

# Gender Inequality & Workplace Harassment of Women in India

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**Abstract:** From many centuries women have considered secondary part in Indian society. Women were suppose to do only household work & taking care of their families. They were not allowed to go out for work. They were not allowed to take education. Centuries have passed, but not the thinking. Today in the era of modernization & globalization, Indian society is in a stage of rapid social transition. Women are entering the workforce even in occupations which were erstwhile regarded as exclusively men's domain. Women are educated and working equally to men in every field. On the performance measurement scale women are considered more sincere, more dedicated, more reliable than men. But still they have to face major problems of Gender inequality and Workplace Harassment.

In today's globalized world women have reached at the top of success and achieved many awards & rewards, but still the social perspective has not changed to the extent which is needed. Women are still facing problems in promotions, designations, wages, and secondary place in the society due to gender difference. Many women are getting harassed at their workplace in many ways. This study is an attempt to highlight the problems which working women are facing at their workplace every day and to create awareness about this serious issue among the society.

## Objectives of the study

- To study the current & past situation of gender difference in India.
- To highlight the problem of workplace harassment of working women's in India.
- To analyze the current situation of gender inequality & workplace harassment in the country.
- **Research Methodology:** This study is based on descriptive research. Primary data is collected through questioner which is taken from women working in different sectors & different part of Marathwada region of Maharashtra State, India. The sample size for this study is 40 respondents. Secondary data is collected from various journals and web sites.

**Introduction:** Suchitra Rao, a social Worker has expressed her views on women in her article, "Women in India", in India Today, Sep 2008. There is no doubt that we are in the midst of a great revolution in the history of women. The evidence is everywhere; the voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get some of their basic rights, like the right to vote, the Constitution of India gave women equal rights with men from the beginning. Unfortunately, women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition. Names like Kalpana Chawla: The Indian born, who fought her way up into NASA and was the first women in space, and Indira Gandhi: The Iron Woman of India was the Prime Minister of the Nation, Beauty Queens like Aishwarya Rai and Susmita Sen, and Mother Teresa are representative of the Indian women.

From many centuries women have considered secondary part in Indian society. Women were supposed to do only household work & taking care of their families. They were not allowed to go out for work. They were not allowed to take education. Centuries have passed, but not the thinking. Today in the era of modernization & globalization, Indian society is in a stage of rapid social transition. Women are entering the workforce even in occupations which were erstwhile regarded as exclusively men's domain. Women are educated and working equally to men in every field. In the recent years, conditions of working women in India have improved considerably. More and more women find themselves in positions of respect and prestige; more and more workplaces are now populated with women who work on equal terms as men. Working is no longer an adjustment, a mere necessity; but a means to self worth and growth.

**Gender inequality:** In Indian society the inequality between men and women is one of the most crucial disparities, which reflects right from the birth of the girl child up to death of women. Gender inequality and gender development's question moves around the 'power' women held. Indian women regardless of their caste, religion or class, have never enjoyed equal status in the society even in their families. Although constitutional and legal safeguards and several empowerment programs and policies of their development have improved the status of women, yet they lack power in many fields and hence they are subordinate to men. The problem of inequality in employment being one of the most pressing issues today. The meaning of gender equality in true sense is to provide equal or same opportunities for men and women in every walk

of life. One should not take wrong meaning to compare gender equality with sex equality, while the sex equality means the number of males and females. Gender equality depicts the level of development among men and women. India is committed towards millennium development goals and special efforts have been taken by Government to attain these goals. Government has introduced a number of programs and initiatives for 360 degree societal and economic development of Indian women.

**Workplace Harassment:** Employees experience a wide range of harassment behaviors when they enter the workplace. Employees experience harassment and violence in the workplace based on multiple grounds. The type of atmosphere that employer provide for employees is important to their physical and emotional well-being. Unfortunately an employee can ruin the job satisfaction of a fellow worker with rude and harassing behaviors. A harasser can engage in mildly annoying behavior that impairs the others concentration or he can perform extremely obnoxious actions that create anxiety and threatens the safety of the other person. Workplace harassment means engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

Workplace harassment involves behaviors that contribute to a hostile work environment. Workplace harassment must include discrimination based on a protected class status such as race, religion, disability. Harassment refers to vexatious behavior experienced as a result of one or more personal attributes, and it is also defined as “Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability, or that of his/her relatives, friends, or associates, and that (i) has the purpose or the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; (ii) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.

#### **Gender & Ethnic Harassment :**

Gender Harassment has been treated as one aspect of sexual harassment, but unlike sexual coercion or unwanted sexual attention, it “conveys hostility devoid of any explicit sexual motive” Evidence has consistently shown that gender harassment occurs more frequently than attempts to garner sexual cooperation, and when sexualized forms of harassment do occur, they are nearly always coupled with gender harassment. Ethnic harassment encompasses both hostile comments

about target individual's ethnic group and exclusion of the target from work-related or social interactions because of the individual's ethnicity. Various research reports that examined women's versus men's sexual harassment experiences indicates (a) non-significant gender differences in frequency rates in some settings, (b) parallel factor structures for GH measures for both genders, and (c) gender similarities in the fit of models examining the antecedents and consequences of harassment.

### **Verbal Abuse :**

The most frequent type of rude and harassing behavior that occurs on the job is verbal in nature. Snide, sarcastic or degrading remarks are rude and, if frequent can constitute harassment. Shouting and the use of expletives are forms of verbal abuse. Any consistent verbal dialogue that affects a person's ability to work in a peaceful environment is rude and harassing. Ongoing verbal tirades by one employee against another worker require HR manager's intervention. The HR manager has to be on guard for these behaviors so that he can warn, counsel and sanction offenders.

### **Verbal Abuse by Employers :**

Verbal abuse at the workplace can be classified as subtle abuse and overt abuse. Overt verbal abuse is when the employer insults the other person by shouting, name calling, threatening, using derogatory language, etc. The employer may pick out mistakes and criticize the individual in front of the other employees. Subtle verbal abuse is when the employer criticizes or passes sarcastic remarks without yelling or shouting. The employer may give his employee a cold treatment, while being nice and jovial with others. The employer may also try to avoid the employee, when he tries to discuss issues and problems. Since this happens in a private setting, there will be no witnesses and no other employee will trust what the abused employee is saying and this makes him to reduce his self esteem. The abused employee has no other option than leaving the organization and makes him dissatisfied in his job.

### **Relations :**

Employee retaliation against another worker constitutes harassment. This can involve a supervisor and a staff member, or can be one employee retaliating against a peer. A supervisor who changes an employee's work schedule to antagonize the employee can be accused of harassment. The manager of a company must have to determine the validity of any alleged retaliatory behavior and correct the situation. Keep a record of the incident and warn the

perpetrator that this type of behavior in the future will result in suspension or other serious disciplinary action.

### **Sexual Harassment :**

Sexual harassment at the workplace is rampant but no one talks about it. Sexual harassment can range from obscene jokes and remarks to inappropriate touching and physical molestation. Sexual harassment in the workplace harms the target of mistreatment. 17% of working women in major cities of India have admitted to it. However most the harassment was not physical. A survey done by Oxfam India and the social and rural research institute in 2011-2012 showed that high incidence of sexual harassment taking place in both organized and unorganized sectors and women are facing incidents that are non physical. Violence against women is a human rights violation- be it domestic violence within homes or sexual harassment at workplace. Sexual harassment often reflects an abuse of power within an organization, where members of one group of people yield greater power than others, generally women.

### **Data Analysis :**

**Table 1.1**  
**Women Employees facing Gender Difference at workplace in Marathwada Region**

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Arangabad</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Jalna</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Beed</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Osmanabad</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Hingoli</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Nanded</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Parbhani</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Latur</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>268</b>
	<b>Total in Percent</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2012-13)**

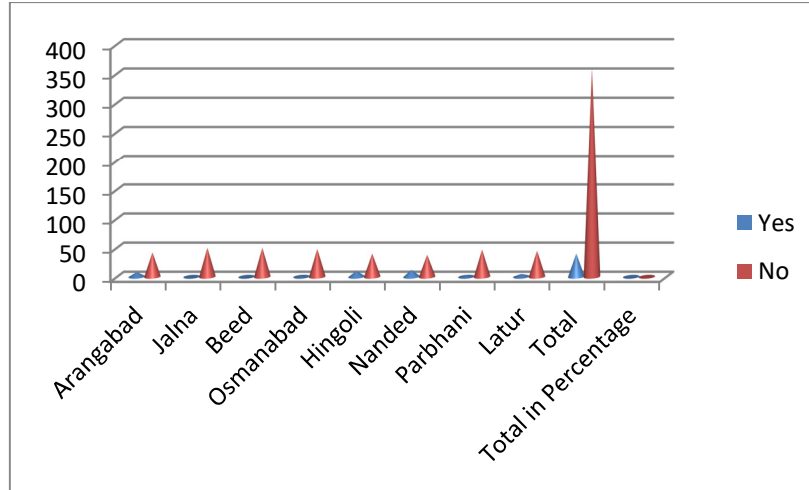


Table no. 1 shows the opinion of women working in different sectors of Marathwada Region. It shows that, 67% women do not face any kind of gender difference at their workplace whereas according to 33% women, they face gender difference at their workplace.

**Table 1.2**  
**Views of Working Women Regarding Mental/Physical Harassment At Workplace in Marathwada Region**

Sr. No	District	Yes	No
1	Arangabad	8	42
2	Jalna	00	50
3	Beed	00	50
4	Osmanabad	2	48
5	Hingoli	10	40
6	Nanded	12	38
7	Parbhani	3	47
8	Latur	5	45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>360</b>
	<b>Total in Percentage</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>90%</b>

**Source: Field Survey- (2012-13)**

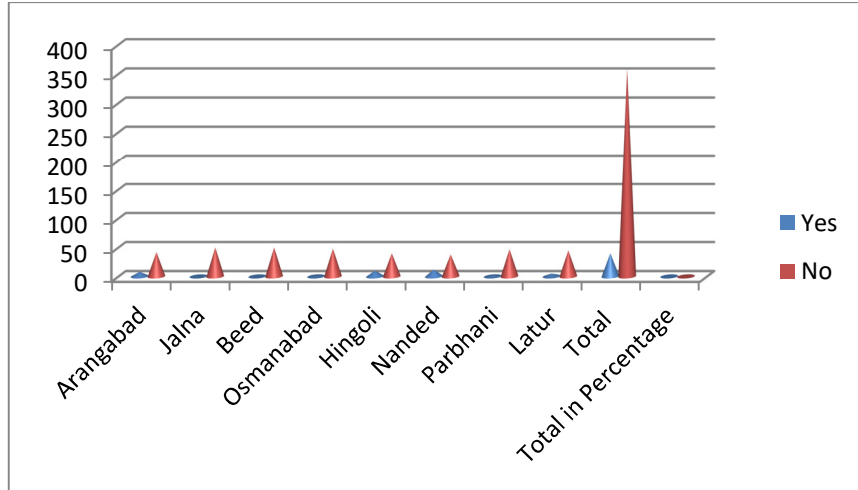


Table no. 2 shows the opinion of women working in different sectors of Marathwada Region. It shows that, 90% women do not face any kind of Mental/Physical Harassment at their workplace whereas according to 33% women, they face some type of Mental/Physical Harassment at their workplace.

**Table No. 1.3**  
**Views of Working Women Regarding Attitude/Behaviours of Male Colleagues at Workplace in Marathwada Region**

Sr. No.	District	Good	Very Good	Bad
1	Arangabad	42	7	01
2	Jalna	43	6	01
3	Beed	46	4	00
4	Osmanabad	48	2	00
5	Hingoli	44	6	00
6	Nanded	34	16	00
7	Parbhani	48	2	00
8	Latur	40	10	00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>02</b>
	<b>Total in Percentage</b>	<b>86.25%</b>	<b>13.25%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>

Source: Field Survey (2012-13)

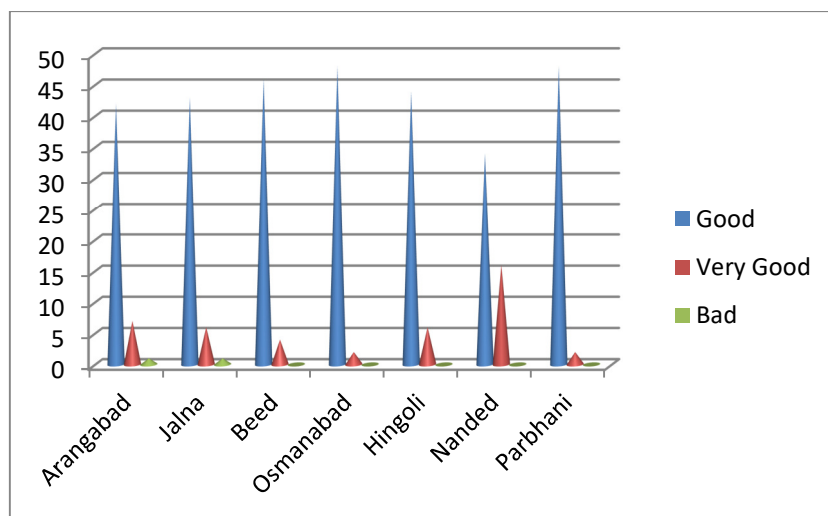


Table no. 3 shows the opinion of women working in different sectors of Marathwada Region regarding Attitude/Behaviors of their male colleagues at Workplace. It shows that, **86.25%** women feel that they face good Attitude & Behaviors of their male colleagues at their workplace and **13.25%** women feel that they face very good Attitude & Behaviors of their male colleagues at their workplace whereas according to only 0.5% women they face bad Attitude & Behaviors of their male colleagues at their workplace,

**Concluding Remarks:** From many centuries women have considered secondary part in Indian society. If we will study various articles or news or if we will discuss with people about gender difference and workplace stress, we will observe that most of the people think that gender difference & workplace stress are major problems in today's life. The result of this study is contradictory with the general opinion & observation of the society. According to data analysis, majority of working women do not face any type of gender difference & workplace harassment problems at their workplace. This result shows the transformation of the society, which is a good & essential change in Indian society.

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