thesis entitled **Problems and Challenges Faced by Urban Working Women in India** being submitted by Varsha Kumari for the award of the degree of MA in Development Studies in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Rourkela, is a record of bona-fide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. Her research work at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences from National Institute of Technology, Rourkela has reached the standard fulfilling the requirements and the regulations relating to the degree. The contents of this thesis, in full or part, have not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree.

Prof. Seemita Mohanty

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to understand the problems and issues faced by urban working women in India. The objectives also included identifying the key socio-economic attributes contributing to women's status, safety and security, and to study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for improving of family, community and society. The study was confined to the urban working women in white collared jobs in the city of Rourkela, India. A mixed methods approach involving face to face interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire technique including both close-ended and open-ended questions was chosen for effective elicitation of data from the respondents. Methods triangulation was adapted for establishing validity and reliability of the study. The study was based on primary data collected from Rourkela city to find out the possible solutions for working women which could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.

The results of the study showed that different age group of working women have different kinds of problems and challenges and different categories as married, single, divorcee, single parent, separated, have different issues at stake in the workplace. Some problems are definitely common, like mental and physical stress, lack of proper balance between employment and family care, unfair treatment in the workplace, stressful life and work place discrimination etc. But some challenges are age or category specific, like prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, ego hassles with colleagues, and problem of glass ceiling etc. Some probable solutions for problems plaguing urban working women that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace are proper safety and security measures by the parent organizations, sensitive and supporting partners at home, effective child care policies and appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms for women in place at the workplace.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the history of human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact higher status for women vis-à-vis employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. Undoubtedly, without the active participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will deteriorate and become stagnant. But ironically and tragically, women employees in general, are not taken very seriously by their superiors, colleagues, or society at large. Having a career poses challenges for women due to their family responsibilities. Traditionally Indian women had been home makers but in the recent decades, proper education and better awareness, in addition to the ever increasing cost of living has made them to go out and choose careers. In a patriarchal society like India it is still believed that a man is the primary bread winner of his family. Although Indian women have started working outside their homes but still they have a long way to go both culturally, socially and economically, to bring in positive attitudinal changes in the mind-set of people.

It is generally perceived that gender bias against working women starts right from the stage of recruitment. Most of the Indian men are not ready to accept that women are capable enough to work side by side with men in all the sectors, other than in a few limited ones like teaching, nursing and in clerical sectors. Their capabilities are generally underestimated as a result of which Indian women have a tendency to opt for less demanding jobs even if they are highly qualified. Women have the responsibilities to effectively manage their multiple roles in

domestic as well as professional lives. Men generally do not offer any help in the households work. This makes the life of working women extremely stressful.

1.1 Background Information

While a majority of the women still face discrimination and gender bias, in the last few decades, the number of women successful in politics, technology and business etc. is definitely on the rise. Society has started seeing women in a different perspective. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, secretaries, managers and officers etc. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. For centuries women have been subjected to exploitation and torture, physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenge and problems faced by them both at home and workplace. What we generally see today, in addition to various media and journal reports is that in the workplace women generally face mental stress, sexual harassment, discriminatory practices, safety and security issues etc (Martin, 1989). India's patriarchal society thinks of women only as homemakers and sexual objects and is generally subjected to exploitation and torture (Dube, 2001).

Women in the Workplace:

Women in the workforce earning wages or a salary are part of a modern phenomenon, one that developed at the same time as the growth of paid employment for men; yet women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce (N. Andal 2002). A woman is a social animal. To keep her in captivity, without access to work or finance or interaction with the outside world, is less than fair (Eisenhover, 2002).Economic, social and political empowerment of women is essential for the development of any society. Working women are essential for the development of the society, so empowerment of women is important to the process of upliftment of economic,

social, political status of women. Traditionally women have been the under-privileged ones in the society, not enjoying the same rights or standards of living as the other half of the population. According to Robin (2002) “Sexism is the root oppression, the one which, until and unless we uproot it, will continue to put forth the branches of racism, class, hatred, ageism, competition, ecological disaster and economic exploitation. No other human differentiations can be similarly powerful in reproducing oppressions, and so, women are the real left.”

Status of women can be broadly defined as the degree of socio-economic equality and freedom enjoyed by women. Economic, social and cultural factors interplay for reinforcing the gender differences in ownership, control and access to land through inheritance, marriage or informal networks (Arun, 1994). Women’s economic status in the household, depends on three levels of influence, viz., women’s acquired economic and social power, the socio-economic status of their households and the level of support and opportunities in the community (Zhao, 1991). Women’s economic well-being is usually enhanced by women acquiring independent sources of income that begets increased self-esteem and improved conditions of their households and the overall level of development in their communities. The gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the most significant contributor to the gender gap in the economic well-being, social status and empowerment of women (Andal, 2002)

Women have been playing vital roles in households since ages. Now women are also recognized for their value in the workplace and are engaged in wide range of activities of work in addition to their routine domestic work. Building a society where women can breathe freely without fear of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination is the need of the hour, to ensure a better future for the next generation.

1.2. Rationale and Significance of the Study

Educated urban women are presumed to be more aware of the opportunities and challenges of the workplace or educated urban women can better understand their roles and limitations in the workplaces and are perceived to be bold enough to develop their own personalities, with or without encouragement from their families. An assessment of the problems and issues plaguing urban working women is therefore a necessity for better understanding of workplace dynamics related to women.

During earlier days there were some man-made boundaries for women but now women play vital roles in different sectors. Women today are breaking that boundary and are playing the dual role of balancing domestic life as well as professional life, giving a boost to their societal status in the process. The major problems for working women arise out of the dual responsibilities of the working woman - domestic work as well as office work. Though more and more women are coming out in search of paid employment and their families also need their income, the attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior, and second-class citizens. Even today, looking after the family and children is generally perceived to be the primary responsibility of the man.

It is possible to accept that as more and more women have entered the workforce, there is no longer a solid family-support at home (Schwartz, 1992). "Women have increased their participation in paid employment considerably during the past 30 years, but men have not increased their participation in housework to the same extent" (Evertsson and Neramo, 2004). Women still perform majority of the care giving role and juggling of work in the family. Gender is seen as a significant determinant of negative job spill-over because employed women are expected to carry out the responsibility for family services and still be able to smoothly handle

their work roles (Delgado and Canabal, 2006). Although husbands have taken on more domestic work than they did in earlier generations, this gain for women has been offset by “escalating pressures for intensive parenting and the increasing time demands of most high-level careers” (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Added to this is the phenomenon of guilt experienced by women containing a general feeling of responsibility especially towards their own children. It gives rise to a sense of failure of responsibility that arises when they lack control over the demands made on them from different spheres of life.

It is a fact that women have to face problems just by virtue of their being women. And if they are working the problems are multiplied manifold. Working women are those who are in paid employment. Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. This attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not for other jobs influences those who are involved in the recruitment of female employees.

Historically, women have suffered oppression and domination by the patriarchal society in India and have faced many problems and challenges. Women were taught to accept their position through the socialization process and also that all rules and regulation made only for women they were bound to follow including their ‘initiation rites.’ They are taught to be obedient wives and sisters and also to respect their elders; manners are taught to them, like how to walk, talk, sit, and work at home and many others. They are neither considered as individuals with a personality of their own, nor do they have any personal life. They are told that a man could marry more than one woman and they accept it silently, blaming it on their own fate. The inferior positions of women in the traditional Indian society have been reinforced by a number of traditional practices such as polygamy, early marriage, and illiteracy and by years of subjugation. Many of these practices are still found today in some places in the country.

Participation of women in prominent decision-making positions is limited by severe cultural and social constraints because men think that women are not capable enough to take a good decision. Women face challenges all over the world and sometimes these challenges are context specific. The literature on the challenges and problems women face at the workplace is not only limited to women in the unorganized sectors, but also in formal organizations too, as women continue trying to contribute to their quality of life and that of their families and thereby to the economies of various countries through work.

Unemployment and temporary work are more common among women than among men. Most women workers do not have any social security or access to health care benefits. As a result, the work-related illnesses, like mental pressure and other health problems, remain hidden. As per available research, a large number of women workers complain of frequent headaches, back pain, circulatory disorders, fatigue, and emotional and mental disorders resulting from performing various activities at the workplace.

Women working in some industries, factories, banks, hospitals etc. complain that they do not get time to look after and give care to their babies. The efficiency of a working woman is always suspected and questioned by most people, especially their male counterparts. In the upper class cadres, it is generally seen that all qualifications remaining similar, men are usually preferred. Authorities are doubtful whether women would be able to handle male subordinates, take independent decisions, cope with crisis and manage their duties properly (Andal, 2002). Even though women prove they are efficient, authorities think twice before promoting them and even if women are given the chance, there is always a remark that they were given the position because they were women. Sexual harassment is another serious problem faced by working women. Whether in the organized or unorganized sector, whether illiterate, low paid workers or

highly educated and highly paid executives, a large number of working women face sexual harassment at the workplace at one time or another. This is mostly from other male employees or their superiors. Women tend to hold lower-level positions than men even when they have sufficient skills to perform higher-level jobs.

The present study therefore aims at finding out if women face challenges in the workplaces which pose problems for them, and what are those particular challenges that women face working in the various sectors and what credible solutions and coping mechanisms can be offered to help them lessen such problems, so that women can understand their own value and ability to face problems in different ways. The study also aims at finding the problems of different age group working women and different categories of women like single, married, separate/divorcee, widow etc. Understanding the problems in a clear way would assist us in finding adequate answers in reducing the problems.

1.3. Research Problems

The study evinces the following research problems for the study at hand related to problems and challenges faced by working women in the workplace:

1. Balancing between paid employment and family care.
2. Work related stress problems faced by working women.
3. Victims of physical harassment and unfair treatment in the workplace.
4. Tolerance of abuse, violence, harassment and discrimination.
5. Sexual harassment, mental pressure and safety problems.

6. Prejudiced and stereotyped thinking faced by working women.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study attempts to address the following key research objectives:

1. To gain knowledge about the problems and challenges faced by urban working women in the workplace.
2. To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to women's status, safety and security.
3. To study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for upliftment of family, community and society that can lead to their overall development.
4. To find out possible solutions that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.

1.5. Implication of the Study

The study would help us in understanding the present status of women in our society what kind of problems they are going through

1. To find out possible solutions for problems and issues faced by working women.
2. To find out the gaps between the problems faced and probable solutions to the problems faced by working women.
3. The study can yield results that can help us in better understanding the problems and challenges faced by working women.

4. Some solutions can be offered for betterment of working women in the work place.
5. To create awareness among the society about the equal importance of men and women.
6. To improve the existing status and security of the women.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

All scientific inquiries are subjected to few limitations, although these may differ with respect to the magnitude of limitations. The findings of the present study are subject to the following limitations:

1. The study area was confined to one small township. Thus the results of the study are applicable only to similar kind of situation analysis.
2. The study pertains to a certain time period. The result may not be valid for over a longer period of time due to fast changing socio-economic and socio-cultural setting in this study area.
3. Because of limitation of time and other resources involved in research, the present study was restricted to a limited number of samples. The result drawn from this study, therefore may have limited application i.e., it cannot be assumed to provide information, capable of generalization over other regions and could have regional biasness, but surely the broad similarities specific to a particular gender, will provide some insight to the study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The literature review shows that more focus is on married working women than on unmarried working women (Karl, 2009). It is also seen that focus is more on organized sector rather than unorganized sector of working women (Shalz, 2011). Eggins (1997) advocates for more facilities to women in the workplace, suggesting that "...it is an important part of developmental strategy as well as an act of social justice" The World Bank (1991) estimates that Indian Women make up one-third of the labor force. Singhal (1995) is of the opinion that, "Participation of women in workforce is essential for economic development and population planning."

Somjee (1989) has some very strong critical comments. She has said that "in the history of women's studies, which is not very long, a variety of approaches have been adopted in order to understand women's problems and find solutions to them. such approaches range from how women are perceived in various cultures and historical settings, given their biological functions and what nature 'intended' them to do, to their decline in power and status vis-à-vis men in the complex social evolution, to a widely shared emphasis on the need to make women equal through the economic on the need to make women equal through the economic and legal route which treats them as individuals rather than those having the sole responsibility for looking after the family."

Mitra (1997) analyses the causes and comes to some important conclusions: "Relationship between women and professions could be perceived as one of women in full-fledged professions, medicine, law, academics, etc and another in the semi-professions-like nursing, teaching, clerks etc."

Okolo (1989) studied that another obstacle is the lack of role models of executive women due to their scarce presence in top managerial positions. Likewise, this study found out that there

is no gender difference in organizational hierarchies when a woman has already gained access to them. “The lack of impact in women can occur because executive and managerial women have developed survival features becoming immune to the effects of men’s hierarchies. A hierarchy composed by men solely may have an effect upon the election of a managerial board, and then its further influence is not very strong.”

Ronald J. Burke, Mustafa Koyuncu and Lisa Fiksenbaum (2010) examined the relationship of the perceived presence of organizational practices designed to support women’s career advancement and their work attitudes and satisfaction and their psychological well-being. Data were collected from 286 women in managerial and professional jobs working in a large Turkish bank, a 72 percent response rate. Five organizational experiences were considered: negative attitudes towards women, equal treatment, support, career barriers and male standards. Women reporting more supportive organizational experiences and practices were more engaged in their work, more job and career satisfied, and indicated greater levels of psychological well-being.”

Wentling (2003) showed that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant. In her study on working women in Delhi, she has shown that “traditional authoritarian set up of Hindu social structure continues to be the same basically and hence women face problem of role conflict change in attitudes of men and women according to the situation can help to overcome their problem.”

Sophia J. Ali (2011) “investigated the challenges facing women in career development. She found that most of the women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmers and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities. The study recommended that organizations should strive to ensure that career development programmers were set to enhance career development amongst women employees. Top management should also be committed to the career development of women, and organizations should also introduce affirmative action to urgently address career development of women.”

Skinner and Pocock (2008) investigated the relationship between work overload, work schedule control, work hours and their fit with preferences and work-life conflict among full-time employees (N=887). It was found that the “strongest association with work-life conflict was demonstrated by work overload, followed by work schedule control, work hours and work hours fit. Time-based work life policies, procedures and interventions were found necessary, but not sufficient, for addressing work-life conflict. They called for effective management of work overload to support a healthy work-life relationship.”

Ahmad and Aminah (2007) examined the work-family conflict experienced by 239 married female production operators in dual-career families, the social support they received and the coping strategies used to manage the conflict. “The women experienced more work interference with family than family interference with work. The intensity of work interference with family was significantly higher in the earlier life-cycle stage than in the later stage. About two thirds of the women indicated that they intended to leave their job upon having another child, mainly due to the rising cost of child-care services. They received the least social support from their supervisors compared to other sources, and tended to cope with conflict using reactive role behavior and personal role redefinition strategies.”

Gunavathy and Suganya (2007) in their study among married women employees of BPO companies traced the causes, consequences of work-life imbalance and interventions for work-life balance. More than two-third of the respondents stated the experienced work-life imbalance primarily on account of work interference with personal life. The causes for work-life imbalance were classified as organizational and personal factors. The organizational factors included work-related factors, time-related factors and relationship-related factors. The personal factors included lack of family support, marital conflicts and frequent change in sleeping patterns. According to the study, “the three main consequences of work-life imbalance were stress and burnout, ill-health and poor work performance. The respondents also experienced guilt of not being able to spend time with family, anxiety about poor performance, displacement of negative emotions on family members and on co-workers.”

Ming (2007) “examined the relationship of self-efficacy, work family conflict, social support, gender role attitude, role model and career aspiration to top management among women in middle management at the manufacturing line. This study intended to determine the contribution of each factor to career aspiration. Data were collected from 109 married women in middle management at eight private manufacturing companies located in Bangi and Nilai. This study found that self-efficacy, social support, gender role attitude and role model were significantly related to career aspiration ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, self-efficacy and gender role attitude were the most significant antecedents of career aspiration among women in middle management in manufacturing line.”

Mathur-Helm (2006) “examined the reality of the glass-ceiling phenomenon in South Africa’s four major retail banks. The study investigated women’s low numbers in their top management jobs. A total of 40 women managers were interviewed for their in-depth responses, which were content analyzed. The paper provided clarity for organizational leaders to identify growth barriers existing in their organizations, leading their women workforce towards a glass ceiling. The results indicated that the glass ceiling considered a myth by many was real and are nurtured by the organizational culture, policies and strategies besides women’s own inadequacies. The study concluded that only the most decentralized organizations, characterized by a culture that supports women’s top positions, will help in breaking down the glass ceiling, along with women’s own efforts to grow, develop and empower themselves through academic and career development.”

D. Jamali, et al. (2006), “made a study to explore the salience of glass ceiling type barriers in the Lebanese banking sector, based on the perceptions of a sample of Lebanese top and middle level women managers. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 61 top and middle level women managers, drawn from the context of 12 different banks in the Lebanese context. They found that the common precepts of the glass ceiling theory were not supported in the context of Lebanese banks with overall positive inferences and perceptions reported by Lebanese women managers in relation to their work environment and daily work experiences. These findings were explained by the progressive evolution of the Lebanese banking sector over the past few decades.”

Lilly and Duffy (2006) wrote “work-family conflict occurs for men and women in the sense that anyone with a job and family may need to cope simultaneously with the demands of both”. Job spill over, in the case of work and family, refers to the impact that work roles could have on that family and vice versa (Delgado and Canabal, 2006). It has been recognized that the long-hour work culture in many organizations does not support appropriate parenting (Wood and Newton, 2006). Long hour work includes working in the banking sector of every economy. After even the long hour daily for five days, Saturdays are now included.

Women can either act as so-called superwomen in order to cope with these competing demands or find other ways of handling the overload at work or at home (Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2005). Women, who felt overburdened by all of the pressures they must shoulder, run the risk of burnout and a possible end to their corporate aspirations (Gallagher and Goland, 2000, cited by Easton, 2007). Macdonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge (cited in Easton, 2007), using fresh data on adult Canadian women and men found that women’s greater hours of unpaid work contributed to women experiencing more stress than men. Success in the workplace as super mom in terms of balancing work and family may come at a high cost in the form of stress (MacDonald et al, 2005, cited in Easton, 2007). “This stress, if not handled carefully, could have dire effects on their careers and even their roles and obligations to their families.”

According to Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson, (2001, cited by Easton, 2007) a woman that worked was “exposed to the constant risk of her position as a mother and woman being questioned particularly where she has chosen employment for her own well-being rather than being forced to by external circumstances.” Hakim (cited in Easton, 2007) makes use of ‘preference theory’, a new theory for ‘explaining and predicting women’s choices between market-work and family-work.’ According to Hakim, adaptive women prefer to combine employment and family work and these women are prepared to prioritize their jobs in the same way as men with family life fitted around their work and many of these women remain childless, even when married.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Nature and Scope of the Study

The study is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify the problems and challenges faced by urban women in different professional sectors like public sector enterprises, banks, schools and colleges, hospitals, commercial organizations etc. Further the study also aims also at finding out the organizational supports for women employees so that the women employees are able to give their best to their organization and are able to reach their full potential. The present study surveyed only urban women employees in white collared jobs who have been in their jobs for at least six months. The study was conducted within Rourkela city. Rourkela city is a steel plant city; multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural. This diversity makes it more attractive for this research study. The places covered for the study were the local schools, colleges, banks, hospitals, Public Sector enterprises, Engineering services, Commercial organizations etc. Primary data was collected from 100 working women of the organized sector using a mixed-methods approach that included face to face interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire. Seventy-five responses were found to be complete and valid. The data collection period ranged a one month period from December 2013 to January 2014.

Methods Triangulation:

Methods triangulation was adapted for establishing the validity and reliability of the study:

- Data were collected using face to face interviews and through two focus group discussions.
- The questionnaire consisted of 16 close ended and four open ended: (a few items are given below)
 - Are you facing problems related to family life and professional life?
 - Have you ever faced sexual abuse of any kind in you workplace (yes or no)?
 - Do you suffer from any health complications like mood swings, depression, concentration problems due to problems at workplace (yes, no or can't say)?
 - Do you have any additional comments about your fears, frustration, wants, needs, career, boss, team, workplace, workplace environment etc. please elaborate?

3.2. Data collection process

Both qualitative and quantitative aspects have been taken into consideration for the study. The methodology followed was a questionnaire-based survey among the urban working women of the selected localities, in addition to face to face interviews and FGDs. The questionnaire (Appendix -1) consisted of 20 items on various aspects of the study in addition to the demographic details of the respondents. A pilot study among 30 of different working women of Rourkela town was initially conducted to test the validity of the questionnaire. Subsequently certain items were dropped and certain others were modified for better elicitation of results.

Data were collected using the personal contact approach. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 100 working women located in Rourkela city, out of which 75 valid and complete responses were returned. Each of these 75 women was interacted with and interviewed face to face. Some related questions were asked of them and the comments noted down. In addition to face to face interviews, two focus group discussions were conducted with eight women in each group. These discussions also elicited information and data that have been discussed in the next chapter. Different methods were used for collecting data on the working women.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 close ended and 4 open ended questions to meet the objectives of the study. The items in the questionnaire included urban working women issues related key parameters like sexual and mental harassment, promotion issues, family care issues, discrimination based on gender, workplace discrimination and prejudices, safety and security issues etc. The statements/items for the questionnaire were formed after consulting relevant literature and some preliminary study conducted in the area. Besides the attitude scale, the survey questionnaire also included a section to capture the general profile of respondents. They were asked about their demographic background including age, education level, marital status, occupation, years of experience, nature of organization etc.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussions

The study addresses the following key research objectives:

1. To gain sufficient knowledge about the problems and challenges faced by urban working women in the workplace.
2. To identify the key socio-economic pointers contributing to women's status, safety and security.
3. To study women's involvement in various activities/ organizations for upliftment of family, community and society that can lead to their overall development.
4. To find out possible solutions that could help them to overcome the problems that they face in the workplace.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 close ended and 4 open ended questions to meet the objectives of the study. The items in the questionnaire included urban working women issues related key parameters like sexual and mental harassment, promotion issues, family care issues, discrimination based on gender, workplace discrimination and prejudices, safety and security issues etc.

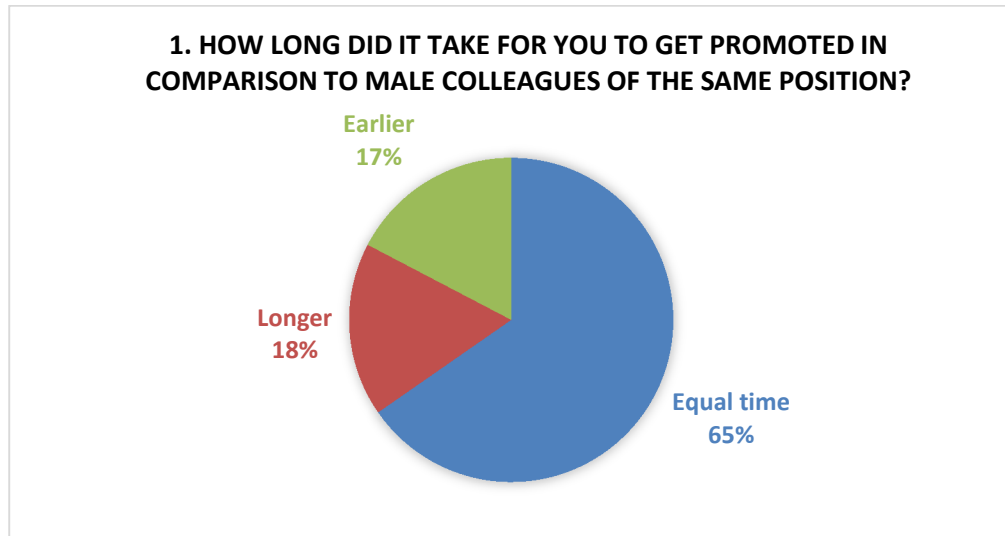
The graphical representation of each of the items is given below:

1. How long did it take for you to get promoted in comparison to male colleagues of the same position?

Table 4.1: Time Taken for Women to get promoted as compared to their male colleagues (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Equal time	49	65
Longer	13	18
Earlier	13	17

Figure 4.1: Percentage distribution of time taken for women employees getting promoted as compare to their male colleagues



Source: Primary data

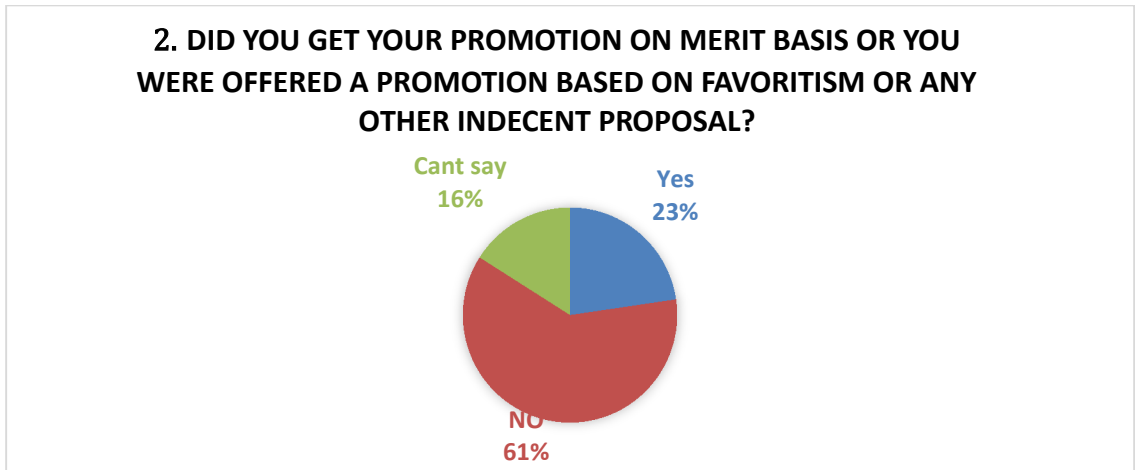
Inference: According to the above information 65% of female employees were promoted at the same time irrespective of their gender, 17% women were promoted earlier than their male colleagues and 18% took longer than their male peers. The above data reflects that gender bias related to promotions do not prevail much in the working atmosphere.

2. Did you get your promotion on merit basis or you were offered a promotion based on favoritism or any other indecent proposal?

Table 4.2: Basis for Women getting promotion on merit (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	17	23
No	46	61
Can't say	12	16

Figure 4.2: Percentage distribution of women getting promotion on merit basis/others



Source: primary data

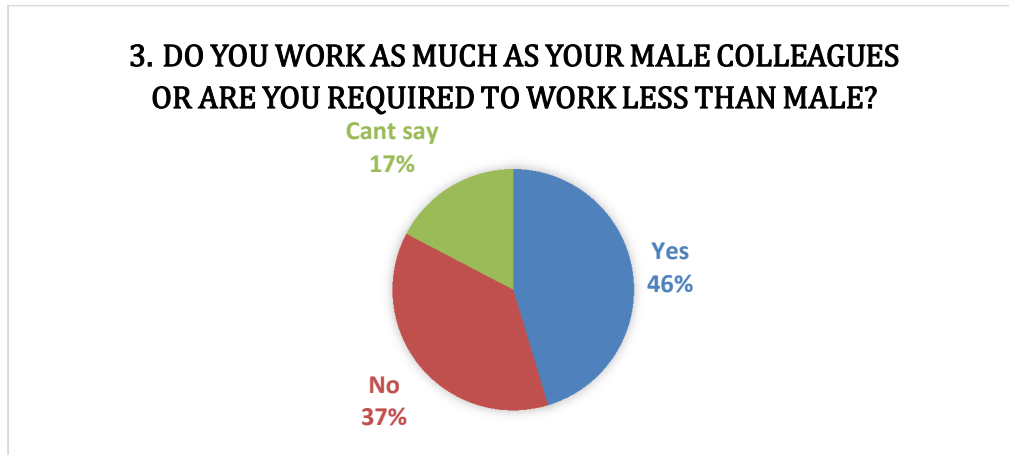
Inference: According to the above information 61% felt that their promotion was based on merit and not on the basis of favoritism or any other indecent proposal, 16% were not sure about their answers and 23% agreed that favoritism prevails in workplaces.

3. Do you work as much as your male colleagues or are you required to work less than male?

Table 4.3: Time spent on women (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	46
No	28	37
Can't say	13	17

Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution of time spent on work



Source: Primary data

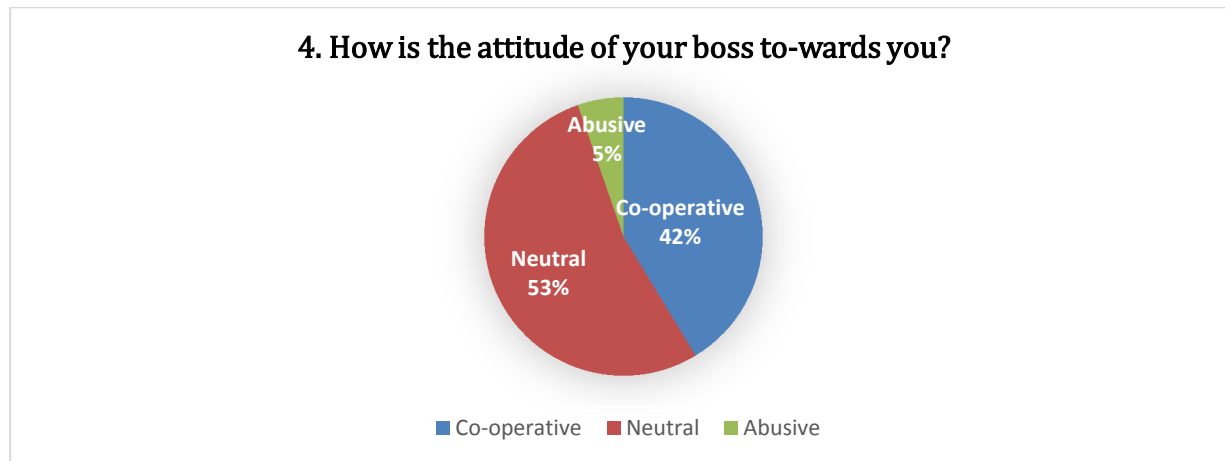
Inference: According to the above information 46% women agreed they were working as much as male colleagues, 17% women were not sure about their answers and 37% women agreed they were not working as much as their male colleagues because sometimes post or position also matter in work process. Accordingly duration of work hour factor also differs for men and women.

4. How is the attitude of your boss towards you?

**Table 4.4: Attitude of boss towards female colleagues as perceived by the women
Employees (in nos.)**

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Co-operative	31	42
Neutral	40	53
Abusive	4	5

Figure 4.4: Percentage distribution of attitude of boss towards female colleagues as perceived by the women employees



Source: Primary data

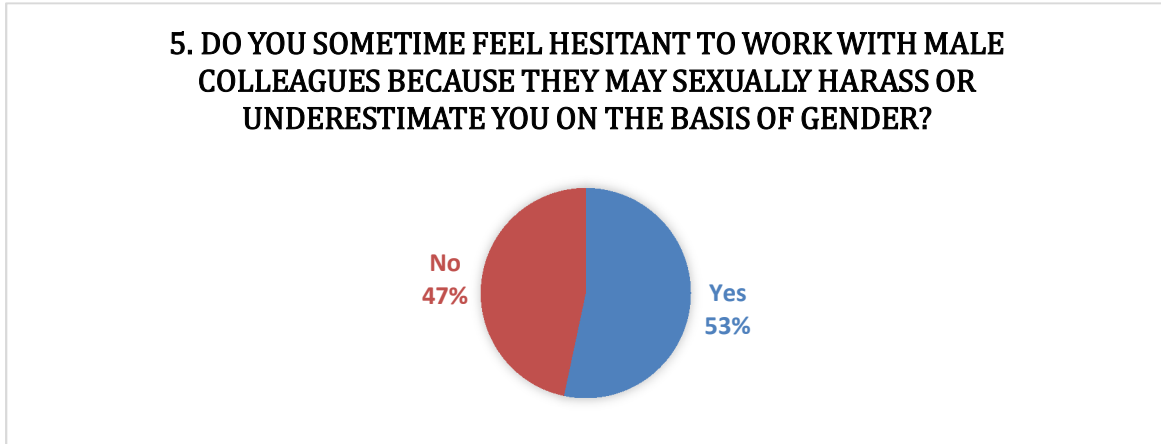
Inference: According to the above information 53% female agreed that their boss attitude towards them were neutral, 42% women said that their boss was co-operative with them and 5% women said their boss attitude towards them were abusive.

5. Do you sometime feel hesitant to work with male colleagues because they may sexually harass or underestimate you on the basis of gender?

Table 4.5: Perception of prevalence of sexual harassment or underestimation on the basis of gender (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	47
No	35	53

Figure 4.5:



Percentage distribution of perception of prevalence of sexual harassment or underestimation on the basis of gender

Source: Primary data

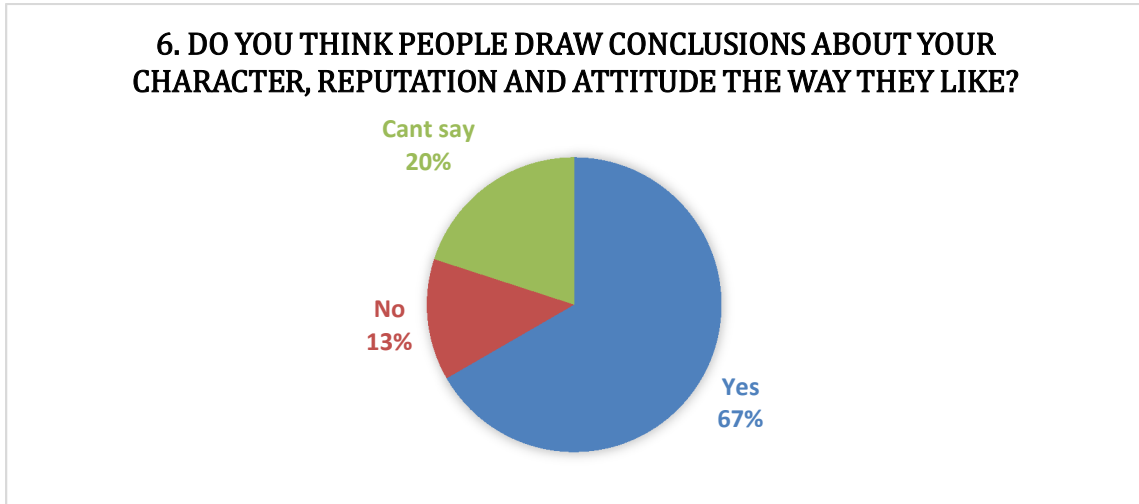
Inference: According to the above information 53% of females agreed that sometimes they felt hesitant to work with male colleagues and 47% said that they were not comfortable with male colleagues. The reason for such high percentage of women not feeling comfortable working with their male colleagues could be their lack of self-confidence, or the inherent distrust for men in our society, reinforced down the years by negative experiences and general awareness.

6. Do you think people draw conclusions about your character, reputation and attitude the way they like?

Table 4.6: Regarding people drawing conclusions about working women's character without any reasons (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	67
No	10	13
Can't say	15	20

Figure 4.6: Percentage distribution of perception regarding people drawing conclusions about working women’s character without any reasons



Source: Primary data

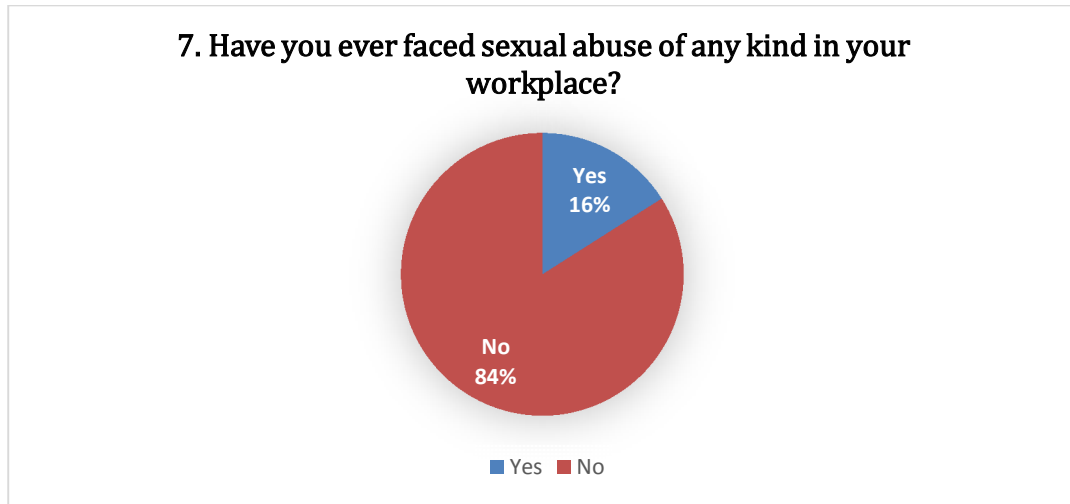
Inference: According to the above information 67% women agreed people draw conclusions about character, reputation and attitude the way they like, 13% women said they were not bother not have a time to think about others and 20% said don’t have any idea what people said about them.

7. Have you ever faced sexual abuse of any kind in your workplace?

Table 4.7: Experience of sexual abuse at workplace (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	12	16
No	63	84

Figure 4.7: Percentage distribution of experience of sexual abuse at workplace



Source: Primary data

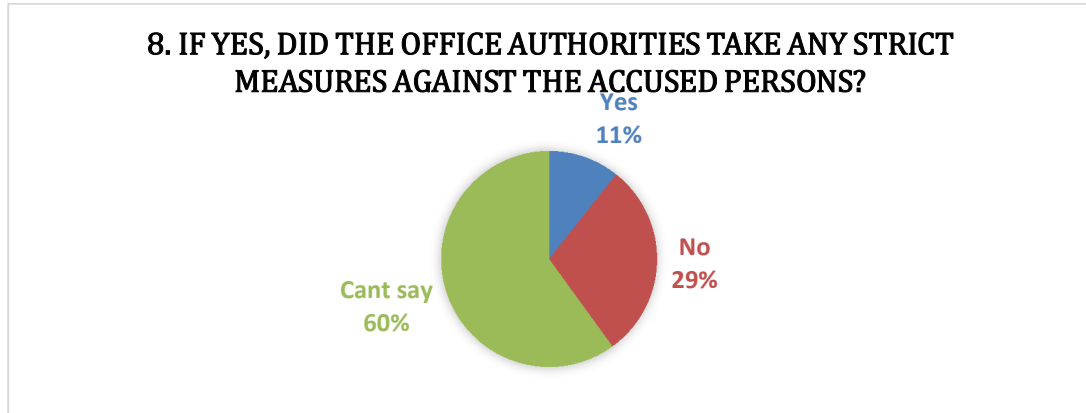
Inference: According to the above information 84% women said that they had not faced any kind of sexual abuse at their workplace, but a good 16% women agreed to have faced sexual abuse at workplace.

8. If yes, did the office authorities take any strict measures against the accused persons?

Table 4.8 Response of the higher authority towards sexual harassment (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	11
No	22	29
Can't say	45	60

Figure 4.8: Percentage distribution of response of the higher authority towards sexual harassment



Source: Primary data

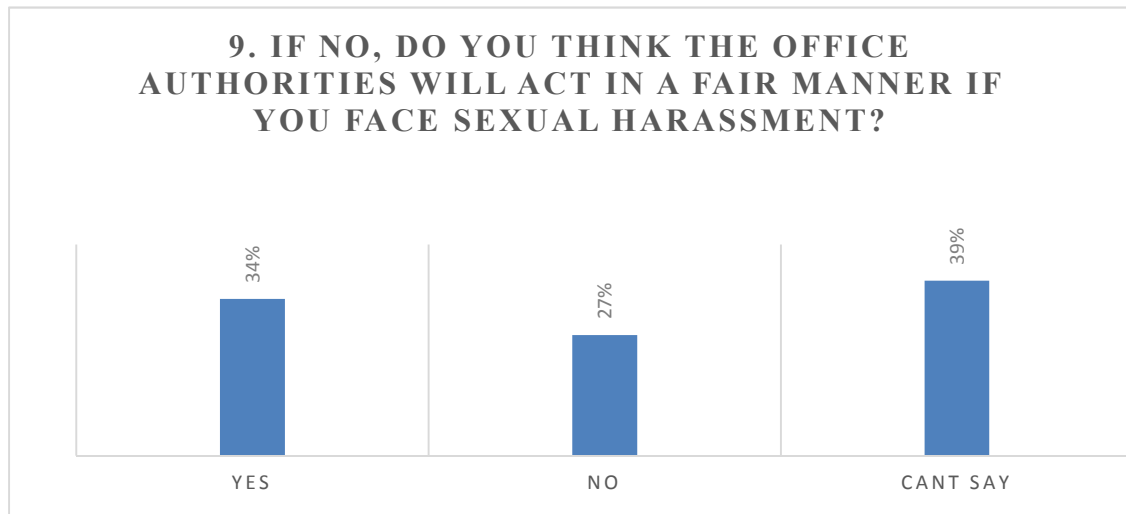
Inference: According to the above information 60% of the females are not aware whether their organization took any action against the accused, signifying lack of transparency or even lack of sensitivity to women’s problems in workplaces. Almost 30% women are of the opinion that no strict actions were taken, while only a small 11% felt that sufficient actions were taken.

9. If No, do you think the office authorities will act in a fair manner if you face sexual harassment?

Table 4.9: Perception of office authority’s willingness to act against sexual abuse (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	34
No	20	27
Can’t say	29	39

Figure 4.9: Percentage distribution of perception of office authority’s willingness to act against sexual abuse



Source: Primary data

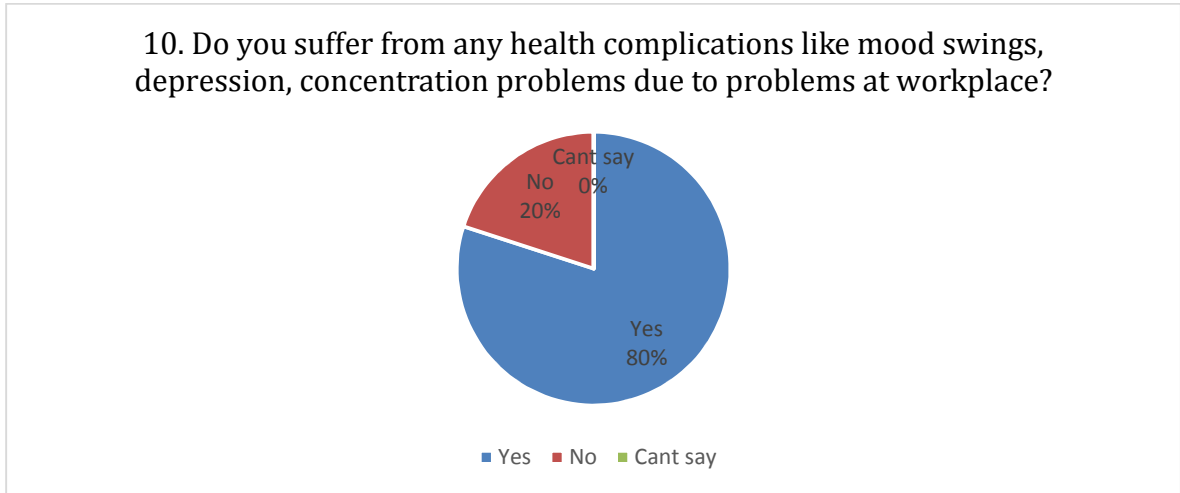
Inference: According to the above information 27% of the females are sure that their organization will not act against sexual abuse as compared to 34% feeling that their organization will take adequate action against the accused. But a good 39% of women said ‘can’t say’ that suggests that they did not have faith on their organization on the issue of sexual harassment.

10. Do you suffer from any health complications like mood swings, depression, concentration problems due to problems at workplace?

Table 4.10: Women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	80
No	15	20
Can’t say	0	0

Figure 4.10: Percentage distribution of women suffering from health related issues due to problems in the workplace



Source: Primary data

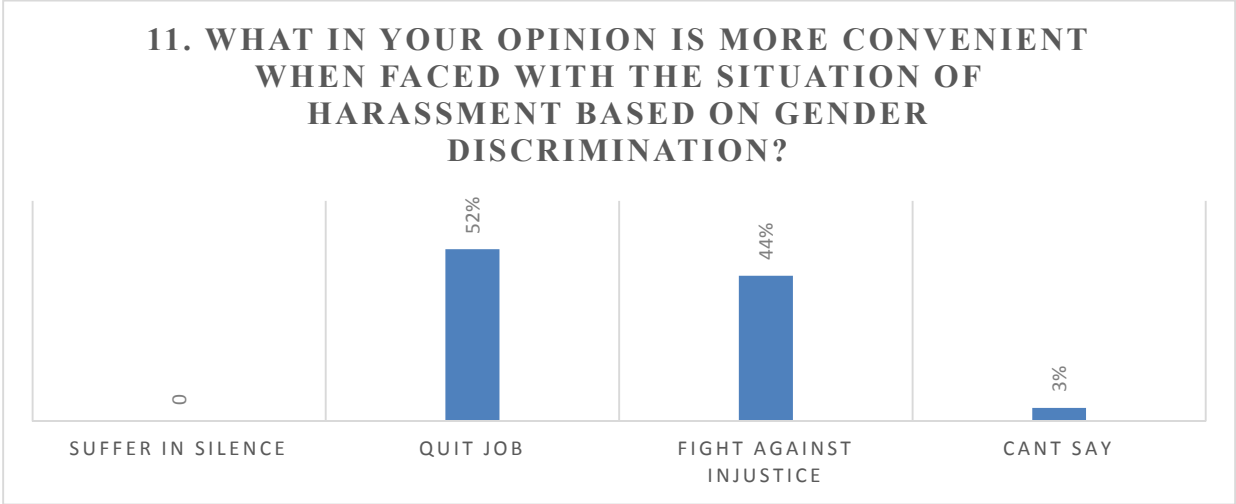
Inference: According to the above information 80% women suffer from health complications, 20% women have not faced any kind of health complications like headache, depression, concentration problems etc.

11. What in your opinion is more convenient when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination?

Table 4.11: perception of women to behave when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination in the workplace (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Suffer in silence	0	0
Quit job	39	52
Fight against injustice	33	44
Can't say	3	4

Figure 4.11 Percentage distribution of perception of women to behave when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination in the workplace



Source: Primary data

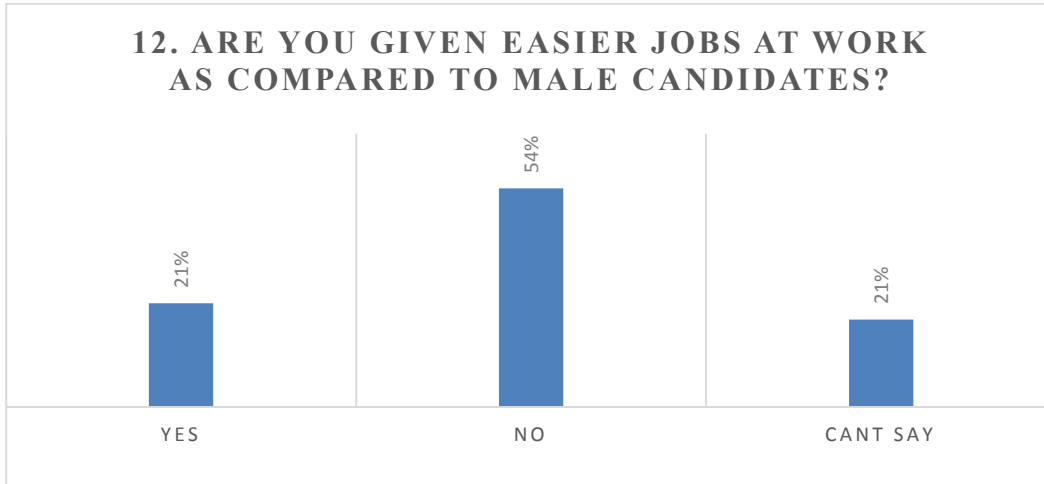
Inference: According to the above information there is an equal division of opinion among working women for either quitting their jobs, or to fight it out, if they face any harassment based on gender discrimination.

12. Are you given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates?

Table 4.12: Perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	25
No	40	54
Can't say	16	21

Figure 4.12 Percentage distribution of perception of women on being given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates



Source: Primary data

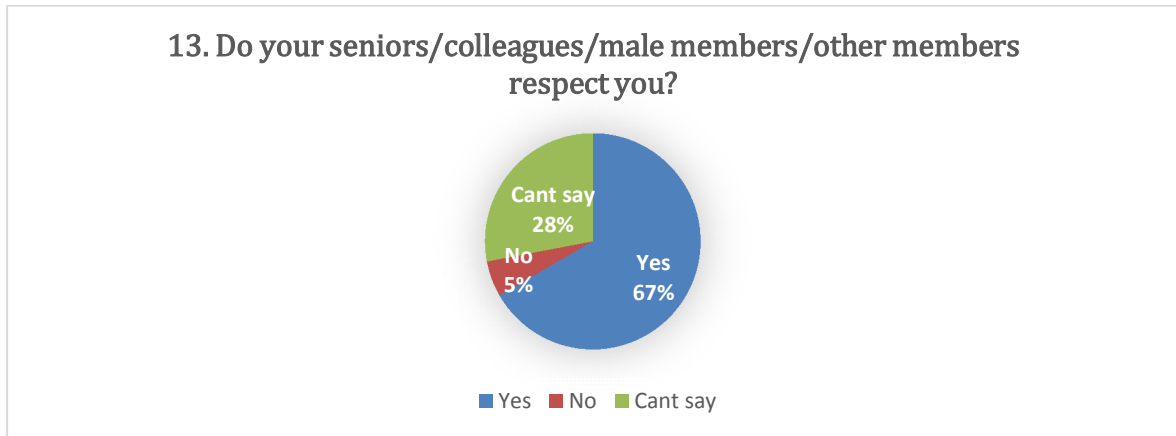
Inference: According to the above information majority of the women are of the opinion that they are not given any easier jobs as compared to their male colleagues. They work as hard as anyone.

13. Do your seniors/colleagues/male members/other members respect you?

Table 4.13: Perception of women on being given respect at their workplace(in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	67
No	4	5
Can't say	21	28

Figure 4.13 Percentage distribution of perception of women on being given respect at their workplace



Source: Primary data

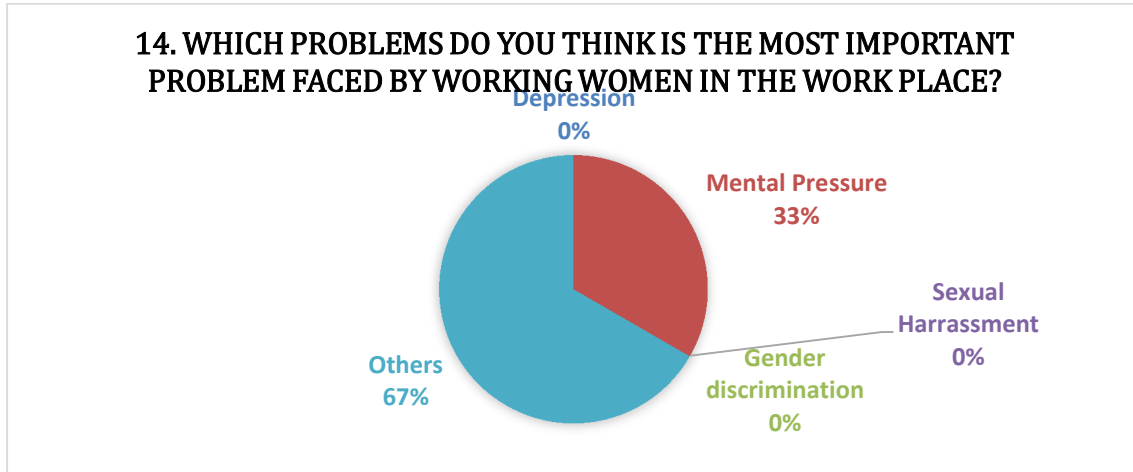
Inference: According to the above information women in general feel that people respect them in the workplace.

14. Which problems do you think is the most important problem faced by working women in the work place?

Table 4.14: According to the above information women in general feel that people respect them in the workplace.

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Depression	0	0
Mental Pressure	25	33
Gender discrimination	0	0
Sexual Harassment	0	0
Others	50	67

Figure 4.14: Percentage distribution of perception of women of the most important problem faced by working women in the work place



Source data: Primary data

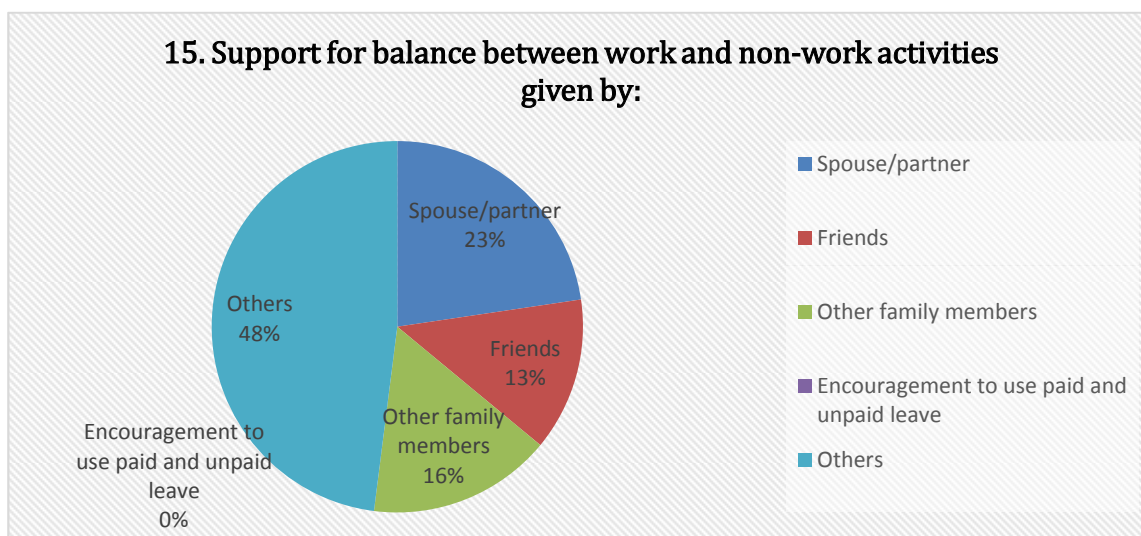
Inference: According to the above information the most important problems faced by working women are due to mental stress that includes jealousy, rivalry, gossip, character assassination etc. and other workplace problems like physical stress, lack of child-care support, rigid workplace timings, and insufficient salary as per qualifications etc.

15. Support for balance between work and non-work activities given by.

Table 4.15: support for balance between work and non-work activities (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Spouse/partner	17	23
Friends	10	13
Other family members	12	16
Encouragement to use paid and unpaid leave	0	0
Others	36	48

Figure 4.15: percentage distributions for support for balance between work and non-work activities



Source: Primary data

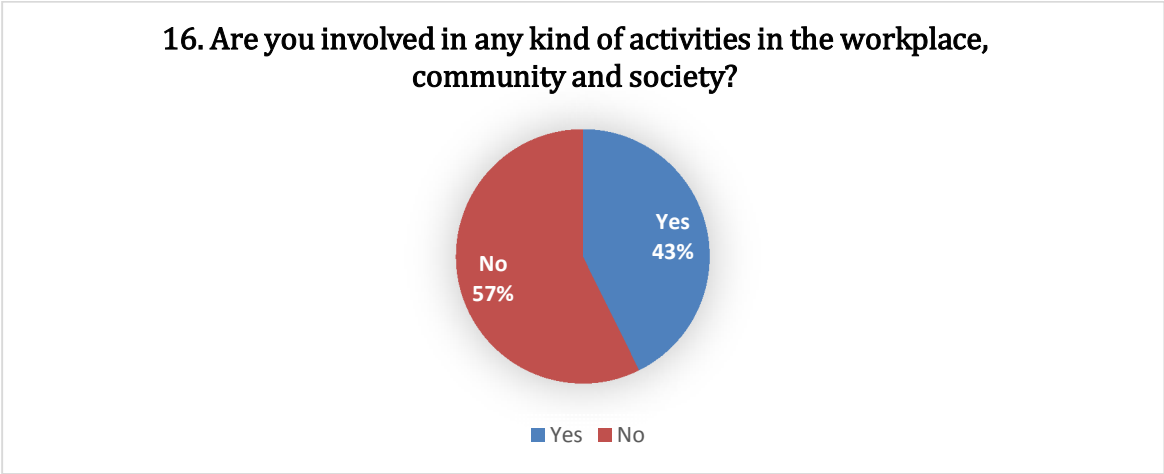
Inference: As per the given data support for balance between work and non-work activities is evenly divided among various support groups mentioned above. The ‘other’ category includes paid assistance, crèches, sympathetic colleagues etc.

16. Are you involved in any kind of activities in the workplace, community and society?

Table 4.16: Kind of activities involved in society, community etc. (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	32	43
No	43	57

Figure 4.16: Percentage distribution of the kind of activities involved in society, community etc.



Source: Primary data

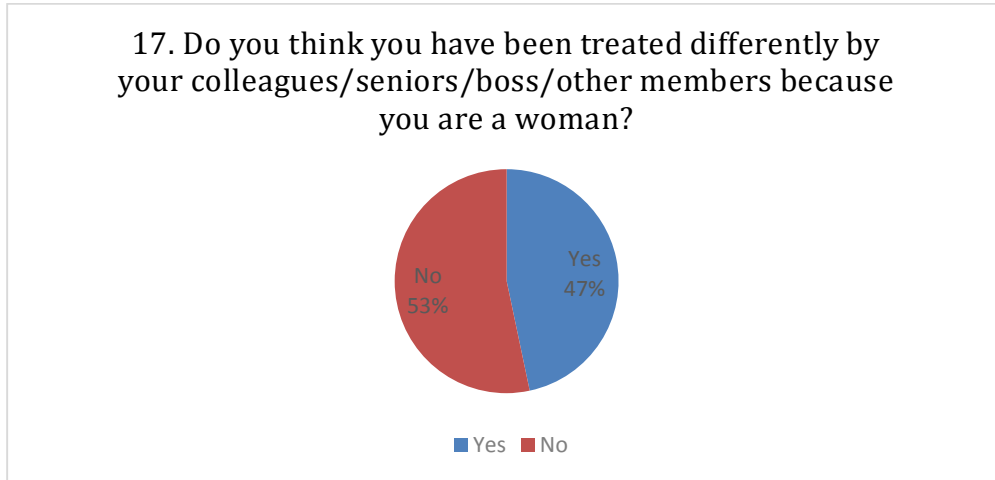
Inference: As per the given data more number of working women is involved in activities at the community and societal level, as compared to those who are not involved. The activities that they are involved in relate to social club memberships, community religious activities, children activities etc.

17. Do you think you have been treated differently by your colleagues/seniors/boss/other members because you are a woman?

Table 4.17 perception among women on being treated differently by their colleagues/seniors/boss/other members (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	35	47
No	40	53

Figure 4.17 percentage distribution of perception among women on being treated differently by their colleagues/seniors/boss/other members



Source: Primary data

Inference: According to the above information 53% female responded said that were not treated differently while 47% female responded said they were treated differently. People enjoy working with friends, which often inadvertently turns into favoritism. It can start as something as simple as being included on a lunch outing where business is discussed and may lead to something much more substantial, like getting salary and promotional benefits. Wanting to work with people you like is fine, as long as it is fair to other employees.

18. Are you facing problems related to your family life and professional life?

Table 4.18 Perception among women facing problems related to your family life and professional life (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	33	44
No	42	56

Figure 4.18 Percentage distribution of perception among women facing problems related to your family life and professional life

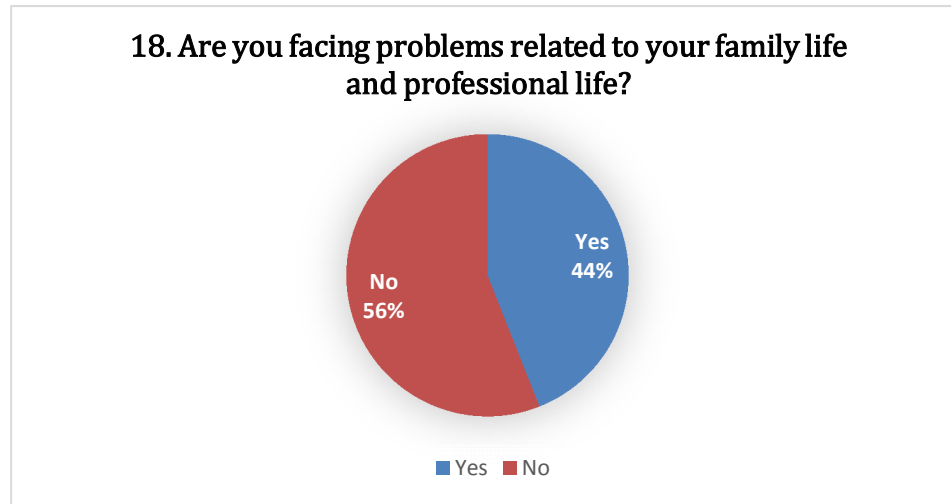


Figure 4.18

Source: Primary Data

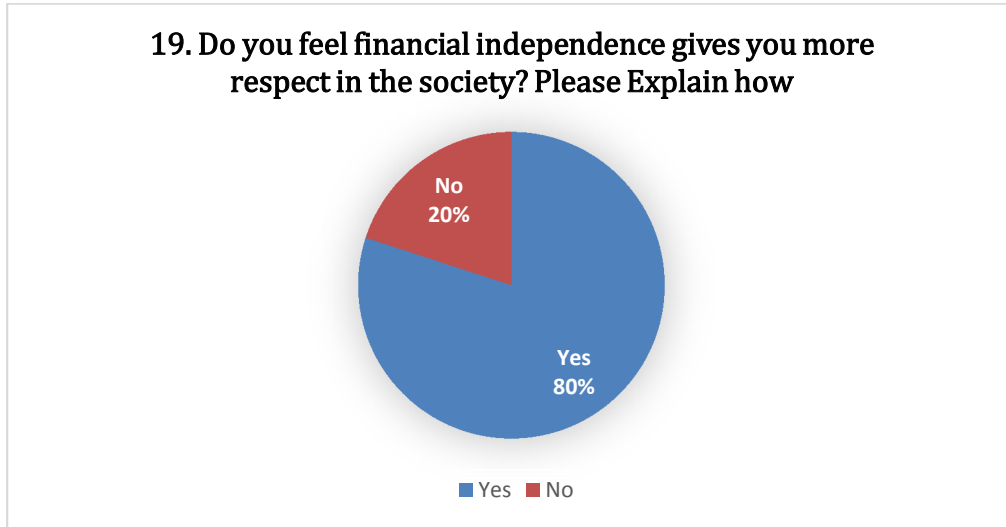
Inference: 56% females responded agreed they were not faced with any problems relating to family life and professional life. 44% females responded that they find it difficult to manage family life and professional life because they have to go home to the family and attend to the household chores and take care of their families. They wished for some definite coping strategies to aid them to carry all the work-load and still be able to take care of their private issues.

19. Do you feel financial independence gives you more respect in the society?

Table 4.19 Perception among women on financial independence giving more respect in the society (in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	80
No	15	20

Figure 4.19 Percentage distributions of perception among women of financial independence giving more respect in the society



Source: Primary data

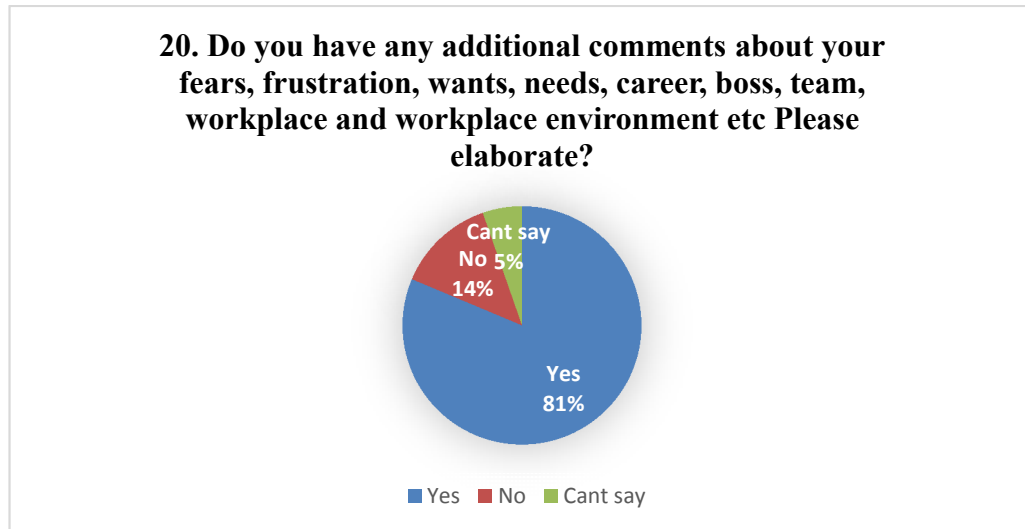
Inference: According to the above information 80% of the women responded said that financial independence gives them more respect in the society where as only 20% of the women responded did not agree to this. They felt that a perception of a sound character is also required to get respect. During the survey it was found that if you are a woman, being financially independent is very essential. It gives a woman a superior reputation and independence in the society

20. Do you have any additional comments about your fears, frustration, wants, needs, career, boss, team, workplace and workplace environment etc.?

Table 4.20: Women having additional comments about their fears, frustration, wants, needs, career, boss, team, workplace and workplace environment etc.(in nos.)

	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	81
No	10	14
Can't say	4	5

Figure 4.20: percentage distributions of women having additional comments about their fears, frustration, wants, needs, career, boss, team, workplace and workplace environment etc.



Source: Primary data

Inference: According to the above data 81% working women were interested to give their feedback, 14% women were not interested and 5% working women did not give proper feedback or additional comments.

4.1. Interpretation of Qualitative Data (for items 17-20, face to face interviews and FGDs)

Most of the working women said that as working women you will definitely suffer from problems. Health related problems like physical and mental stress, general weakness, excessive work load because of work pressure, family pressure etc. are all very real issues. Sometimes the stress is so profound that they feel like leaving their jobs but then they realize that these are all a part of life that they have to fight and endure, which ultimately makes them stronger. Gender

discrimination also happens, men think that women are not capable enough to work properly and unable to take decision in a better way.

One more interesting, but bitter fact that was revealed was that female colleagues also give mental stress, like indulging in jealous behavior, unnecessary gossip and rivalry. Several women also commented on injustice meted out to them by their female colleagues where they spread negative rumors about one's character and upbringing. They neither listen to, nor are they interested in listening to your side of the story, but simply continue with their comments, and any objection to that is met with arguments and unreasonable behavior. They try to harass by creating confusion and misunderstanding with superiors and complain about other females. Male members also try to extract sexual favors. If one is a single/divorcee/separated from husband, then other male members try to get close and if they do not a favourable response then they start talking spreading rumors casting aspersions on the woman's character and family. They resort to name-calling and ascribe certain derogatory names that influence others in the workplace. People become judgmental and become blind to one's good qualities, instead highlight only the bad ones. Not only male colleagues but also female colleagues resort to this kind of mental torture and harassment.

If working women work and get a higher post then people usually think that the woman has got the higher post because of favoritism and draw conclusions on her character rather than accepting her capability of achieving this kind of a position.

Most of the women admitted to sexual harassment happening inside the workplace but in a city like Rourkela there is less probability of sexual harassment than in metro cities, because people are more concerned about the scandal it might create in a small place like Rourkela, and also because of the fact that people know each other more closely, as compared to bigger cities which provides a kind of anonymity. In Rourkela they face more mental pressure, health complications, depression, and criticism from male and female colleagues. But female colleagues are more personal in their criticism, they comment more on a colleague's character, standard of living, family matters, even dressing styles etc.

Sexual harassment is faced by women not only in the workplace but also outside the workplace. Women have a fear of their own safety and security not only from strangers but also from their own relatives or neighbors try to sexually harass and abuse them. They have a fear of sexual abuse (touching, staring, lewd comments etc.). Commuting in public transports to their offices brings in these kinds of sexual abuses but they lack the financial resources to give themselves a better deal.

Financial independence gives women more respect in the society. For a woman, being financially independent is very essential. It enhances one's reputation and begets more freedom and independence in the society. Women feel self-empowered and better and it helps them in their economic and social status also.

4.2. Own Observations

It was observed that different women have different perception of their needs, fears, frustrations etc. Some are happy with their jobs; some are frustrated because of harassment, both mental and physical; some women have a good job environment; some are highly depressed because of issues with their colleagues, both male and female. One interesting fact that was revealed was that those women who are more beautiful or have enough good personality and can carry themselves in a good way; people instantly draw a particular conclusion about their character that is highly negative. They think about her in a wrong way and assume that those women having a friendly kind of nature inside workplace male member generally think that kind of objects for them they can do anything with her.

Some male members who are highly qualified and holding a high position, but are highly frustrated because of job stress or for some other personal reasons for their own, sometimes they behave appropriately with junior women employees in front of others but covertly harass these women for satisfying their own anger and frustration. One type of stereotyped thinking that still persists is whether women, who are crossing the four walls of their homes for jobs, are capable enough to compete with others, and at the same time appropriately balance between family and professional life. So the question arises as to why only women have to balance both lives, and why women have all these burdens thrust on them.

4.3. Key Findings

1. Sexual harassment by male colleagues is a reality. Mental harassment by female colleagues is also a reality.
2. Working women face problems because of their female colleagues (jealousy, rivalry, competition etc.)
3. Colleagues, both men/women draw conclusions about women's character, sometimes without any basis.
4. Financial independence gives women more respect in the society as perceived by the working women.
5. Working women feel they are facing more mental pressure and depression than non-working women.
6. Not much aware about Acts and Policies favouring women in the workplace.
7. Health issues are also an important problem for working women.
8. Working women are forced to leave their small children at home because of their work.
Lack of proper support system.
9. Life as a single parent very challenging for working women.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions related to the challenges and problems faced by working women drawn from the analysis of responses:

- Professional women feel isolated and burdened by the simultaneous demands of their new aspirations on one side and the traditional way of life on the other.
- Women are discriminated against in all walks of life.
- Women are subjugated, dominated and exploited both at work places and home.
- Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to households, kids and family.
- Working women generally face workplace sexual harassment, mental pressure, and safety issues.
- Females are also highly judgmental about other female colleagues and try to put one at any given opportunity.
- Women face problems leaving kids at home and going to office early in the morning.
- Child rearing problems are always faced by working women.
- People make particular perception or draw conclusion about characters of working women.
- The social system cannot accept the new roles of women who end up feeling misunderstood and distressed.

5.1. Some Recommended Solutions

- Partners can be more sensitive to women's needs, and counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks and take care of children.
- Organisations should have an internal code to ensure security of women employees and take measures to ensure that they discharge their job in a secure atmosphere.
- Governments should make it mandatory for companies to install Global Positioning System (GPS) in vehicles carrying women, in all industries which engage women in night shifts.
- Providing self-defence training to women; installing safety devices and CCTVs at the work place; undertaking police verification of cab drivers, security guards etc.
- Child care facilities and Child care leave for working women should be provided by every organisation.
- Flexible timing and Possibility to work from home are required for working women.

In a patriarchal society like India a particular boundary exists only for women, and if they try to cross that boundary then people start maligning them. The general perception is that if some women are doing things differently, beyond people's limited imagination, and out of sync with traditional thinking, like going out for jobs, wearing different type of fashionable clothes, talking freely with male members etc., immediately they are branded as loose women. India probably has still a long way to go to make our workplaces free from any prejudices, abuses and harassments. Even then we can still try at solving some of the related issues and problems with some possible solutions that have been mentioned above so that women become stronger and are able to handle any adverse situations.

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APPENDIX 1



Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

National Institute of Technology, Rourkela

QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY TO SUPPORT THE STUDY OF “PROBLEMS AND ISSUES FACED BY URBAN WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA”

Providing information on this survey is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to respond. However, maximum participation is encouraged so that the data will be complete and representative. Your survey instrument will be treated as confidential. Identifying information will be used only by persons engaged in, and for the purposes of, the survey.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Name:

Age: Qualification: work Experience:

Profession: Marital Status:

Religion: Caste:

(1) How long did it take for you to get promoted in comparison to male colleagues of the same position?

- Equal time
- Longer
- Earlier

(2) Did you get your promotion on merit basis or you were offered a promotion based on favoritism or any other indecent proposal?

- Yes
- No
- Can't say

(3) Do you work as much as your male colleagues or are you required to work less than male?

- Yes
- No
- Can't say

(4) How is the attitude of your boss to-wards you?

- Co-operative

• Neutral

• Abusive

(5) Do you sometime feel hesitant to work with male colleagues because they may sexually harass or underestimate you on the basis of gender?

• Yes

• No

(6) Do you think people draw conclusions about your character, reputation and attitude the way they like?

• Yes

• No

• Can't say

(7) Have you ever faced sexual abuse of any kind in your workplace?

• Yes

• No

(8) If yes, did the office authorities take any strict measures against the accused persons?

• Yes

• No

- Can't say

(9) If No, do you think the office authorities will act in a fair manner if you face sexual harassment?

- Yes

- No

- Can't say

(10) Do you suffer from any health complications like mood swings, depression, concentration problems due to problems at workplace?

- Yes

- No

- Can't say

(11) What in your opinion is more convenient when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination?

- Suffer in silence

- Quit job

- Fight against injustice

- Can't say

(12) Are you given easier jobs at work as compared to male candidates?

• Yes

• No

• Can't say

(13) Do your seniors/colleagues/male members/other members respect you?

• Yes

• No

• Can't say

(14) Which problems do you think is the most important problem faced by working women in the work place?

• Depression

• Mental pressure

• Gender discrimination

• Sexual harassment

• Others

(15) Support for balance between work and non-work activities given by:

- Spouse/partner
- Friends
- Other family members
- Encouragement to use paid and unpaid leave
- Others

(16) Are you involved in any kind of activities in the workplace, community and society?

- Yes
- No

(17) Do you think you have been treated differently by your colleagues/seniors/boss/other members because you are a woman?

(18) Are you facing problems related to your family life and professional life?

(19) Do you feel financial independence gives you more respect in the society? Please Explain how

(20) Do you have any additional comments about your fears, frustration, wants, needs, career, boss, team, workplace and workplace environment etc. Please elaborate?

