

**By exploring the role of women labour in the tourism/hospitality industry, critically examine the barriers they face and the extent to which these might be addressed by employers**

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## Introduction

The hospitality sector is one of the fastest growing sectors across the globe. Due to its structure, hospitality offers variety of direct and indirect employment opportunities in almost all the areas of the national economy. The jobs in hospitality are always attractive for both men and women on the account of better job satisfaction and salary. Though, the concern for all the academician and management practitioner is that women workforce is still under-presented at medium and high level management. Hospitality industry has evolved as one of the fastest growing industries across the globe, employing a large number of people and generating huge foreign currency, especially in the developing countries. Hospitality is often defined as “any and all businesses and devices aiming to serve people outside of their private home” (Barrows, 1999). The paper aims at exploring the role of women labour in the tourism/hospitality industry, which includes the critically examination of the barriers they face and the extent to which these might be addressed by employers.

## Gender Segregation in Society

The study on Gender Inequality at Work in Industrial Countries done by Blackburn, Girts and Jarman (2009) provided enough evidence that there is the large extend of occupational gender segregation in society. The employment of women in his segregated both vertically and horizontally. The occupational segregation of women is done based on their “feminine” characteristics and domestic skills. The job of the women with lower status is showing the vertical segregation. This is also seen in hospitality sector, where most of the women are mainly employed in the worst areas with lower wages (Barsh & Yee, 2011). The some of the gender inequality factors are like they lack in opportunities, no mobility in the service, their hard work and dedication goes unnoticed and so on. The other factors include job characteristics, mentoring, and gender issue, balancing personal and professional life, relationships at work, family concerns, work atmosphere and long work hours.

On the other side, horizontal segregation exists at managerial level. This meant that men holds the managerial position like security, finance and food section in hospitality, while

women holds personnel training, banquet and conferences management role. The horizontal segregation mainly suggests the functional areas. Despite the importance of women in the hospitality industry, women are primarily considered for lower jobs in hospitality industry (Davidson, & Burke, 2011). They are employed based on their domestic and feminine characteristics as they are considered to be better off doing compared to men (Nomura, 2013). This has been proved with the report of McKenzie-Gentry (2007) that only 3% of the women in the overall staff of the Belize, which is well dedicated for mass tourism have been deployed to managerial position. The other report of Nebel III, Lee and Vidakovic (1995) on vertical segregation stated that almost 93% of the men are working at the position of manager in hotel industry. The women are mainly in the slight management and supervision job. All these studies have proved the glass ceiling that blocks the entry of the women in the high paid jobs.

## Direct Discrimination

The gender pay gap reflects the inequality issues in the labour market of HCT. This is also remains an major problem across the labour market globally. The women are having the great amount of disadvantages at their workplace, even they are not getting the similar level of freedom as others are getting. This kind of discrimination mainly impacts the women as some of the women are getting less payment against men for the same job. This is also known as direct discrimination by Barsh & Yee (2011). The one of the major reason is that women's competencies are less evaluated as against men. The job which requires similar skills, experience and qualification tend to be poorly incentivized by the company in the case of women. For instance, female room attendant in hotels are earning against men who are working kitchen as helper , though the required work skills will be same for both profiles. Moreover, it has been observed that the pay level and career progression also witnessed some biasness in the favour of men. For example ; where both the men and women are equally qualified for the particular job , the more responsibilities and better career progression is attached to men, while minimal in the case of women.

The study focused on the under – representation of the women managers that is the major constraint for the women’s career advancement (Ng and Pine, 2003). The one of the reason is that women is lacking in maintaining the balancing work and private life. The domestic affair task is largely handled by women. Therefore, Kattara, (2005) stated that the overall employment rate of the women with dependent children is just 62.4 percent as against the 91.4 percent for men with depend children. Due to time constraint, some of the women are now a days are considering part time jobs as this allows the women to make the effective balance between their family responsibilities and work life. This is the only reason that one third women in Europe is doing work part as against only 8% of the men. More than three quarters of part time is being performed by women.

The Opengart (2002) identified some of the factors that are the major challenge for women career growth such as social expectation, the models that lacks diversity, women’s primary care and some of the responsibilities towards their home and career pattern that is purely changed from the women. Woods and Kavanaugh (1994) mentioned in his study that 80% of the men and women still perceive the gender discrimination along with that sexual harassment is the main concern for women. The other major barrier is the masculine organizational behaviour which indicates that people who are ambitious will opt for competitive work environment, on the other side, people who are less competitive will go for less competitive environment. These have been suggested by Vianen and Fischer (2002) that men will pursue competitive culture against women. Therefore, women would feel under represented at managerial level due to challenge associated with the profile and their organizational cultural preferences. The women are feeling less ambitious as against men while performing the top management job.

Doherty and Manfredi (2001) mentioned that cliché in the hospitality industry works that “right kind of personality” is more crucial employment requirement than employees’ formal qualifications. He stated that personality is primarily used in hospitality as a synonym for the sexual attractiveness. There are number of jobs are categorised patriarchally-prescribed jobs, because conventional practices prescribe the gender appropriate in each case. Due to

household division of labour and gender socialisation, the employers see tacit skills of women and consider them to be having “inherent aptitudes” relevant to the job requirements in the hospitality. Therefore, Baum (1999) also added that there are primarily three elements that determine or predispose employers to hire particular kinds of work in hospitality industry: sex, gender, and labour price.

The other findings of the Purcell (1996), and Doherty and Manfredi (2001) came up with interesting conclusions that the jobs in restaurants and bars were gendered mainly due to the reason that the employers were intending to hire inexpensive labour no matter what their sex is. Cleaning jobs were specifically considered that women were better off cleaning compared to men (Roberts, 2013). Thus, this job was patriarchally-prescribed job. Their findings stated that jobs during the nights are usually gender typified as women were not considered for night job in Italian hospitality industry on the account of safety as well as social reasons.

Barsh, & Yee (2011) mentioned that companies are only concerning about their profits, but at the same time they are simply ignoring the internal factors regarding how to manage their workforce like career advancement of women working in their organization.

Although, dedication, good communication and problem solving skills may make a woman equal to a man, but the ‘luck’ factor remains stronger to the male domain side. Women today are facing numerous problems at work which leads to lack in development in their careers (Davidson, & Burke, 2011). The survey data of the (Yousuf, 2014) also added that that the levels of stress and job satisfaction influences in their marital, parental and managerial status. The women usually hired for a non-managerial post and mostly hired as hostess, house-keeping and labourer (Roberts, 2013). They are mostly noticeable in guest relations’ and human resource departments. Managerial positions are taken by them in housekeeping, considering them as a female forte (Sabarwal, Sinha, & Buvinic, 2011). Though the managing post is a pride post, but the tension in women’s work life and higher level of stress level e women are not being able to fulfil the demand on their jobs and clasp under pressure. (Burgess, 2003). also adding that stress brings a crash of failure which invites more stress making it evil cycle, resulting in a falling performance.

The other problem faced by the women in hospitality is humiliation. They have to go through various humiliations a lack respects from the management while performing the low paid jobs/ This is especially happens with the housekeeping staff. This humiliation propelled the poor performance level. Moreover, the under performance by the women employees leads to down fall of self-esteem and job satisfaction (Church, and Frost, 2004).

One of the common problems faced by married women is the higher amount of domestic stress (Potter, & Banyard, 2011). It has been observed that most of the married women find difficult to handle their personal and professional life. Their responsibilities are merged in such a way that they cannot escape it without any stress compared as against the unmarried women, where they face less domestic stress and responsibilities confronting domestic and professional commitments (Sabarwal, Sinha, & Buvinic, 2011). They are even less affected by work and life conflict. The degree of stress seen in married women workers is higher in evaluating to unmarried women workers (Gmelch, 2003). The managers are required to give some privilege and liberty to married women. However, Ng and Pine (2003) argued that married is not being the major constraint as family and work conflict is the major conflict.

### Issues for Women in Hospitality Industry

Another problems faced by the women are burdened with heavy work load. Majority of the women find it difficult to face the challenges of their hotel job and house responsibilities because of the heavy workload at both the fronts simultaneously (Nomura, 2013). But majority of the women agree that their efficiency at work could be more if they can get full support from their home. The work pressure affects personal life too and the symptoms can be clearly seen in them (Kattara, 2005).

The poor working conditions and pathetic attitude of the management in the hotels makes the working conditions worst for the women. Klein, H. J., & Delery, J. E. (2012) mentioned in his report that women face much more problems in housekeeping job. While hotel workers are hurt physically, the rate of getting hurt is 25% that too only in women workers. He stated that around 91% of women have suffered work-related pains and injuries(.While sexual assault is

areas he found that invasive of harassment is unsafe during the working conditions for the women who work in this industry.. Katz, and Tanzi, (2013) also added that the managements act as stone and silent. Management usually giving the guest as highest priority instead of women employees. Thus, this will become tough for the women to raise their voice and ask for their safety and a secure workplace (

(Roberts (2013) mentioned that women's growth at highest levels reported strong gains from the last few years. er, but the real issue is that women have been still under signified in their positions compared to men (Roberts, 2013). Therefore, much of diversity is observe in wages, promotion and rewards. Beede, et al., (2011) stated that sluggish growth of the women in hospitality sector is mainly on the account of poor professional knowledge and dearth of experience in hotel industry.). Therefore, some of the researchers such as Nga, and Pine (2003) reckoned that hiring women employers for a higher post would be a disadvantage as she would not be able to handle faultlessly (The real concern is that unless and until the women employers won't be able to convey their problems, the management itself would not understand the concern. Addressing these issues will enable the organization to help the women employees to develop their abilities and create a supportive environment for the women in long term basis (Zhong, Couch, and Blum, 2011). This has been observed that few women opt would remain silent during certain times; there are yet other set of women who show courage especially if they have been a victim of harassment Katz, and Tanzi, 2013). It is important that they need to come forward, share their stories make other people aware too. Misconduct of behaviour should not be tolerated. Launching a campaign is always a better start. Zhong, Couch, and Blum (2011) suggested that if a woman is facing problem of lack of knowledge and understanding she can ask for assistance and training programs so that she can take responsibilities in the administrative. There are many barriers before them but it depends on how you act on it ((Quesenberry, &Trauth ( 2012) also pointed that problem of male dominance should be shared with the management and asking for equal treatment same as the male employees). Women must explain the management the issues they are facing with men dominance. They must share how they have been treated unequally during promotions, payments and rewards (Klein, &Delery, 2012). If an employee is married, she



has to make sure that she keeps her priorities straight and tell the management that workload is unacceptable and it is hard to manage your professional and domestic life together. This will result in making others understand your work table and how work is allotted (Adib, and Guerrier, 2003).

Quesenberry, &Trauth (2012) added that many women pointed that are having the concerns regarding their securities (). Thus, the best way to solve the problem is by making yourself secured by using various facilities available in your hotels. The some of the suggestions are like women can ask for panic buttons, which are worn around you in case of any event of attacks. If she is working in night shift, she must be assured about security related matters . These types of small steps will make hospitality management realize your importance as a woman (Richter, 1995).

Inequality is on both the sides of the workplace which leaves an effect on the health/ safety of women at work. European Risk Observatory says that “examining the specific challenges in terms of health and safety posed by the more extensive integration of women in the labour market”. There research included issues faced by younger, middle aged and older women too. They also included how women lacks in the growth of service sector, harassment, diversified working time patterns and increasingly violence(Potter, &Banyard, 2011).

One of the problems faced by women is competition. Competition among each other for higher post is seen common among the women employees. They carry an attitude for job assignments that often develops among them who want to be in "glamorous positions" which ends up developing harmful and unfortunate attitude making a grunt position (Jordan, 1997),. Glamorous position includes Hostess, Desk Clerk, and Server. These wrong views and missed opportunity to learn about their profession is rarely reversed and never overcome (Church, and Frost, 2004).

The next problem addressed should be communication. With the lack of communication goals women face misunderstanding among guest and management. This problem can be related to countless reasons, including the pattern, notions and bias. Miscommunications can

be developed only when there is lack of understanding which leads to negativity in the organization (Nga, and Pine, 2003).

While employers may choose women in some instances for their “feminine” appeal and lure their customers, the women labour also face embarrassment and teasing from the customers sometimes and the employers may ignore these issues considering the importance of the customers. Even the strong women can break down when they are targeted by the customers for teasing or harassment (Potter, & Banyard, 2011).

Nomura (2013). mentioned in Journal Of Women Health that women labour are more prone to job cut in case of financial crisis, which makes them mentally weaker. Their psyche is developed accordingly and they do not feel secure at the job. Once they have feeling of insecurity, they are not likely to perform in accordance with their potential. It is renowned that the biggest source of working knowledge takes to create a triumphant hospitality environment is through the staff workers. But the level of information goes unrewarded by the management which results in all the losses in a big way. This is the major problem which needs to be addressed, but intently demoted to the human resources department to address and handle (Sparrowe, and Iverson, 1999).

Few employers intently fear of losing their job, or do not understand what decision to be taken in a particular situation if they are facing problems (Beede, et al., 2011). Sometimes they are lost and don't get any way of doing something, and so they prefer to remain quiet and hog to their given tasks which results in workload, stress and mental disturbance (Sabarwal, Sinha, & Buvinic, 2011). This type of unwieldy is unproductive, risky and even hazardous sometimes. The staff thus goes untapped because of their managers or the management who are enable and insensitive towards their staff. Understanding women workers is a duty of the management but very few ask them for help and if not, the staff member chooses to simply stay quiet (Kattara, 2005).

## Conclusion

We live in an era where women are doing wonders in every field and they are at the top positions. Considering them only apt for lower jobs shows the patriarchal mentality. Moreover, women face a lot of challenges working in the industry and it requires a great deal of effort from the employers to solve their problems. Women labour in the hospitality industry generally faces those problems and challenges which are addressable by the employers to a large extent.

Evidently, occupation segregation lies to a great extent in the hospitality industry. While women are mainly associated with lower jobs and the jobs that call for their domestic and feminine characteristics. The employers need to avoid biasness based on gender and keep it all fair and square so that women labour in the industry can feel rightly paid and rightly treated. Governments also need to come up with stricter rules and laws in order to check this disparity and ensure the more participation of women. Infact some of the international hotels , must continue to organize surveys in their subsidies to getting the responses of women towards the gender inequality at their workplace. It is essentials for the HCTs to address the issues of gender inequality on both national and international levels.

In order to overcome, the issue of occupational segregation, the employers must concentrate on the part time job contracts for the women to allow them to reconcile between work and family life (Chant,1997). The career advancement issues can be mitigated by augmentation in access of women in various professional courses through special quota system and special institutes will address the problem of lower education among women. The more women must be deployed in various functional areas of large hospitality establishments. The diversity issues in gender can also be addressed by organizing the business meetings, where women

will also be giving the chance of participation and arranging the social gathering, where every individual will have the chance of express their views.

The effective culture of the HCT, ie, the operation environment and working should always be supportive for the women employees. This should be free from “macho “ and “ male dominated” culture which ensures the women to work safely in the organization and rewarding in the same way as other are receiving within the organizational framework. The current concluded that poor performance of the women in HCTs is mainly on the account poor training programs and job orientation training. The tourism industries are barely concentrating towards training. Therefore, HCTs must provide adequate training to women as job learning is perceived as much more valuable as against the individual skill development. The investment on the part of training to women workforce improves the human capital of the company.

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