

## CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE EMPLOYEES WORKING IN HOTELS AND ROLE OF HR

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Women are vital members of society who contribute significantly to the well-being of their families and society at large. **Objective:** The objective of this paper was to study the invisible barriers as a challenge in the career advancement for women in the hospitality industry and to seek the female worker's views on work place grievances within the hotel industry. **Methodology:** Quantitative research design was used to understand the challenges faced by female employees working in the hotel. The items in the questionnaire included working women issues related key parameters like sexual and mental harassment, promotion issues, family care issues, discrimination based on gender, workplace discrimination and prejudices, work life balance issues etc. A questionnaire-based survey of female (60) hotel workers in Kolkata was done. The data was collected using the personal contact approach. **Results:** The majority age group that participated in the study was under 21 to 29 years. About 78.3 % respondent's organization does not provide with childcare facility, though 73.3 % respondent's organization do provide with adequate maternity leave. Around 60 % of the respondent's promotion took longer than those of male colleagues in the similar rank, which focus light on gender inequality. About 75 % women experienced biasness in their place of work based on gender. Gender discrimination and biasness are still existential in the industry. The rate of work satisfaction, stood at 43.3 %. **Conclusion:** The result explains that there are areas that are slowly changing for the betterment of women, there is still few barriers and challenges that makes it difficult for a female employee in a hotel industry. Women representation at the senior level is also proportionately very low compared to men. Conflict between work and family is a real juggling act for women which may at times lead her to make a choice between career and home.

**Key Words:** Women, Wellbeing, Barrier, Challenges, Work Place

### INTRODUCTION

Women are taking up leading positions in all sectors of hospitality. The hospitality sector employees are maximum women as mentioned in Times of India, Report of Febury, 2013 that in South and East India, 55-60%of the employees in hotels are women while in Central and North India, the figure was 40- 50%. These figures are good, however career of women in hospitality becomes a task for Indian women. (restaurant.indianretailer.com, 2013). Women progress in education is marvelous however not comparable to the

position at work. There are multiple factors for the under representation of employees especially women in the Hospitality sector. Solely 18.6% of working women in India participate as labour force, which is three times lower than men, says the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020. According to the World Bank (worldbank.org) women of India contribute lower most to the formal economy of the world. The Economic Survey, 2018 (indiabudget.gov.in) depicted that Indian women get low incomes working in

jobs that are not secure. In our country the major gender gap in earnings (middle level) of full-time workforces in the year 2015. Conflicts lead to not only employee tension, job dissatisfaction, and a performance which is not up to the mark, half heartedly organizational commitment, and highest turnover intention (Eby et al., 2005).

According to a recent research by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) March, 2019 titled ‘Travel & Tourism: Driving Women’s Success,’ the female proportion of employment in tourism in India is 12.1 percent. According to a survey of 1100 hotels in India conducted under FHRAI, a high percentage of women are employed in 5-star deluxe hotels in India, but only 23% of women are general managers (FHRAI, 2002). Due to the low employment of senior-level women, the gender gap was considered to be large in this sector. Various authors have cited reasons for less percentage of women employees like gender inequity is caused by cultural values and beliefs towards women (Li and Leung, 2001; Blayney and Blotnick, 2017; Yasin et al., 2020), corporate culture policies and procedures (Biswas and Cassell, 1996;), and male dominance (Gonzales-Serrano et al., 2018; Kattara, 2005) which vary among different societies.

It is rightly said that the hotel industry never sleeps resulting to long and irregular working hours. Ever since women have greater levels of family duties, women involved in shift work may experience more chances of work-family conflict. Female employees have to work in various shifts depending on the requirements of the job.

The objective were:

- To study the invisible barriers in the career advancement for women in the hospitality sector.
- To identify challenges hindering women from occupying top positions.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** Quantitative research design method was used to identify the hurdles faced by female employed working in the Hotel. Quantitative researchers are claimed to “study things in their ‘natural settings’, making an attempt to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings individuals arouse them” (Cawthorne, 2001).

**Locale:** Hotels in Kolkata, West Bengal was the location to collect data.

**Sampling Design:** The methodology used was a questionnaire-based survey for female hotel workers in Kolkata. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 60 working women of leading hotels. The statements/items for the questionnaire were formed in reference to the relevant literature and some preliminary studies in this area. The survey questionnaire included a section about their demographic background including age, marital status, occupation, years of experience.

**Tools and Technique:** Structured questionnaire was prepared. Prior permission was taken from all the hotels to interact with hotel employees, later after rapport development data was collected.

**Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis:** The collected data for all subjects and was analysed by calculating frequency and percentage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demographic Details:** Out of 100 %, that was 60 respondents, 58.3% comprised of the age group 21-29 years, 21.7% (30-39 years), about 13.3 % (40-49 years). About 6.7 % fell in the age group of 50 and above. Maximum age group of 21-29 years, comprised of 58.3 %. As per marital status 45% were married, which and 55 % were unmarried.

*Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents*

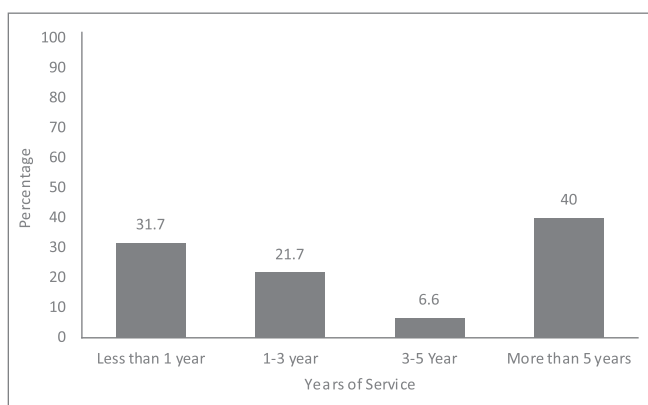
Age Group and Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
20 to 29	35	58.3%
30 to 39	13	21.7%
40 to 49	8	13.3%
50 and above	4	6.7%
Married	27	45%
Unmarried	33	55%

**Work department of the respondents:** Same percentage (23.3 %) were working in food production and food and beverage department. Front office (21.7 %) and accommodation department (15 %). The other department category comprised of 16.7 %. Majority belongs to food production and food and beverage service.



**Figure 1: Department wise segregation of respondents**

**Years of Service in the hospitality sector:** Majority (40%) of the respondents were serving for more than 5 years in their current position, 31.7 % were working for less than 1 year. About 21.7 % were at their current position of service.



**Figure 2: Years of service in the hospitality sector**

**Department participation by respondents:** The result for value of contribution in the work place showcased that 43.3 % felt valued for their contribution in the organization. About 30 % did not feel valued for their contribution and 26.7 % were not sure of it. For consideration of ideas and opinion majority (56.7%) felt sometimes followed by 30% who felt rarely. In case of work schedule majority (53.3%) believed that work schedule always makes it difficult to fulfil home and family responsibility. On the contrary Pant, 2020 cited in the paper that the Cygnett brand, organization was trying its best for maintaining flexible working environment for the employee, designing regular training and mentorship programs, designing the recruitment and promotional policies, equality among genders, awards for special contribution from women employees leading women, and setting up committees to handle sexual harassment at all units of Cygnett. Healthy

work environment is attained by focusing on employee engagement activities.

**Table 2: Department participation by respondents**

	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
<b>Value for Contribution</b>		
Yes	26	43.3%
No	18	30%
Maybe	16	26.7%
<b>Consideration of ideas &amp; opinion</b>		
Always	7	11.7%
Sometimes	34	56.7%
Rarely	18	30%
Never	1	1.7%
<b>Work schedule difficulty</b>		
Always	32	53.3%
Sometimes	24	40%
Rarely	4	6.7%
Never	0	0%

**Facilities and challenges for working women:** All the respondents believed that it is very important to have flexible working arrangements provided by the organization that will help the working women to balance work and family duties. IHCL is working on all facilities and resolving challenges faced by women employees like flexible time, transport etc. (Pant, 2020). In case of childcare facility in the organization majority (78.3 %) mentioned there is no such provision. For the purpose of maternity leave, majority (73.3%) mentioned that their organisation provided for an adequate maternity leave. Regarding gender biasness majority (75 %) of the respondents mentioned to observe unconscious bias in their organization.

Ozdemir (2021) cited that the hospitality industry is offering good working condition and safe employee opportunities for women. Around 55.5 % of the workforce worked in hospitality sector in 2017 (Darioly, 2019) but still at the managerial positions (e.g. president, partner, CEO) are men ironically. Same ironic data is presented was presented by Castell Project (2021).

**Table 3: Facilities and challenges for working women**

	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
<b>Flexible Working Arrangements</b>		
Very Important	60	100%
Not Important	0	0%
<b>Childcare Facility</b>		
Yes	13	21.7%
No	47	78.3%
<b>Provision of Maternity Leave</b>		
Yes	44	73.3%
No	16	26.7%
<b>Women Work Force</b>		
Less than 50%	53	88.35%
More than 50%	7	11.7%
<b>Gender biasness</b>		
Yes	45	75%
No	15	25%

Challenges for working female employees: Regarding promotion time majority (60%) respondents mentioned that it took longer time for promotion if compared to male colleague for the same designation, followed by 36.7 % who mentioned it took equal time for promotion as compared to male colleagues. In case of opportunities for career development majority (73.3%) believed that organization provided adequate opportunity. For women work force in senior management majority (61.7%) mentioned less than 30% followed by 36.7% for 30-50%. To enhance the number of female employees, the hospitality sector should plan solutions for hiring and retaining female managers. (Ali, 2022). Frequent training of the women employees will also help them be ready to deal with upcoming situation in the working environment (Dhoundiyal & Mathur, 2022). Hospitality sector should work out long term plan to retain women employee which will directly affect their

job performance too (Liu & Leung, 2021). In context to fair remuneration policy majority (76.7 %) responded affirmatively. Lastly for anti-sexual/ violence policy majority (93.3%) mentioned that organisation provided anti-sexual harassment, anti-gender violence or equivalent policy for its employees. Overall all the employees whether male or female should pay emphasis on employee engagement so that staff is engaged in achieving overall goals of the organization in a positive manner (Paul & Sharma, 2022).

**Table 4: Challenges for working female employees**

	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
<b>Promotion time</b>		
Longer	36	60%
Earlier	2	3.3%
Equal Time	22	36.7%
<b>Opportunity for career development</b>		
Yes	44	73.3%
No	16	26.7%
<b>Women work force in senior management</b>		
Less than 30 %	37	61.7%
30 % - 50 %	22	36.7%
60%	0	0
100 %	1	1.7 %
<b>Fair remuneration policy</b>		
Yes	46	76.7%
No	14	23.3%
<b>Anti-sexual/violence policy</b>		
Yes	56	93.3%
No	4	6.7%

## CONCLUSION

Even with recognizing the importance of female employees in hospitality, the study suggest that the industry has made a little improvement in creating and developing these

potentially capable group of people. The fact of women's participation and contribution in the workforce in India has increased yet their representation in higher management is quiet low as compared to their counterparts, which is not recognized. Women representation at the senior level is also proportionately very low compared to men. There is an existence of glass ceiling observed that resists women's upward mobility. This suggests that there needs to be a policy designed to bring in gender diversity in the organization, thus encouraging capable women to overcome the challenges they face in their career progression. The challenges related to the work life balance indeed are critical due to the customary belief that women need to carry out her primary role as a mother, housewife and also as a co-partner in the earnings. Conflict between work and family is a real juggling act for women which may at times lead her to make a choice between career and home. The hospitality industry has to take cognizance about this scenario and adopt in practice various women friendly policies that would assist them to progress in their career. Greater gender equality can enhance economic productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institution and policies more representative and thus benefitting out nation as a whole. With this research the study shed light on the challenges faced, paving its way for firstly accepting the barrier and eventually working on it. This also provides as an educational significance for personal benefit and growth as an individual. Government should along with industry experts work on the criteria to increase the work force in hospitality sector so that more and more women work force can be engaged in the hospitality sector.

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