CAREER PROGRESSION OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN SERVICE SECTOR: LESSONS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study throws a light on various aspects of career progression of women employees in service sector. Hundreds of research papers were searched on the topic and finally a sample of 89 research papers published between 1997 and 2020 were selected, which include 69 international studies and 20 Indian studies. The review shows that financial support and prestige, self-assessment, self-empowerment and professional role confidence are the key points of attraction for women joining the service sector. Work-life balance, less involvement in decision making, sexual harassment, absence of safety while travelling, workplace adjustment, lack of training opportunities, domestic violence, work overload, lack of gender-sensitive policies, gender segregation, discriminatory policies, socio-cultural and individual differences, multiple life roles, long working hours, caring responsibilities, parental leave or child care leave, lack of professionalization, etc. are the some of the barriers faced by them in their career. Resultantly, they either resign from the jobs and stop their career or join other organization, if not financially strong or even start their own consulting business in which they balance their time for the business from home as per their comfort zone during motherhood or child care. The measures initiated at organizational level for smooth progression of women career include providing training opportunities, flexible working hours, equal rights and opportunities, conflict resolution methods, amicable working environment, appreciation, induction programs, promoting transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership style, etc. Policies have also been formulated in some countries under which it is mandatory to share the maternity leave between men and women to reduce the burden of child care put on women and support them to reach at senior levels in their career.

KEYWORDS: Progression, Development, Segregation, Motivation, Discrimination

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the impact of modernization and economic development on the lives of women can be noticed easily. The women have broken the traditional gender segregation in various fields such as academics, labour force, public events, corporate sector, and education, etc. (Cheng & Wu, 2016). A new stream initiated in the society i.e. equal rights and equal employment opportunities has developed a new picture in the mind of every person regarding the women rights and opportunities. Now people have made a perception that fair number of women should exist in certain professions in such a male dominated society (Sinkele & Mupinga, 2011).

In the last century, most significant changes have been noticed by increased number of women's participation at the paid workforce. They have achieved significant progress by increasing their movements into the various occupations (Saadina, et al. 2015). But despite of these changes, different kinds of gender issues can easily be seen especially in Indian society because glass ceiling for female workers is a strong barrier that stretches back to the women to get success or to move up high in their professional lives. It has also been noticed that women

remain at lower positions as compared to men due to less confidence and ambiguity regarding their career life (Cech *et al.* 2011).

Traditionally, women tend to become homemakers *i.e.* they find themselves suitable for only for household chores and do not intend to work outside their house premises. There exit a lot of factors such as economic, geographical, legal and constitutional, cultural, family, *etc.* that mark the career development of women especially in Indian society, Gender-based discrimination impedes the women to participate in important decisions of family or career and they are unable to enjoy the equality with men (Alsharif, 2018). Till date, the rules and regulations of most of the accounting associations are framed by men to cover up the leadership qualities of women resulting of which career progression of men becomes faster than women (Din *et al.*, 2018). But with the passage of the time, several changes have taken place and the concept of double income has gained popularity. Now men and women are making combined efforts to run their houses by maintaining a balance between their organizational and individual lives (O'Connor & Wright, 2013).

The present study is divided into various parts covering introduction, objectives, data and methodology, classification of literature, findings and observations, suggestions, conclusion and implications of the study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose is to recognize the reasons of joining the service sector by women, barriers faced by them and measures initiated for overcoming those barriers as mentioned by the earlier researchers in their studies through the review of research work published in the area during the period under study.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the dynamics of research work published on various aspects of career progression of women in service sector will be presented. Hundreds of research papers were collected and finally reduced to 89 to achieve the objective of the study, which include 20 (22.47 percent) Indian studies and 69 (77.53 percent) international studies published from 1997 to 2020. At the end, collected data were analyzed and presented in tables to draw conclusions. The findings of the study will bring out a contrast between national and international studies of women employees about various aspects of their career progression.

Classification of Literature

The available literature is divided into different categories by using parameters like countries, years and tools used for data analysis.

Country-Wise Classification

The country-wise classification (Table-1) of the study shows that most of the researches have been conducted in USA, India and UK. Out of total eighty nine research papers, twenty three are from USA, twenty from India, thirteen from UK, seven from Europe, six from Australia and three each from Malaysia, Netherland and Saudi Arabia. Other countries like Iran, Thailand, East Africa, Canada, Korea, Singapore, *etc.* also took initiative in the stream.

Table 1: Country-Wise Classification

S. No.	Country	No. of Studies	S. No.	Country	No. of Studies
1	USA	23	11	East Africa	01
2	India	20	12	Canada	01

3	UK	13	13	Korea	01
4	Europe	07	14	Singapore	01
5	Australia	06	15	Nigeria	01
6	Malaysia	03	16	South Africa	01
7	Netherland	03	17	New Zealand	01
8	Saudi Arabia	03	18	China	01
9	Iran	01	19	Nepal	01
10	Thailand	01		Total	89

Source: Compiled from earlier studies.

Year-Wise Classification

Table 2 shows the research work conducted in this area, which gained popularity after the year of 2010 as lot of researches have been conducted in this field during the year 2011 and afterwards.

Table 2: Year-Wise Classification

S. No.	Year	Frequency	S. No.	Year	Frequency
1	1997	01	13	2010	02
2	1998	02	14	2011	06
3	2000	01	15	2012	04
4	2001	02	16	2013	07
5	2002	01	17	2014	08
6	2003	04	18	2015	05
7	2004	03	19	2016	05
8	2005	06	20	2017	04
9	2006	03	21	2018	04
10	2007	03	22	2019	09
11	2008	03	23	2020	01
12	2009	05		Total	89

Source: Compiled from earlier studies.

Analysis-Wise Classification

Table-III reveals the tools and techniques used to analyze the data in earlier studies like correlation analysis, regression analysis, percentage analysis, factor analysis, ANOVA, *etc.* to achieve the objectives of their studies. It is also noticed that correlation analysis, regression analysis and percentage analysis have been used in higher frequency as compared to other tools.

Table 3: Analysis-Wise Classification

Tools used for Data Analysis	Frequency
Regression Analysis	21
Correlation Analysis	18
Percentage Analysis	12
Comparative Analysis	10
Factor Analysis	11
ANOVA	08
t-test	02
Feminist Theory	02
Longitudinal Analysis	01
Thematic Analysis	01
Constructivist grounded theory approach	01
Person categorization and Social role theories	01
Charting Process, Discourse Analysis and Life History Analysis	01

Source: Compiled from earlier studies.

Findings and Observations

The review of literature shows that a large number of international studies (*Susan & Imhoff 1997, Lyness & Thompson 2000, Adams et al., 2003, Fuller & Narasimhan 2007, Hoobler et al., 2009, Tlaiss & Kauser 2010, Jogulu & Wood 2011, Dezso & Ross 2012, Ellemers 2014, Andric 2015, Saadin et al., 2016, Pringle et al., 2017, Alsharif 2018*), etc. have been conducted on career progression of women employees and these are more than the Indian studies (*Parikh & Sukhatme 2004, Patel & Parmentier 2005, Tara & Ilavarasan 2009, Juliet & Vijila 2011, Gupta 2012, Rawat 2014, Rath et al., 2015, Chawla & Sharma 2016, Datta & Agarwal 2017, Kapur 2018, Khattar 2019*), etc.

Susan & Imhoff (1997), Lyness & Thompson (2000), Adams et al. (2003), Fuller & Narasimhan (2007), Hoobler et al. (2009), Cech et al. (2011), Singh & Fouad (2013), Ravindran & Baral (2014), Chawla & Sharma (2016), Datta & Aggarwal (2017), Rangarajan, (2018), Makarova et al. (2019), etc. focused on the reasons which encouraged the women to join service sector like financial support (*Parikh & Sukhatme, 2004, Datta & Aggarwal, 2017*), prestige (*Kandiko, 2017*), self efficacy (*Singh & Fouad, 2013*), advancement (*Lyness & Thompson, 2000*), enthusiasm and career mobility (*Susan & Jennifer, 2010, Gupta 2012*), equity (*Khoreva, 2011*), maintaining work-life balance (*Rangarajan, 2018*), improvement in socio-cultural and political status (*Patel & Parmentier, 2005*), generating leadership qualities (*Mattis, 2001*), career success (*Kim, 2004*), professional role confidence (*Cech et al., 2011*), self-assessment, creating gender equality (*Chawla & Sharma, 2016*), self efficacy and task value among others (*Geigner & Crow, 2014*), etc. In the ancient time, these reasons were the source of attraction for men only, but now the women also join service sectors due to these reasons (*Klatt et al., 2016*). However, self-assessment (*Cech et al., 2011*), self-empowerment (*Devi, 2017*) and professional role confidence are the main points of attraction outside India for women joining the service sector (*Cech et al., 2011*).

Payne (1998), Eagly & Schmidt (2001), Powell & Butterfield (2003), Knorr (2005), Foster et al. (2007), Sipe et al. (2009), Tlaiss & Kauser (2010), Juliet & Vijila (2011), Gupta (2012), Ellemers (2014), Marinelli (2015), Wu & Cheng (2016), Devi (2017), Alsharif (2018), Kapur (2019), etc. paid attention on the blockades that Indian women faced throughout their career such as work-life balance, gender stereotype (*Saadin et al., 2015*), peer pressure, lack of family support, occupational stress, perception of roles and abilities of women, less involvement in decision making (*Thanacoody et al., 2006*), sexual harassment, absence of safety while travelling, workplace adjustment, lack of training opportunities, domestic violence (*Khattar, 2019*), work overload, lack of gender-sensitive policies (*Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007*), etc. Due to these barriers, they resign from jobs and join some other organization, if not financially strong. It has also been found that few Indian women have also raised their voice against the harassment, discrimination and exploitation (*Chawla & Sharma, 2016*).

On the other hand, gender segregation, discrimination in policies by government and employers, socio-cultural and individual differences (*Trauth et al., 2008*), multiple life roles (*Phillips & Imhoff, 1997*), long working hours and caring responsibilities, less confidence (*Hadfield & Sen, 2014*), parental leave/family related or child care leave (*John Evans, 2001*), lack of professionalization (*Joseph et al., 2005*), lack of confidence and career immobility (*Arun et al., 2014*), absence of comprehensive development plan, reward and incentives and inappropriate income (*Alsharif, 2018*) are some of the barriers being faced by women in other countries. Due to these barriers, they either join training and development programs (*Thanacoody et al., 2006*) or start their own consulting business (*Ranson, 2003*) in which they balance their time for the business from home as per their comfort zone.

Payne (1998), Kelkar et al. (2002), Arun et al. (2004), O'Leary & Deegan (2005), Fuller & Narasimhan (2007), Sipe et al. (2009), Juliet & Vijila (2011), Gupta & Saran (2013), Rawat (2014), Yadav & Unni (2016), Nabanita & Chatterjee (2017), Khattar (2019), etc. highlighted the measures initiated for smooth career progression of Indian women employees. The organizational level measures include providing training opportunities (Alsharif, 2018), employee motivation, flexible working hours (Hadfield & Sen, 2014), performance appraisal methods, equal rights and opportunities (Wu & Cheng, 2016), conflict resolution methods, amicable working environment (Din et al., 2018) appreciation, induction programs (Kapur, 2019), etc. Government has also initiated various labour reforms to improve the situation of women and promote their entry in service sector (De & Chatterjee, 2017, Devi, 2017), etc. Further, efforts were also made for creating larger freedom for women, improving health and education indicators for women, reducing the occurrence of violence against women and providing quality services to the victims (De & Chatterjee, 2017).

On the other hand, for improving their smooth career development outside India, organizations have decided to increase advertisements featuring only women, particularly in computer or engineering magazines and to create informal networks with females that will provide the information regarding job opportunities to them (Sinkela & Mupinga, 2011). Various encouragement activities have been conducted by the organizations of United States to attract the women in service sector (Geigner & Crow, 2014). Efforts were also made to bridge the gap between employers and educators so that they can provide enough access to female students at the time of recruitment. It helps the organizations to find out the talented students by internships and apprenticeships (Sinkela & Mupinga, 2011). Organizations are also promoting transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership style to attract women towards the service sector (Eagly et al. 2001). Some educational institutions also paid focus to increase the role of teacher in the life of a student for encouragement (Adams et al., 2005). In some developed countries, government has decided the share of women in leadership positions (Alsharif, 2018) and to create gender equality in labour market. Policies have also been formulated under which it is mandatory to share the maternity leave between men and women i.e. family leave policies for both men and women (Wu & Cheng, 2016) to reduce the burden of child care put on women and support them to reach at the senior positions in career (O'Connor & Wright, 2013).

SUGGESTIONS

As India is moving towards next level with its gender diversity, there is a need to avoid socio-cultural and psychological barriers which create a lot of hurdles in the progress of the society as whole (Datta & Aggarwal, 2017). In fact, empowerment is a key which divide the whole world into two parts such as developed and developing worlds (Khattar, 2019). When the issue of women employability is addressed, then a lot of questions arises in Indian society demanding sustainable development, which is possible only when the present status of the women is improved (Alsharif, 2018). And so far the growth of any organization or society as a whole is concerned, there is a need to focus on fair treatment without discrimination on the gender basis, formulating strict policies regarding sexual harassment, equal opportunities for promotion, etc. (Wu & Cheng, 2016). On other side, men should also take the responsibility of child care and must share all the household chores (Hadfield & Sen, 2014). Sometimes, women break their career chain by resigning from the jobs thinking that they will not be able to utilize their full potential due to burden of family responsibilities (Kapur, 2019). Therefore, proper family support is required for maintaining a balance in their work and professional life so that they may prosper in their career (Saddin et al., 2015). The educational institutions and employers should try to develop different kind of interacting programs with the students as well as with their parents to create awareness regarding the rights available to

the girl child (Trauth *et al.* 2008). The government should initiate strict actions against those private organizations which do not pay to female workers for their maternity leave (O'Connor & Wright, 2013). The organizations should also try to improve the role of the women in the organizations by paying more attention on fairness and in accessing all sorts of facilities for employees regardless of gender (Bartram *et al.* 2006). The role of women should be increased in decision-making, whether in personal life or professional life to ensure gender equality in the society (Din *et al.*, 2018). If Indian women want to crack the ceiling and want to see the blue sky of freedom, then efforts are required at each and every level because women's personal empowerment cannot be productive without collective empowerment (Nabanita & Chatterjee, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the barriers like organizational, economic, geographical, legal and constitutional, cultural, family, *etc.* faced by women in their career, they are prospering in various fields and even registered a great dominance in some streams. The findings of the study exhibit that UK, India and USA took more initiative in examining this issue. However, later on, some other countries too like Thailand, East Africa, Canada, Korea, Singapore, Iran, *etc.* have also taken initiative in the stream. Now government as well as organizations in all the countries is making sincere efforts for the betterment of women in the society.

Implications of the Study

This study will present an organized view of empirical studies in career progression of women in service sector. It will also offer a base to future researchers to pursue their research work in the respective field. After analyzing the barriers faced by the women and measures initiated for their career advancement, this study will provide a roadmap to the employers for policy making about the different issues involved in career progression of women.

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