

Challenges Faced by Working Women: A Study of Tricity Chandigarh

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ABSTRACT

Women all over the world constitute a significant portion of the workforce of the country. The contribution of women in work force is continuously increasing. Women have even chartered the uncharted terrains and contributing in the fields which were considered forbidden for them few decades before. In this century there is hardly any area which can boasts of male supremacy let alone the male only area. In spite of this social and economic volte face in work life the journey is not as good for women as their male counterparts owing to various reasons. They face multifold challenges like gender discrimination at the workplace. Despite of having equal qualification women in most jobs face discrimination on basis of most general grounds like pay, promotion, top positions etc. There are some other challenges like work life balance, harassment and workplace safety, maternity and career interruptions, mental health and emotional challenges. This study is an attempt to find the challenges being faced by the working women of tricity Chandigarh.

Keywords: working women, work life balance, discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Women are being considered the backbone of the society. She plays an important and equal role like male in the economic development of the country. Improvement and upgradation in education system and career options promotes and ensures equal opportunities for labour force without any gender disparity. Enhanced presence is felt both in rural and urban areas. According to PLFS(periodic labour force survey) conducted by Ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI) since 2017-18 there is an upward trend in educated women workforce which is 39.6% in 2023-24 as compared to 34.5% in 2017-18 with a drastic increase in total women with higher secondary education level from 11.7% to 23.9% in same time period. Labour force rate of women has risen from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24. The primary reason of being remaining outside the workforce is giving preference to continue higher education and another major reason is that women give preference to home responsibilities and childcare. It gives a need to look into policy and social interventions to balance work and family. With this background this paper is an attempt to study the problems faced by working women in tri-city Chandigarh i.e. Panchkula (Haryana), Chandigarh (Union Territory) and Mohali (Punjab).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The participation of women in the workforce has increased significantly in recent decades. Despite this progress, working women continue to face multifaceted challenges that hinder their professional growth, affect work-life balance, and reinforce gender inequality. These challenges vary across socio-economic, cultural, and geographical contexts, yet common patterns persist globally. In South Asia, **Kabeer (2005)** noted that even educated women face pressure to prioritize family duties over careers, limiting their economic empowerment. Maternity often results in temporary or permanent exits from the workforce, affecting career progression. **Budig & England (2001)** describe the "motherhood penalty," where mothers earn less and are perceived as less competent than childless women or fathers. In contrast, **Cuddy et al. (2004)** found that fatherhood often enhances perceptions of male employees as stable and committed, highlighting a gendered double standard. **Acker (1990)** in his study introduced the concept of "gendered organizations," emphasizing how workplace structures inherently favour men, making it difficult for women to thrive equally. Gender discrimination is reflected in hiring practices, promotions, wage gaps, and task allocation. **Cotter et al. (2001)** highlight that the "glass ceiling" remains a significant barrier, limiting women's advancement to leadership positions despite qualifications and experience. **World Economic Forum (2023)** data reveals persistent global gender pay gaps, with women earning approximately 77 cents for every dollar earned by men for similar work. While policies exist in many countries to support working women, implementation and enforcement remain weak. **UN Women (2020)** reports that while many nations have enacted maternity leave laws, fewer have paternity leave or anti-harassment

enforcement mechanisms in place. **ILO (2021)** suggests that stronger labor laws, gender-sensitive workplace policies, and inclusive leadership are needed to foster equitable environments.

Balancing professional responsibilities with domestic roles remains one of the most cited challenges for working women **Lewis et al. (2007)** show that lack of organizational support, such as flexible working hours or parental leave, disproportionately impacts women, making it difficult to sustain a healthy work-life balance. Working women often carry the emotional burden of managing both work and home, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout. **Burnett et al. (2010)** highlight how chronic work-life imbalance can lead to long-term psychological effects, such as depression and lowered self-esteem. **Hochschild & Machung (2012)** in *The Second Shift* discuss how women often manage both professional work and the majority of domestic chores, leading to stress and burnout. **Chougale et al. (2022)** found in their study that time pressure, household burden and stress were the most common challenges, particularly in nuclear families where domestic support was limited. **Taneja and kumar (2024)** in their study revealed that dependent care obligations and social expectations negatively influenced women's ability to balance work and personal life.

Sexual harassment and safety concerns are significant deterrents to women's workforce participation. **Ibarra (1993)** argues that male-dominated networks often exclude women, making it harder for them to access information and sponsorships critical for promotions. **Fitzgerald et al. (1997)** identify that organizational tolerance and under-reporting of harassment exacerbate the issue, creating a hostile work environment for women. **Ragins & Cotton (1999)** found that women are less likely to have mentors in higher positions, limiting their exposure to opportunities and guidance. Career advancement is often linked to mentorship and professional networking, from which women are frequently excluded. According to a report by the **International Labour Organization in 2021**, over one-third of working women worldwide report experiences of harassment or violence in the workplace.

The literature clearly indicates that working women face complex and overlapping challenges across personal, organizational, and societal levels. These issues are deeply rooted in systemic gender inequalities and require multidimensional approaches to address. This study will try to find out the challenges being faced by working women of tricity Chandigarh.

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 of Tri-city Chandigarh
2. To find out possible solutions that could help them to overcome the problems

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is conceptual in nature and based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected with the help of survey technique through questionnaire which was filled by 124 women. Personal observation and interview is also used. The structured questionnaire was designed to capture detailed information about the respondents' professional and household roles. It included both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

The respondents were selected using convenience sampling, a method that involves choosing individuals who are readily accessible and willing to participate. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the practical constraints related to time and resources. The structured format ensured that the data collected was comprehensive and could be easily analyzed statistically.

Data analysis and interpretation: On the basis of the questionnaires filled by the respondents the data has been analyzed using percentages, pie charts, tables etc. to ascertain the challenges being faced by working women of tricity Chandigarh in dual role.

Sample Data

States/UT	No. of Respondents
Haryana	39
Punjab	41
Chandigarh	44
Total	124

Demographic profile of the respondents:

The demographics play an important role to face the adversities and challenges. The age, experience, qualification, working sector and marital status of the participants determines their response towards various problems and challenges. With growing age, people become more tolerant and understanding. Similarly, the education and experience also affects the way person takes problems. Their attitude towards problems changes and they become problems

solvers. Similarly their working sector also defines the complexity of the problems and challenges. The support available to the working women helps in mitigation of some of the challenges and time at their disposal increases up to some extent.

Table No. 1. -Demographic profile of the respondents

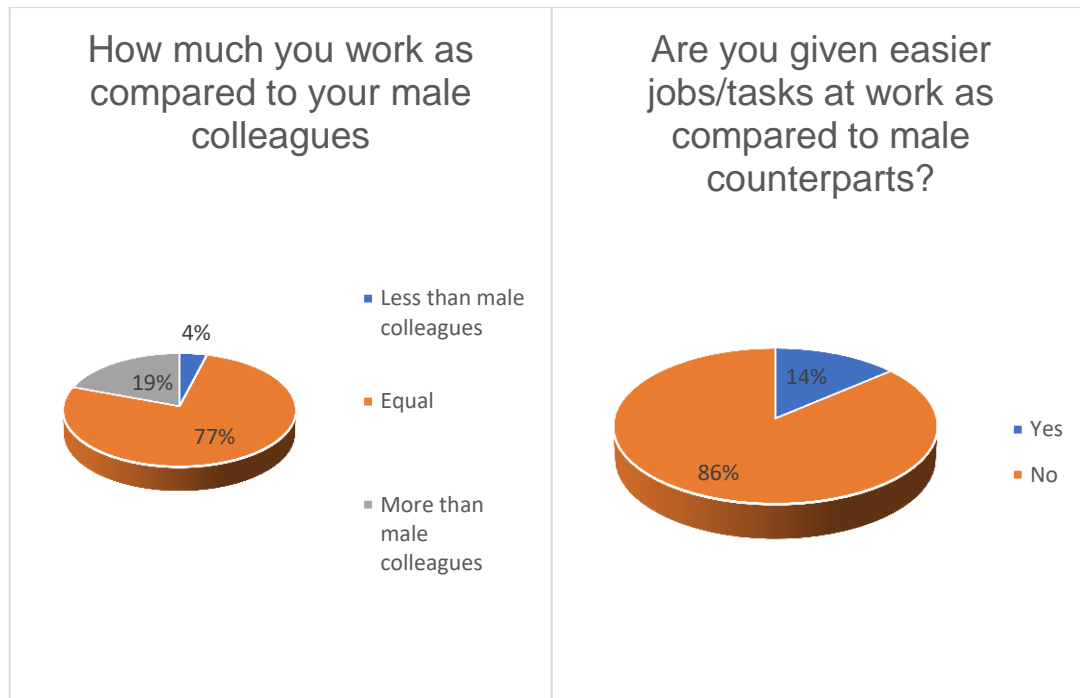
Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	36	29.03%
30-40	57	45.97%
40-50	31	25%
Total	124	
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	97	78.2%
Unmarried	21	16.9%
Other	6	04.8%
Total	124	
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Graduation	15	12.1%
Post Graduation	77	62.1%
Ph.D.	11	8.9%
Professional	21	16.9%
Total	124	
Occupational Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Govt./Public Sector	74	59.7%
Private Sector	50	40.3%
Total	124	
Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
0-5 Years	34	27.4%
5-10 Years	47	37.9%
10-15 Years	21	16.9%
15-20 Years	14	11.3%
Above 20 Years	8	6.5%
Total	124	

The majority respondents (45.97%) belonged to the age group of 30-40 who are having responsibility of their husband and children and in some cases in-laws or parents. The sample is comprised of 78.2% married and 16.9% unmarried women. All the respondents are well educated as only 12.1 are graduates and 62.1% are post graduates while 8.9% are having doctorate degrees and 16.9% are professionally qualified. Among the participants 59.7% are working in Government or Public Sector while 40.3% are working in private sector. 27.4% are having experience of 0-5 years, 37.9% are having experience of 5-10 years, 16.9% are having experience of 10-15 years, 11.3% are having experience of 15-20 years while 6.5% are having experience of more than 20 years.

Analysis and discussion: However employment has a positive effect on the minds of women and their families but still they encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace, home and society. The findings highlight the various challenges faced by women. Be it gender discrimination, exploitation and harassment, underestimating their potential, work pressure or challenges in maintaining work life balance.

Working Hours of Women and Work Complexity

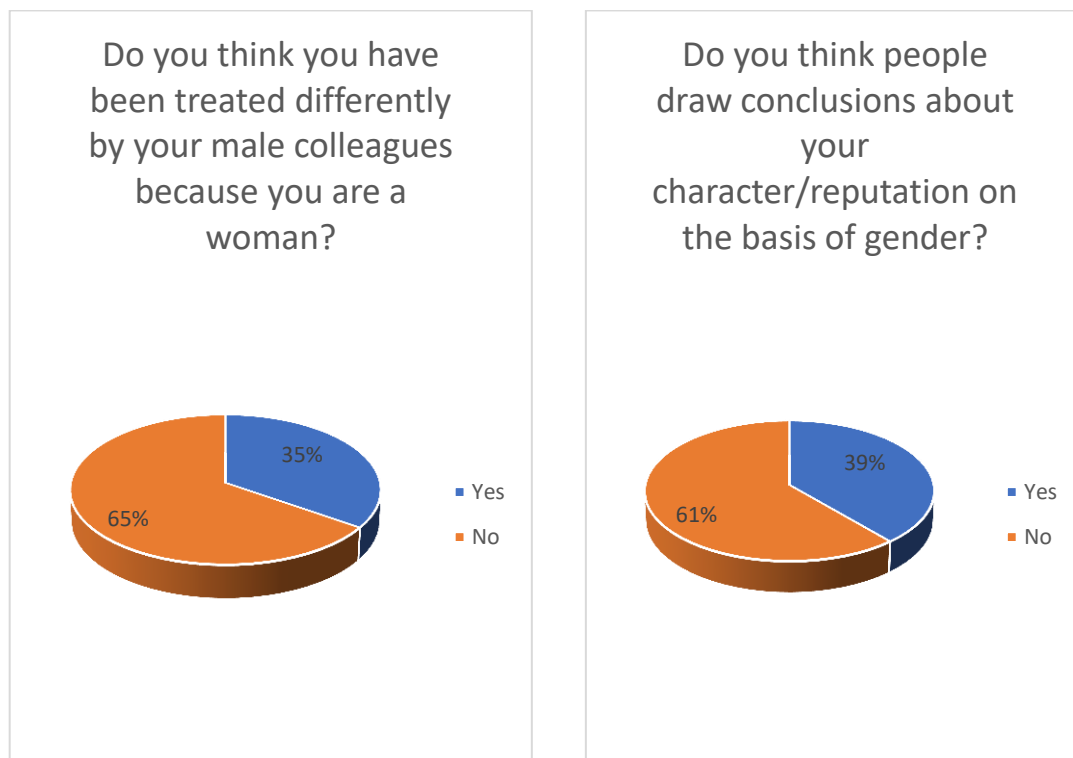
When asked to women in the survey how much they work as compared to their male colleagues, 77% women said they do equal work. While 19% women said they work more than men and 4% said they work less than their male colleagues.



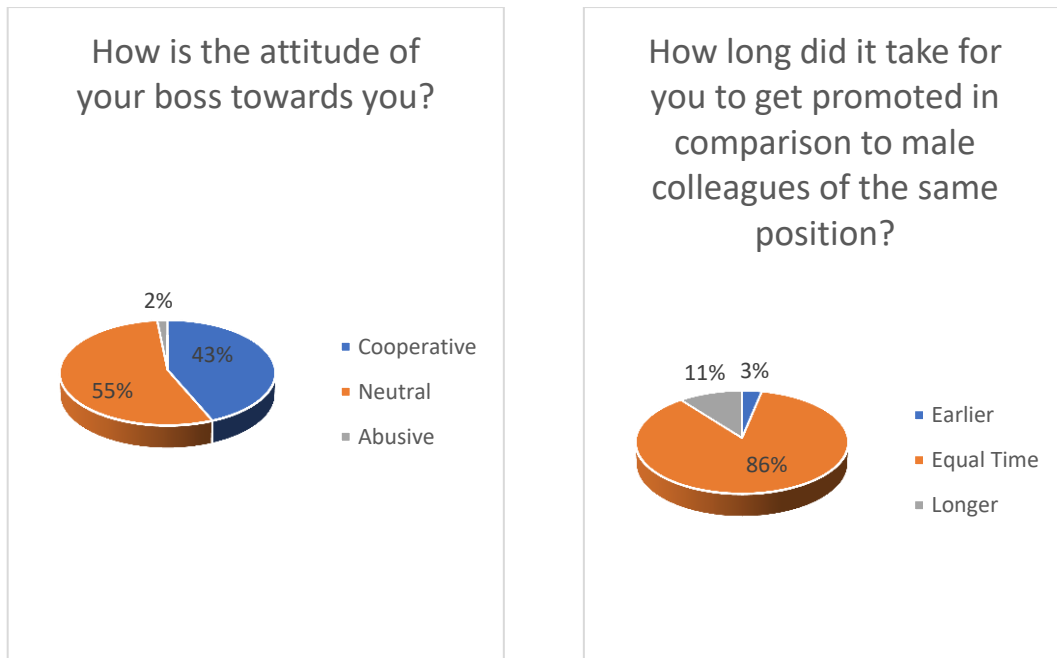
As far as work complexity is concerned when asked whether they get easier jobs/tasks at work as compared to male counterparts 86% women said no while 14% admitted that they were given easier jobs/tasks. It is observed that majority of the respondents feel that equal work opportunity is given to them

Treatment at Workplace

In response to the question whether women are treated differently by their male colleagues because they are women, 65% women denied the fact while 35% admitted they are treated differently.



When asked whether people draw conclusions about the character/reputation of women on the basis of their gender, 61% women denied the fact. Only 39% respondents said they think people do so.

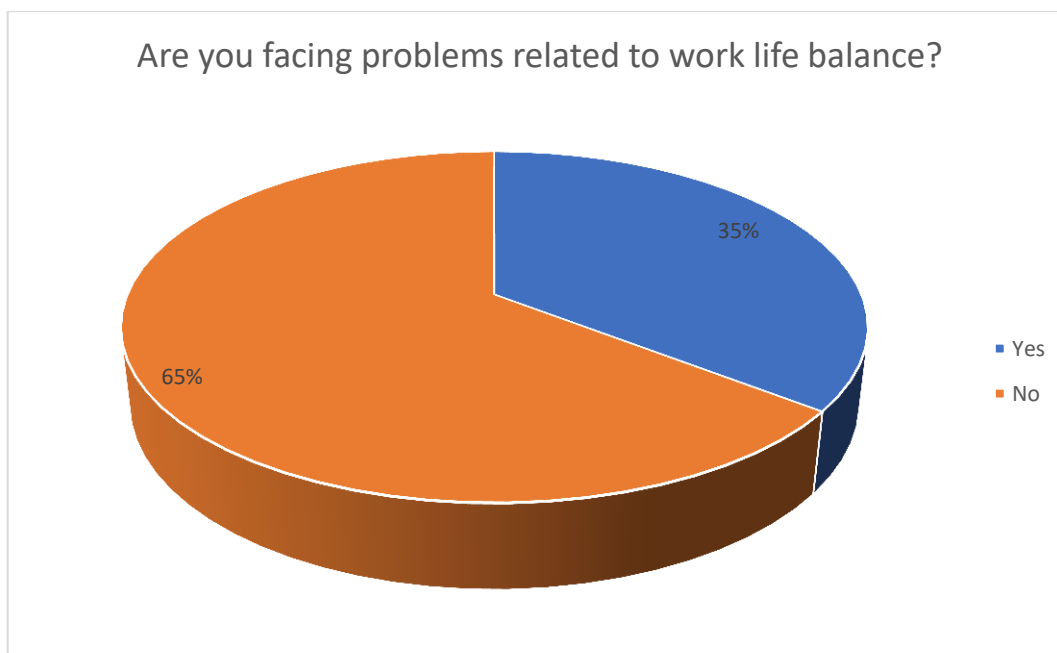


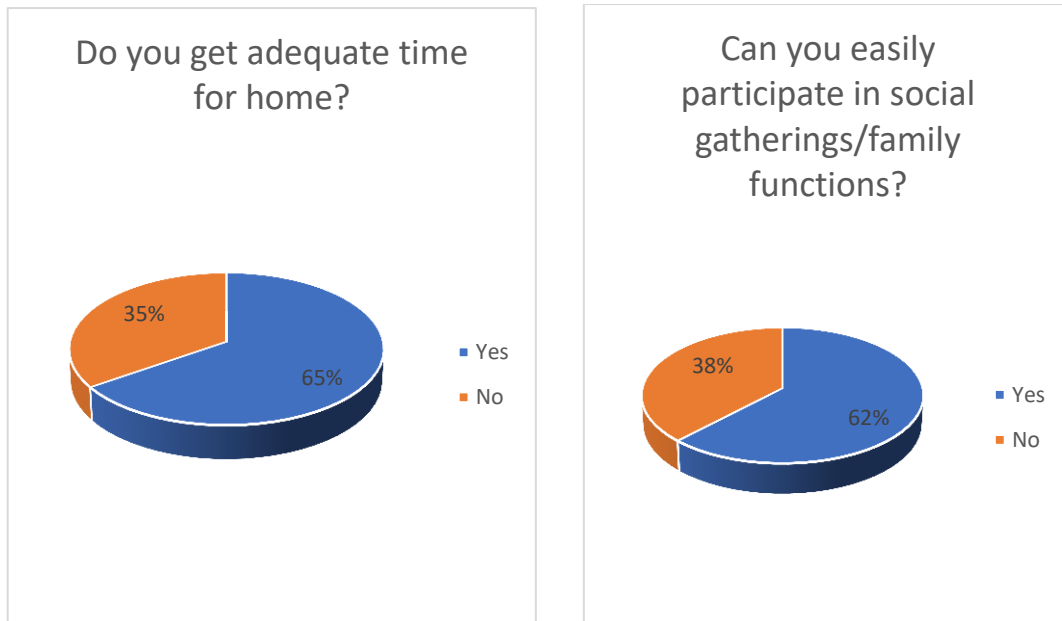
Majority of women (98%) are satisfied with the behaviour of their boss. It is neutral or cooperative towards them. Only 2% said it is abusive. When asked about their career progression, 86% women said it take equal time as their male colleagues to get promoted. Only 3% said they get early promotion while 11% said they get longer time as compared to their male colleagues to get promoted.

Based on these responses it is evident that majority of women in tricity feel that they are not treated differently at workplace and they get neutral or cooperative treatment from their boss and get equal career progression opportunities as male counterparts. In the nutshell, there is no gender discrimination as far as work environment and promotional opportunities are concerned.

Work Life Balance

Only 35% women faced the work life balance problems. 65% women said that they had no work life balance problems and they get adequate time for home. 62% women admitted that they can easily participate in family functions and gatherings.

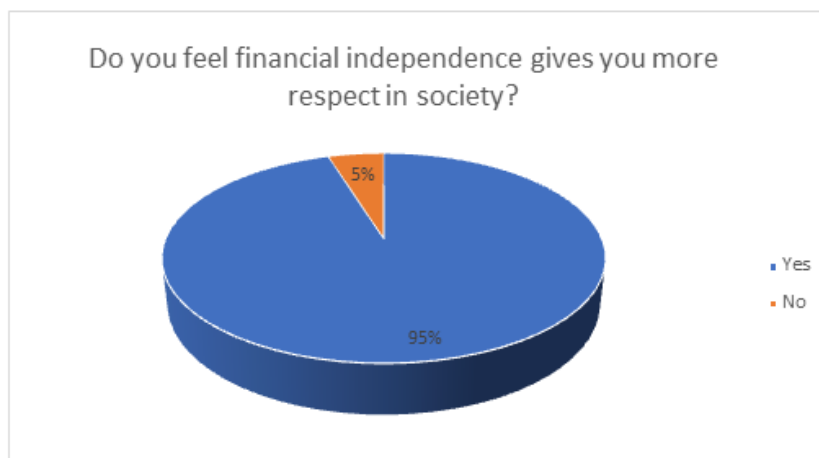




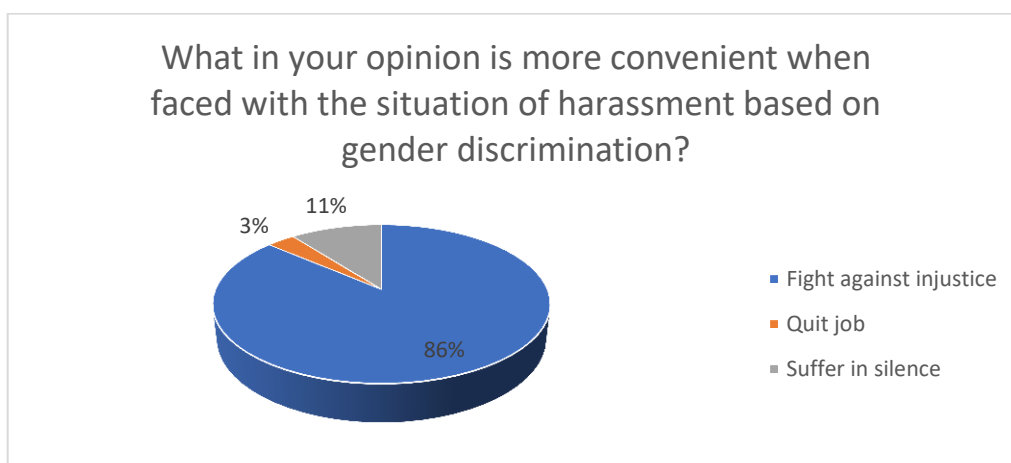
So it is evident from the study that most of the women get adequate time for home chores and they can easily fulfil their social obligations.

Financial Independence and Respect in Society

Being working gives the women financial independence where they not only earn but also decide how to spend, where to spend and when to spend. Majority of the respondents (95%) are independent in their financial decisions and it gives them more respect in society.



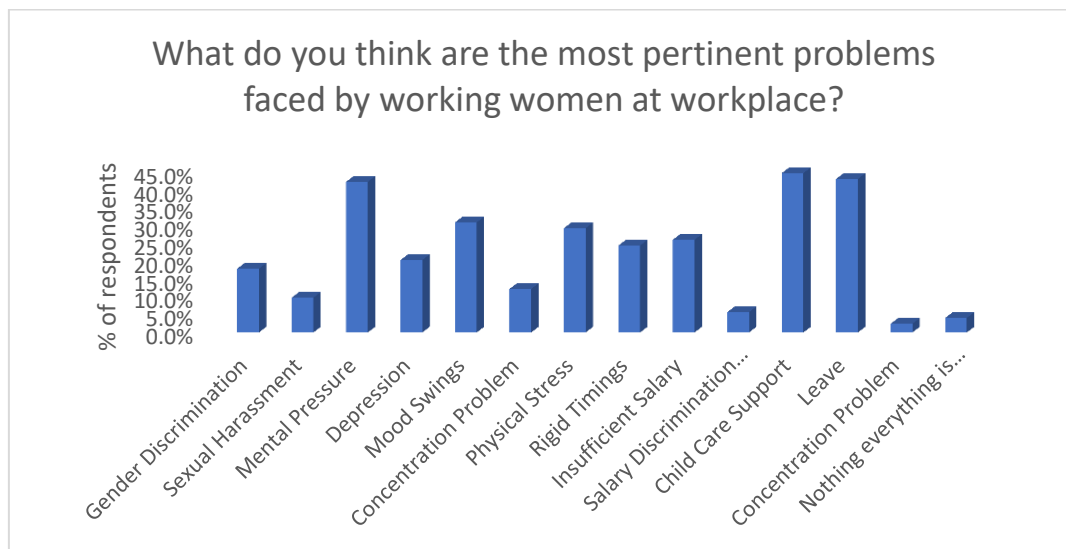
Facing Harassment based on Gender Discrimination



Majority of the respondents (86%) are ready to fight against injustice when faced with the situation of harassment based on gender discrimination. On the other hand 11% women said they would prefer to suffer in silence while 3% said they would quit the job.

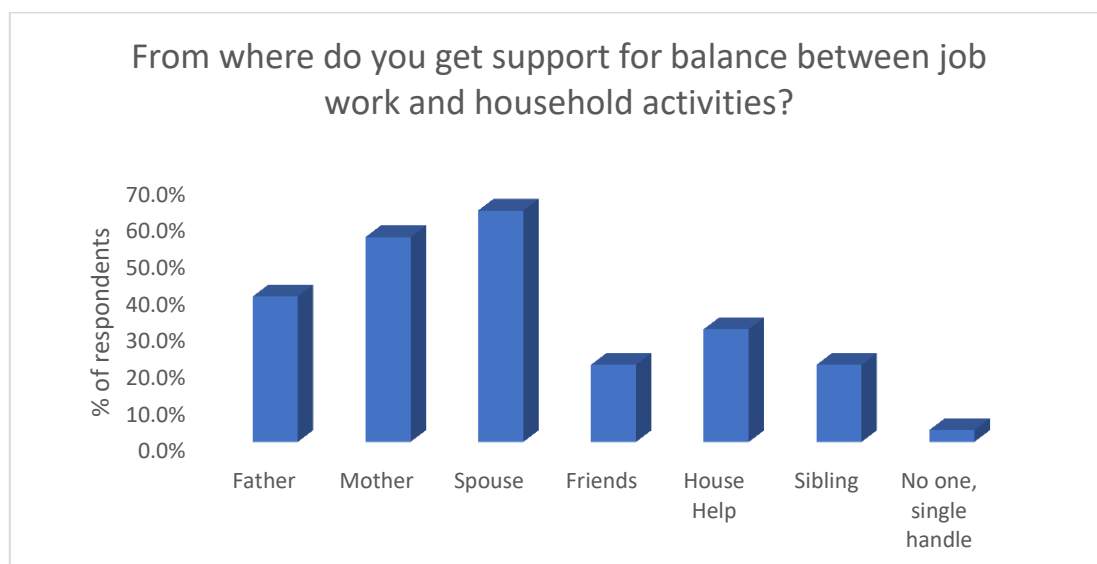
Most Pertinent Problems at Workplace

As per the women participants under study the most pertinent problem faced by working women is child care support and it is more faced by women in nuclear family. This problem is more aggravated when leave is not granted or you can take leave. These problems create mental pressure and stress. Rigid timings, Physical fatigue, mood swings, salary discrimination are some other problems being faced. Some of these are interrelated one leading to another.



Support

As far as support is concerned most women get support from their spouse. It shows that both have to help each other for work life balance. Then help comes from parents to manage household activities. House help comes after this. Very few (3.2%) have no one to support and they single-handedly manage their work.



Concluding Remarks:

From the study we can conclude that with changing environment, both social and cultural, there is increased support to the working women. The main problem in the work life balance is mainly in case of child care which results in stress and other related issues. Awareness among working women might be the reason that leading to less problems and they are not hesitant to raise voice against any injustice. The government has enlarged the importance of women by adopting a variety of schemes and programs for their education, skill development, entrepreneurship and self reliance. The solution to the problem of occupational stress in working women lie in the change of mind- set of the culture that man are the bread winner and females are the house- keepers. So there is a need to alter the approach of the employer, policy

makers, family members and society that women be supposed to offer the stress free surroundings at place of job at the same time as well as at residence.

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