

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

India achieved unprecedented economic growth and made noteworthy advances in the fields of science, agriculture, medicine and information technology (CSNSI 2008; Pathak and Singh 2011). The development of a nation cannot only be measured through the technological and materialistic advances, but through the quality of life the people live. The growth of a nation lies in its capacity to elevate the status of the weakest section of its society especially women. Women play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of a country. Despite the unprecedented growth and development, women's position has worsened considerably in every sphere with the exception of some gains for middle class women in terms of education and employment. Gender disparities in women's economic participation have remained deep and persistent in India. Substantial gender gap exists in labour force participation. Women in our country suffer from the disadvantages or repressions according to gender and class. They are victims of the multiple negative factors, and they face both vertical (class) and horizontal (gender) oppressions. There are gender differences in every sphere of society. In India, the situation is worst due to regional, religious and cultural differences and urban-rural disparities. Attainment of equality in human capabilities irrespective of gender in various dimensions has hardly any alternative in the process towards an optimal socio-economic development of any country. In fact, establishing a level playing field in terms of provisions of social and economic opportunities for all men and women irrespective of caste and creed should be the norm in any just society. Aberrations from this norm manifest itself in the form of gender bias in human attainment which of late is a growing malaise in the socio-economic functioning of a number of developing countries.

Provision of equal rights and opportunities has in fact been enshrined in diverse national and global commitments starting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1945) to various national constitutions. Still the picture that emerges

clearly reveals that women are not treated on par with their male counterparts and are in the worst state of well-being in terms of opportunities and benefits. (Datta and Bandyopadhyay, 2004). Women, as a group, are economically more disadvantaged than men, especially in developing countries, where women constitute the economically poorest segment with estimates ranging anywhere between 60 to 70 percent. Studies estimate that over 70 percent of world's poor are women. The underlying causes of these inequalities are centuries old traditions and the economic structure which is based on formal and informal practices/norms. Even elevated status of education as well as health does not let the women to make a free choice in their important decisions of life until they are economically dependent. This social discrimination is closely linked to the economic sphere as well. That is why the women are employed in low paid, insecure and low status activities. Due to social hindrances, women have very low horizontal as well as vertical mobility and have to remain contended with lower wages. Worldwide experience shows that supporting a stronger role for women contributes to economic growth.

Women comprise half of the world's population and perform two thirds of the work, but earn only one third of the total income and own less than a tenth of the resources. The most discriminated people in the world are usually the ones who lack economic power (Saksena, 2004). Labour force participation rate of women is below 40 per cent in all countries in the region except in the Maldives and Nepal. The workforce participation rate of India from 1971 – 2011 is given in Table 1.1

According to the information provided by the Labour Bureau (2012-2013), the work participation rate for women has increased from 22.27 per cent in 1991 to 25.5 percent in 2011. Though the work participation rate of women has increased, it is substantially less (35.8 percent) in comparison to the work participation rate of men (53.3 percent) in 2011. India has the lowest workforce participation rate of women among the BRICS and other nations. Women's participation in economic activities is influenced by "notion of honor and respectability" (Walter & Desai, 2003). Both in the industrially developed and less developed countries, women are burdened with cumulative inequalities as a result of discriminatory socio-economic practices in India. The situation is much worse particularly in the case of rural women in India. Women not

only get pushed into low wage jobs but they are even paid lower remuneration than their male counterparts. The underlying rationale behind this is the supposition that women are materially dependent on men, and therefore the issue of equal remuneration seems an aberration.

TABLE 1.1
WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN INDIA

Year	Total/Rural/Urban	Persons	Male	Female
1971	Total	33.08	52.61	12.11
	Rural	34.03	53.62	13.42
	Urban	29.34	48.82	6.68
1981	Total	36.70	52.62	19.67
	Rural	38.79	53.77	23.06
	Urban	29.99	49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.50	51.61	22.27
	Rural	40.09	52.58	26.79
	Urban	30.16	48.92	9.19
2001	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.25	50.60	11.88
2011	Total	39.8	53.3	25.5
	Rural	41.8	53.0	30.0
	Urban	35.3	53.8	15.4

Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour, 2012-13.

Employment and Gender

During the last three decades there has been an increase in the number of women in the workplace (Davidson & Burke, 2004). However, the distribution of women's employment varies from men across sectors and within hierarchical structures (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Peppard, 2007). Research shows that women worldwide are still underrepresented in the so called 46 male occupations as well as in the upper levels of organisations (Heilman, 2012). According to statistical information nine out of ten employees in the construction industry are men (EOC, 2001). Moreover, according to

Wilson (2003) women are more likely to be employed in professions such as teaching or nursing whilst professions such as medicine and law are dominated by men. Furthermore, women are found in routine office work or cleaning more often than men and are least likely to be encountered in skilled manual work such as heavy duty vehicles drivers (EOC, 2001). The reasons for this gendered variation are several and contentious. What is clear is the involvement of structural and cultural influences, at least to some degree. In the words of Heilman (2012), “people can be disadvantaged in how they are viewed not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the gender group to which they belong”, meaning that women’s employment may be affected by the expectations adhered to them just because they are female. Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997) also suggested that the perceived unfitness of women, especially in male dominated jobs, can act as a hindrance to their work progression.

In terms of career advancement, women account for 30 percent of all managerial jobs across Europe (Kirton & Green, 2005). The failure to advance women in senior positions at the same rate as men (public and private sectors), in all developed countries, has been documented in research and via statistical evidence (Davidson & Cooper, 1993). In Wirth’s words (2001, p. 26) “women’s interest in professional and managerial work and the predicted shortages of highly qualified managers have not resulted in women obtaining senior executive positions in significant numbers”. In 1995, women comprised less than 55 percent of senior management in the UK and the US while in many other countries, including Australia, it was close to only two percent (Sinclair, 1995). In 2010, women lead in only two percent of Fortune 500 companies and only in five companies of the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 stock index. Women account for only 4 percent of the Presidents and 10 percent of the members of the decision-making bodies in the largest organisations within the European Union (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). In Finland, despite the fact that almost half of the workforce is women they continue to hold only a small percentage of managerial positions and even less positions in top - line management (Valinaki et al., 2009). Even though 30 percent of Finnish managers are women (Statistics Finland, 2007) just seven – eight percent are CEOs. In the USA, in 2000, women held 46.5 percent of the US working positions, but only 11.7 percent of Board of Directors positions, and only 12. 5 percent were corporate

officers of those companies (Gregory, 2003). Taking into account the increasing rate of corporate positions held by women it seems that by 2020 women will occupy more working positions than men but men will still hold about 75 percent of high ranked positions referred to in Fortune 500 companies.

Gender Gap

Women working in the western liberal states have better access to the labor market and have a relatively low wage gap. Such measures have provided women with better social-economic status. But women in Asia have not experienced many of these opportunities. Most women are employed in low paid and low skilled jobs where sexual harassment is an everyday occurrence. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2008) released by the Swiss - based World Economic Forum, no country closed the gap between men and women when it comes to economic participation and opportunity, education attainment, political empowerment, health and survival. The three highest ranked countries – Norway, Finland and Sweden – closed a little over 80 per cent of their gender gaps while the lowest ranked country Yemen closed only a little lower 46 per cent. India was ranked 113 out of the total 130 countries, with a score of 0.6060. India was ranked 125 in economic participation and opportunity, 116 in education attainment, 25 in political empowerment, and 128 in health and survival. To maximise its competitiveness and development potential, each country should strive for gender equality and give women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men. In the current global financial and economic crisis, it is more vital than ever that women's economic participation does not shrink. The minds and talents of both women and men will be needed to produce the most creative solutions and to prevent such crisis in the future. Asian women face even severe wage gap. Most women make between 50 and 70 percent of their male colleagues' salaries and benefits depending on the professions (Walter and Desai, 2003).

While there has been an increase in the number of women involved in decision-making or appointed to decision-making posts in the EU over the last years, power is still firmly in the hands of men within the political and economic spheres. Gender discrimination is also visible in other aspects of employment. In the United Kingdom, for example, a recent report by the Equal Opportunities Commission states

that 30,000 women each year lose their jobs because of their pregnancy (ILO, 2007). Women are rarely found in the higher management position in Asia compared to Western countries. A Wall Street Journal report asserts: "Currently, the percentage of women on corporate boards and executive committees in Asian countries severely lags behind the West. Women accounted for only 6 percent of seats on corporate boards in the markets studied, compared with 17 percent in Europe and 15 percent in the U.S" (Chu & Ramstad, 2012). Even in China which has one of the highest female labor participation rates in the world, (at 74 percent), less than 10 percent of executive board and committee members are women (Chu & Ramstad, 2012).

According to the Indian Census 2001, the total labour force in India is 402.5 million of which only 32 per cent (127 million) are women. The Economic Survey 2003-04 found that the number of women employed in the organised sector stood at 4.95 million on March 31, 2002, which is about 18.1 per cent of the total organised sector employment in the country. The Survey found that the proportion of women in organised sector employment is higher in states with higher female literacy. Women working in the organised sector form only 3.2 per cent of the female workforce, while the rest of the women work in unorganised sector. More and more women are being pushed into the highly exploitative unorganised sector jobs with no job security and less pay.

There are many dimensions of gender bias and equity in the economic sphere (Kannan, 2007). However the worst sufferers are women from the poorer household in rural areas belonging to socially weaker sections. There could be other layers on this bottom layer. First, there is the issue of narrow range of economic opportunities. Ninety six per cent of women workers in the country are unorganised workers as against 89 per cent for men. The percentage of women not able to secure minimum wages is quite high. Though both men and women work, there are significant gender differences in the nature and conditions of work and wages. Other than wages, discrimination against women workers is also found at the level of recruitment, selection for skilled jobs and promotions. The employers are prejudiced against employing women, especially in jobs where workers have always been men. The problems of working women at work places are multiple and differ from woman to woman according

to the nature of work and position. There is a general perception that women are less capable than men in matters of administration and decision making. Even though women perform well at managerial levels, only very meager percentage of them is at the top decision making levels. Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men. Both in the formal and informal sectors, women face less favourable conditions, have less access to education, training and thereby have lower skills. Therefore, first, conditions for men and women must be both equitable to meet the minimum standards. Second, since the government policy is to encourage greater employment opportunities for women, working conditions and labour policy needs to accommodate the gender specific needs of women workers. So the first step in this direction would be to surface from the perspective of both women and men, their needs and issues in the work-place. The gender gap among the states in India for the year 2001 has been depicted in Table 1.2.

In 2001, the gender gap in work participation was maximum at 48 for Daman and Diu and minimum for Manipur at 8. The average of the gender gap in work participation for India is 26. Gender gap in Indian society has existed for generations. The sole reason for this disparity is the culture of India which involves dowry system, child marriage, preference of men over women in almost every field. The gender gap in employment continues to be large in the region, with a general tendency towards a further widening. Women are more present in the informal economy, often involved in subsistence agriculture. Due to economic crisis, women are frequently forced to accept jobs below their qualification levels in order to be able to continue supporting their households. The current fiscal consolidation measures and the cuts in government spending heavily affected the funds available for social programmes for the most vulnerable groups of women.

TABLE 1. 2
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WORK PARTICIPATION – 2001

RANK	STATES	GENDER GAP
1	Daman & Diu	48
2	Delhi	43
3	Chandigarh	42
4	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	41
5	Lakshadweep	36
6	West Bengal	36
7	Pondicherry	36
8	Kerala	35
9	Punjab	35
10	Goa	33
11	Uttar Pradesh	31
12	Tripura	30
13	Bihar	29
14	Assam	29
15	Jammu & Kashmir	28
16	Orissa	28
17	Gujarat	27
18	Tamil Nadu	27
19	Karnataka	25
20	Haryana	23
21	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23
22	Jharkhand	22
23	Andhra Pradesh	21
24	Maharashtra	20
25	Uttarchal	19
26	Sikkim	19
27	Madhya Pradesh	19
28	Rajasthan	17
29	Arunachal Pradesh	15
30	Meghalaya	13
31	Chhatisgarh	13
32	Himachal Pradesh	11
33	Nagaland	9
34	Mizoram	9
35	Manipur	8
	India	26

Source: Census 2001 & Annual report of D/O Women and Child Development, 2001-02

Gender Discrimination at Workplace

Employee is a back bone of the organization that performs critical tasks for the survival of the organization and employee productivity is affected by gender discrimination. There is an alarming rise in the rates of gender discrimination at

workplaces nowadays. Gender comprises a range of differences between men and women, extending from the biological to the social. Discrimination is treating differently on the basis of sex or race. On the basis of above definitions one can conclude that basically gender discrimination is preference of one gender upon other. The gender discrimination may exist in various dimensions which include hiring discrimination, differences in salary and wages, discrimination/differences in promotion and inequity related to different goods and facilities provided to different gender. Every now and then we come across reports related to gender discrimination at workplace. Gender discrimination can take place in various forms in respect to unusual or unequal and harsh treatment to a person of one sex as compared to the person of the other sex. It is the practice of letting a person's sex unfairly become a factor when deciding who receives a job, promotion, or other employment benefit. Gender discrimination at workplace is still very much alive and kicking. It most often affects women who feel they have been unfairly discriminated against in favour of a man.

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

candidate does not automatically indicate gender bias (Ram Krishna Sahu,2009). The different forms in which gender discrimination at work place is prevalent are:

- Gender pay-gap - unequal pay between both genders.
- Gender discrimination at entry level - obstacles experienced by women during job recruitment. Women are not allowed to progress even if they are talented to - they are kept at the entry level jobs by the employers.
- The most severe form in which this discrimination occurs is sexual harassment - performing activities and favors which are sexual in nature to other employees and employer in return for job, promotion, etc. Often, the male employees are ignored for meetings where the clients are needed to be entertained and the women employees are preferred for various reasons even though the male employees might possess much more knowledge than the female employees in that particular area of expertise.
- Bullying employees and delegating office work which might not cover the specialization of the concerned employee.
- The men are often rewarded with higher incentives and salaries as compared to women, but it is to be noted that the women in several cases have proved to be more deserving and hardworking and deserve a better position in the area of workplace.
- Promotion are generally handed to the male employees as they are expected to be more responsible and capable of handling the job which might be a debatable question as nowadays women are better off as compared to the men at top level of organization.
- Research has stated that in workplaces men and women who are generally involved with the other sex are judged more harshly when they commit mistakes and are constantly in danger of falling off a “glass cliff” in the workplace. Women are more vulnerable to such a fall. (Ankur Shukla , 2011).

Types of Discrimination in the Workplace

In the 21st century also discrimination at workplace is prevalent in one form or other. It may be observed in terms of hiring, in return of some favours, firing an employee from the job for improper reasons, following unfair promotion practices,

offering insufficient salary, and simply behaving badly at the workplace. The different types of discriminations are

Age Discrimination

An organisation may prefer younger candidates as potential employees to employees in their middle ages, just because younger employees are more likely to work for a lesser pay. This age discrimination in the workplace may even be put into practice while terminating employees.

Personality Discrimination

Companies may also refuse to recruit or mistreat employees just because they are not good-looking and do not have a pleasing personality, irrespective of their skill sets. Some organizations may even reject job applicants who are obese or disabled.

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination in the workplace means the employer gives importance to the employee's gender, rather than skill, while deciding on the pay, promotion, and work responsibilities. There are two main categories of gender discrimination: (i) Disparate treatment (ii) Disparate impact

- (i) Disparate treatment, is simply treating an employee differently (disparately) because of his or her gender. For example - an employee may be discriminated against by being asked discriminatory questions during a job interview, an employer does not hire, promote or wrongly terminate an employee based on his or her gender, or employers pay unequally based on gender.
- (ii) Disparate impact is a more complex concept. It regards company policies or practices that exclude persons of one gender from a job or from promotions although the policy or practice was not designed to do so. There is a disparate impact on one gender. An example is the policy of many fire departments that had strength requirements for hiring firefighter that far exceeded the strength needed by an individual to work effectively as a firefighter. Such excessive strength requirements had a disparate impact on women, many of whom

had enough strength to be a good firefighter, but not enough strength to meet the department's requirement (Ram Krishna Sahu, 2009).

Gender discrimination at workplace may prevail in different forms. Some of them are as under:

Gender Pay Gap

Discrimination in payment is done on the basis of gender. Men are provided higher wages than women.

Gender Entry Gap

Discrimination is there at the time of recruitment on the basis of gender. Men are given preference over women for higher or top level position in the organization.

Gender Advancement Gap

Taking into consideration gender, discrimination is done in career advancement. In spite of talent, qualification and experience, women may not be allowed to progress in terms of career advancement.

Sexual Harassment

Demand is made by the employer or higher authority for sexual activities and favors in turn for giving promotion or employment.

Marital Status Discrimination

Marital status discrimination takes place when the employer takes decisions about employment while considering whether the person is married, living alone, divorced, or widowed.

Religious Discrimination

This discrimination relates to the situation when the employer favors a person for job offers, promotions, and pay increase; just because he belongs to his own religion. In religious discrimination, people from other religions are likely to be ill-treated.

Native place Discrimination

The employer favors a person for job offers based on the native place of a person. Some companies reject job applications on the basis of the country the applicants are from, the race they belong to, and the language they speak (Stephen Rampur, 2011).

Glass Ceiling

Glass ceiling is the term used to define employment discrimination or the discriminatory phenomenon that takes place at workplace and which poses a hurdle in the path of professional advancement of those towards whom such discrimination is directed (Ishani Chatterjee Shukla, 2011). This is a frequent term that has been used for the past three decades to describe the discrimination that is faced by women. It is an invisible barrier that prevents or limits women from achieving top level positions in the workplaces. These barriers can be regarding-culture, psychological factors, stereotypes, sociological, etc. As a result of these barriers women are not able to progress to more powerful positions of management. The most valid reason for these so called barriers is that men are not used to see women in more powerful positions. A similar reason is that women are not used to go high levels of powers and are expected to make mistakes at those levels. Even from the ancient times men used to be the rulers. That typical stereotype of women, still prevails in the minds of men. Another main reason is education gap, this was valid in the 70s and 80s but now this is not a valid reason as people have become aware and the education gap between sexes is narrowing.

Powell and Graves (2003) conducted a study to indicate that proportion of women in the managerial ranks has increased in almost all countries. But irrespective of this, most of the women working at managerial level find it hard to make upward progression to the top most management positions. They are confronted with the phenomenon of 'Glass ceiling' practices by the organizations to hinder the progression of female managers. It can be noted that the proportion of women in lower and midlevel management positions has increased dramatically, while the proportion of women reaching top management positions or climbing up the corporate ladder has remained relatively small (ILO, 2002). Indian companies seriously lack women in senior management roles. Women Managers, despite being highly educated often remain in lower management positions with little access to challenging assignments and power (Jain & Mukherji, 2010). However, even if women can break though the 'glass ceiling' and get to the top, many have to leave their jobs in order to take care of their families. The same report reveals that "an average of 30 percent of senior managers surveyed said that many or most women, who reached the middle and senior levels of

management and left their jobs voluntarily, did so due to family commitments” (Chu & Ramstad, 2012).

Gender discrimination in different occupation

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro social forestry, fisheries etc. But yet they have remained as “invisible workers”. Gender discrimination runs deep at many levels in agriculture. Women manage every aspect of farm work, but are not considered farmers. They toil in the fields planting, sowing, weeding, and harvesting but are not landowners. They harvest and process the produce, but men largely control the market and income. Still, women in general take up only specific jobs, which the male workers usually avoid. It shows a tendency towards a system of job-segregation in the agricultural labor force. Such job segregation has several consequences. It creates a disparity in wage rates between the male and female, the reservation of high prestige and high wage jobs for men and low prestige and low-wage jobs for women workers. It brings down the bargaining power of women workers and reduces them to the state of marginal, intermittent oppressive labor, which is mostly unorganized. Hence the agricultural women laborers constitute the most exploited segment of laborers and their levels of employment and wages remain significantly below those of men in the agricultural labor market.

Discrimination against female workers still runs rampant in the construction industry, About one-third of these workers are women and children. Women are almost unskilled labourers and they face serious problems related to work, viz., wage discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, unhealthy job relationship, lower wages etc.. Despite all these, construction industry overwhelmingly attracts female workers. Their skills are always at the same level and are not upgraded as they assist only the male worker in the workplace. They perform various unskilled jobs in the industry like cleaning building sites, carrying bricks, gravel, mortar and water up to the skilled carpenters and masons. Irrespective of the number of years they worked, they are not upgraded from unskilled to skilled as males. This mindset has led to gender discrimination in this sector for work allocation and wage distribution (Suchitra and

Rajshekhar, 2006). Such anti-women attitudes and discrimination further complicate the workplace culture of these women labour. They live very tough life and do not enjoy equality of status and social justice which they actually deserve. Sexual harassment is a serious problem for female construction workers.

In ITES sector, the employees are literate and skilled; they have similar education, age, eligibility etc. Still discrimination occurs in this sector. In the first phase of IT revolution, women mostly find jobs in the lower end work such as data entry and word processing, and assembly of electronic components. However, as manufacturing advances and manual jobs become obsolete, women found new opportunities in services such as information processing, software development, and call center support. It is undeniable that Indian women have made significant inroad into the higher value added segments of the IT industry. But NSSO estimates as Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2008) explains, the newer activities that are much cited such as IT and finance continue to absorb only a tiny proportion of urban women workers. Women workers in all IT-related activities that is, computer hardware and software as well as IT-enabled services account for only 0.3 per cent of the urban women workers in large sample, amounting to an estimated total of 74,000 workers at most. Software and ITES segment are employing more women and brand themselves as women friendly industries. In Indian software sector, in spite of continuously increasing number of female employees at entry level as per NASSCOM-PWC Report (2010), number of women at middle management and top management level is stagnant at 11 percent and 1.5 percent. At entry level female labor force is increasing steadily and their proportion has reached now 45 percent. But this higher number at entry level doesn't ensure equal representation at higher level which is evidenced as 'leaky pipe line'. Moreover, it is believed that female employees in ITES at times face discrimination in compensation, recruitment, promotion, participation in decision making, leadership roles etc.

Research Gap

The standard literature on gender discrimination characterizes the discrimination in many ways. It can be measured by gender wage gap and its variants such as sticky floor, glass ceiling, and also by occupational gender sorting. Earlier studies like Gunderson (1979), Donald Cox (1989), Michael Schultz (1995), Altonji and Blank

(1999), Martin Patrick (2000), Mariana Alfonso (2001), Hilary M.lips (2003), Yusuf Ziya Ozcan (2003), Grisanaputi, Wipawee (2005), Shaik Haffis et.al (2011),PanchananDas (2012), Nani Bendelani et.al (2014) Ashish Singh (2015) focussed on wage / pay discrimination. And a few studies like Mia Hultin (1998), Grisanaputi, wipawee (1999), Suriya,M. (2003), Samantha Velluti (2008), Michailidis. (2012), and Abhishek Mishra (2014) focused on other discriminations during recruitment, promotion, decision making etc. Most of these studies pertain to employees in United States, African countries, Pakistan, Japan and China. Few attempts have been made in Indian context to explain gender discrimination at work place (Tripathy and Das, 1991; Sivakumar, 2008; Malhotra and Chand, 2012; Sharma and Sharma, 2012; Mishra, 2014). No attempt has been made to analyse perception of gender discrimination at workplace among ITES employees focusing on their socio-economic profile, employment and working conditions, promotions, benefits, facilities, problems at workplace and job satisfaction. Filling the research gap is very significant as gender equality and empowered women are catalyst for achieving sustainable development. Thus gender discrimination at workplace in ITES organization is the right sector to be focused in this modern era.

Need for the Study

In developing countries, the economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns on all development investments. Gender discrimination at workplace is a matter of concern for any democratic and developing country as it holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies to the disadvantage of both men and women. Gender issues are not simply talking about women issues. Understanding gender means understanding opportunities, constraints and the impact of change as they affect both men and women. Equal opportunities and advancement to female workers is a requirement of time; therefore there are campaigns across the globe which emphasis on women empowerment and women rights in all aspects including education, employment and advancement. Even today, gender discrimination at work place is still very much alive and kicking despite women having

attained incredible triumph in the so-called male dominating working world. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of women in the workforce over the years with a parallel increase in the number of highly educated women equipped with technical expertise. It is undeniable that Indian women have made significant inroad into the higher value added segments of the IT industry. There are estimated 38 percent of female software programmers, largest of any demography. It is believed that female programmers at times face discrimination in compensation and promotion. However, in BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) and IT (Information Technology) which are the emerging areas of working atmosphere, not many studies have been done on the issues of gender discrimination. In this sector we face homogenous group of people in age, education etc., and it will be the most perfect area to analyze whether the issue of gender discrimination is prevalent in this sector and suggest ways to eliminate the same.

Scope for the study

The research focuses upon an important issue within the Indian industry, as more and more women become part of the labour force in India. Women in India have been a part of the labour market for many years, but their contribution has been mainly in agriculture. It is only recently that more and more women are entering into the organized job market in India, although a majority of the opportunity is being created in the urban areas. The change in the employment scenario for women has been a result of the liberalization of the economy which propelled the growth of private sector companies in India. The emergence of service sector industries like banking, hospitality, software services and business process outsourcing has created a lot of opportunities for women workers in India. However, India has to go a long way in achieving the level of women employment and equal opportunity which western countries like the UK and the USA has been able to achieve. The reason for the lower level of overall women employment in India is the existence of several "social, organizational, and personal biases" (Budhwar et al., 2005). However, studies have revealed that with liberalization of the economy the situation is changing rapidly in the labour market in India with reference to women's participation. On the international front, the focus on women's issues is also contributing to their evaluation in the Indian context. Opportunities for

women lie in urban areas. Therefore, gender equality as a concept driven by the industry, is more pertinent to the urban workforce. Keeping in mind this particular peculiarity of the Indian labour market, this research aims to understand the employment scenario that exists in India and the perceptions that women workers have about this issue and how they feel about their position with reference to their male counterparts. Therefore the research scope is limited to only one segment of the labour market in India i.e. the urban labour market.

The issue of gender is vast in terms of the nature of the labour market in India, which is spread over both urban and rural areas. While rural employment opportunities for women are restricted to few of the basic occupations like agriculture, the multiplicity of job with increasing number of women finding their way into the corporate arena, the issue of gender equality has become important. This is more so because work discrimination and sexual harassment are found to exist even though there are a greater percentage of women in the workforce (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Gruber and Bjorn, 1982).

In this context, an attempt is made to examine the challenges and problems faced by ITES employees based on gender. The gender discrimination faced by the employees would cause them strain and which in turn affects their career. Hence, an attempt is made to analyse various aspects of ITES employees such as their socio-economic profile, employment and working conditions, promotions, problems at workplace, and their perception regarding gender discrimination. Such an attempt will pave way:

- To suggest suitable policy decisions for employers to encourage, provide better safety and ensure a conducive climate for women employees.
- To enact suitable policy decisions to encourage and empower the women employees.
- Since not many researches are done on gender discrimination at workplace among ITES employees in India, the findings and suggestions that would emerge from the study would help to make required amendment in the labour law for discrimination among women employees.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of the selected respondents.
2. To identify the gender differences in employment factors and working conditions.
3. To study perception of the employees' on equal opportunities at work, decision-making, emoluments, facilities, benefits and problems at work place.
4. To assess the interrelation between perceived gender discrimination at workplace and professional growth for female employees.
5. To study the gender differences on the perception of the employees on the determinants of job satisfaction.
6. To recommend policies to reduce gender discrimination.

Hypothesis

In the course of the study the following hypotheses was examined

1. The gender of the respondents is independent of the selected socio-demographic and economic factors.
2. The average monthly income of the respondents is independent of age of the respondents, education status, marital status and type of family.
3. The gender of the respondents is independent of the employment factors and working conditions.
4. Women employees were discriminated in terms of career progression, equal opportunities, leadership role and onsite job.
5. Perceived gender discrimination causes work place harassment and career growth hindrances, causing a decline in job satisfaction and indirectly affects professional growth.
6. Gender differences are not visible on the perception of the employees' on facilities, benefits and problems at work place.
7. Work conditions, fairness, promotion, and pay are the key factors affecting ITES employees' job satisfaction.

The findings and conclusions emerging from the present study will be of immense help to the policymakers and the government to formulate suitable policies and programmes to eliminate gender discrimination and pave the way for women empowerment, inclusive growth and the achievement of millenium development goals.