

WOMEN IN WORK ENVIRONMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF SHREDS OF EVIDENCES

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Abstract

The importance of inclusivity for women in the nation's progress cannot be questioned. It is evident from the past literature that women face multiple types of issues at their workplaces. This systematic literature review-based study was planned to explore the issues, challenges, or hindrances faced by women in their workplaces. The literature was searched, and applying inclusive and exclusive criteria, thirteen articles were shortlisted for review. PRISMA guidelines were applied to perform the selection and analysis of the studies. The results indicated that females faced the issues such as; gender stereotypes, work-home balance, social problems, lack of basic needs, individual problems, and administrative/organizational problems, male chauvinism and negative attitudes toward female work performance. This study would be a good addition to the literature as it threw light upon the workplace related issues of females.

Keywords: *Women Workforce, Problems at Workplace, issues at workplace, women-workplace*

INTRODUCTION

The fact, that women play a vital role in the development of any nation cannot be denied. However, the facilities at workplaces should impede womens' commitment to give their best in terms of work. Working females become stressed in order to manage the multiple responsibilities as individual and professionals (Anand & Goyal, 2017). People need to be more vigilant in terms of their energy, attention and time management to ensure their equal participation and enthusiasm at work and home. In connection, it is really important to highlight that females possess more home-related responsibilities as compared to males. The research underscored that the dual role of women, encompassing personal and professional responsibilities, was more demanding compared to that of men (Akram & Syed, 2017). Therefore, they face difficulties in meeting their work expectations and domestic responsibilities (Gopinath, 2020) as they have to put more efforts to manage

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the work-life balance (Anand et al., 2017).

Although women double their efforts for managing work and home, they face issues and resistance not only at work but also at home as well. The already published studies have highlighted a lot of issues faced by working females including harassment (Ashiq & Warraich, 2023; Jabeen et al., 2017; Khan & Masroor, 2019; Saleem et al., 2021; Wilder, 2018; Yasmin & Jabeen, 2017); workplace violence (Li et al., 2020; Naved et al., 2021; Rasool et al., 2020) and workplace bullying (Salin, 2021; Yao et al., 2020), discrimination (Mian et al., 2016). Furthermore, the challenges include, workplace environment that lack support and comfort for female employees (Kumari, 2014), disparities in salaries between genders (Dashora, 2013), limited maternity leave, a prevalent male-dominated culture, and instances of unwanted behavior from male colleagues (Kaur & Kaushiki, 2018).

In a study, Avais, Waseen, and Shah (2014) emphasized that women navigate a dual role in society, contending with instances of sexual, emotional, and financial abuse both within and outside the home. Additionally, females encounter hurdles such as limited family encouragement, heightened family responsibilities (Nawaz et al., 2013), the patriarchal structure inherent in Pakistani society (Raja, 2015), as well as challenges related to insufficient social support, inadequate rest, stress, and time management (Akram & Syed, 2017).

However, the issues are never ending, Dashora (2013) highlighted that despite being equally efficient and able, women do not get equal wages and benefits as males. The issues such as gender stereotypes, leadership problems, family's needs, lack of mentorship, and difficulties in building social capital are some of the reasons that cause women's underrepresentation in work environments. Dean, et al., (2009) and Eagly, (2007) highlighted that universities have maintained a predominantly male-centric culture, resulting in the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership. The existing literature consistently reports gender-based wage disparities (Kulich et al., 2011), where women receive lower compensation compared to their male counterparts, even they are at equal levels in terms of their qualification and work expertise (Saari, 2013; Tharenou, 2013).

Kumari (2014) highlighted several challenges confronted by working women, encompassing concerns such as physical and mental stress, an absence of work-life balance, unjust treatment in the workplace, perpetuation of stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, the existence of a glass ceiling, and various other obstacles. Qasem (2013) highlighted the working

women status in accounting profession. The study highlighted the presence of discrimination against women in accounting profession because of the culture of Jordanian society. Similarly, Barati et al., (2015) highlighted that workplace harassment, lack of workplace safety, less or no family support, job insecurity and insufficient maternity leaves as some of the reasons that affect female workers. Anand et al., (2017) proposed additional measures, such as the establishment of a complaint committee, availability of pick and drop services, and the cultivation of a conducive work environment in order to ensure that women fulfill their productive roles. The study of Al-Hazmi et al. (2017), highlighted the issues faced by Saudi working women into four categories; social, professional, ethical, and psychological. The study of Kaur and Kaushiki (2018) endorsed two categories social and psychological issues faced by Indian working women. The issues highlighted by them includes include “less time to join family gatherings, less appreciation and cooperation from partner and extended family, pick and drop issues, no time for relaxation, unwanted interference of male colleagues, the pressure of house work, and responsibility of kids”.

National-level studies in Pakistan have extensively delved into the status of working females, workplace challenges, and issues faced by working women. Qureshi (2000) investigated the concerns of women from working women hostels and highlighted that female faced the challenges in managing time effectively for their families and expressed that their absence affects the family member’s health. They further added that lack of basic facilities in hostels and difficulties in transportation were some of the issues faced by these working women.

Maqsood et al. (2005) highlighted the issues faced by women from different professions such as doctors, bankers, and teachers from Faisalabad. The results highlighted multiple challenges faced by these women including less family support, low salaries, and unfavorable working conditions. In the same way, Sadaquat and Sheikh (2011) highlighted that women are usually offered low paid or low status jobs due to the marker discrimination, which affect the female participation in workforce. Nawaz et al. (2013) explored the social, domestic, and cultural challenges experienced by working women and revealed distinct challenges faced by women in different professions. Policewomen encountered low social recognition, nurses dealt with unscheduled working hours, and teachers expressed a desire for higher wages. Additionally, a shared concern among working women across all professions was the non-availability of transportation, emphasizing a common obstacle in their respective work environments.

Ali and Kramer (2015) identified that social, cultural, institutional, and managerial factors influenced sexual harassment. The study highlighted the existence of harassment policies however the implementation of these policies was affected due to cultural factors. Another study found out that females in banking sector feel discriminated when it comes to job promotions (Hussain et al., 2016). Akram and Syed (2017) emphasized several challenges faced by women entrepreneurs such as a lack of social support, high levels of stress, insufficient rest, and difficulties in time management were highlighted.

The foundation of this study is rooted in the researcher's PhD dissertation, aiming to comprehensively uncover the challenges and issues encountered by females within work environments. Drawing upon existing literature, the study seeks to construct a holistic understanding of the various problems faced by women in professional settings. The anticipated results are expected to contribute insights that can be instrumental in developing strategies aimed at enhancing the workplace environment for females, ultimately bolstering their work productivity and efficiency. Therefore, the primary objective of the study is to identify and elucidate the problems faced by females at work, as documented and emphasized in published literature.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This study was undertaken by using a systematic literature review to fulfill the purpose of this study. The guidelines provided by Moher et al., (2009) for preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) were used. The use of these guidelines helps researchers to conduct a systematic review of existing literature. There are four steps in this procedure; identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Multiple keywords were used to extract the most relevant data. This search strategy was run on October 20, 2022, to extract the data from Web of Science. The query used for searching the most relevant literature was: "TS=("work environment" OR "females" OR "issues" OR "challenges" OR "Problems") AND PY=("2001-2022") AND DT=("Article") AND LA=("English)". The relevant data was downloaded for further review. Figure 1 explains the strategy used in this study.

The studies that have discussed issues, challenges, problems, hurdles, and hindrances faced by women in work environments were shortlisted as these were highly relevant to the topic under study. The year of publication filter was applied from 2001 to 2021, as well as only English language and journal

articles were selected. Furthermore, the studies that have discussed other aspects related to working women were excluded. Studies other than the English language were also excluded. Review-based articles, books, book chapters, proceedings, dissertations, reports, and conference papers were not included.

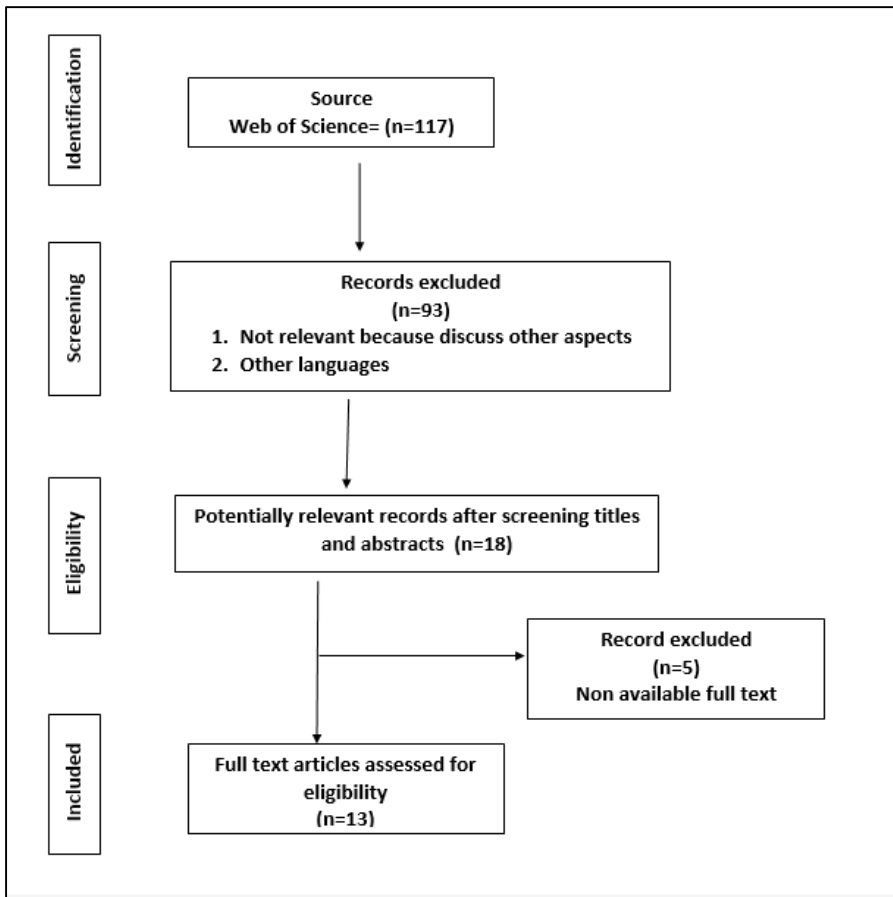


Figure 1: phase wise flow diagram of studies selection

Assessment of Selected literature

It was important to assess the quality of the selected literature, for that the checklist designed by Boynton and Greenhalgh (2004) was selected. This checklist includes items that comprise six distinct parts of a study. These include “the questions and design of the study, sampling, instrumentation,

response rate, coding and analysis, and the presentation of the findings and conclusions”. According to these six different points of view, the highest possible score of a study is 13.

Table 1: Quality assessment of selected studies

Author	Question & Design (Out of 2)	Sampling (Out of 2)	Instrument (Out of 4)	Response rate (Out of 1)	Coding & Analysis (Out of 2)	Presentation (Out of 2)	Total Score (13)
Huagui Zhu1, Hafiz Ghufan Ali Khan Muhammad Ilyas	2	2	1	0	1	1	7
Mansi Tiwari, Dr. Garima Mathur Dr. Suvijna Awasthi	1	2	1	1	2	2	9
Dima Jamali Yusuf Sidani	2	2	1	1	2	2	10
Duong, M. T., Hussain, I. A., & Subramaniam, A.	1	1	0	0	2	1	5
Trinkenreich, B., Britto, R., Gerosa, M. A. Steinmacher, I.	2	2	2	1	2	2	11
Ruzungunde, Vongai S. Sindiso Zhou Chamisa Shingirayi	2	2	1	1	2	2	10
Maxwell Chuma and Florence Ncube	2	2	0	1	0	2	7
Jepkemboi Ruth Choge	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Rajindar K. Koshal Yuko Yamada Sasuke Miyazima Manjulika Kosha Ashok K. Gupta	2	2	0	1	2	2	9
Helen H. Yu,	1	2	3	1	2	2	11

Wiza Muntekal Ashika Maharaj l	2	2	4	1	2	2	13
Ahmed Al-Asfour, Hayfaa A. Tlaiss, Sami A. Khan, James Rajasekar	1	2	4	1	2	2	12
Lona Whitmarsh, Donalee Brown, Jane Cooper, Yolanda Hawkins- Rodgers, Diane Keyser Wentworth	1	2	2	1	2	2	10
Obtain Score	20	24	19	10	21	22	116
Total Score	26	26	52	13	26	13	169

Data extraction & synthesis

The details given in Table 2 shows that 6 studies were conducted by using quantitative survey research design, however, 5 studies were conducted qualitatively. It is interesting to note that four studies used a mixed-method research design. The authorship pattern varied from 1 author to five author maximum. It was fortunate to observe that articles were from different countries such as Pakistan, India, Vietnam, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and so on. Similarly, the population of these studies was women belonging to different professions such as teachers, attorneys, bankers, software houses, law enforcement agencies, and so on (Table 2).

Table 2: The general overview of the studies

Author	Country	Journal	Method	Population	Sample
Huagui Zhu l, Hafiz Ghufuran Ali Khan, Muhammad Ilyas	Pakistan	African Journal of Business Management	Quantitative	Females working in public organizations	N=50
Mansi Tiwari, Dr. Garima Mathur, Dr. Suvijna Awasthi,	India	Journal of entrepreneurship education	Quantitative	Working females	N=120
Dima Jamali, Yusuf Sidani	Lebanon	Women in management review	Qualitative	Female managers	N=52

Mai Thuy Doung, Ibiwani Alisa Hussain, Anusuiya Subramaniam	Vietnam	Test Engineering and Management	Quantitative	Females working in multinational companies	N=200
Trinkenreich, B., Britto, R., Gerosa, M. A., & Steinmacher, I.	Sweden	Software Engineering in Society.	Mixed method	Women from software house	N=94
Ruzungunde, Vongai S.; Sindiso Zhou; F., Chamisa Shingirayi	South Africa	Gender & Behaviour	Quantitative	women from academics	N=20
Maxwell Chuma and Florence Ncube	Zimbabwe	Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa	Qualitative	Female managers from banks and their subordinates	N=25
Jepkemboi Ruth Choge	Kenya	Journal of Education and Practice	Mixed method	Females from Education sector	N=364
Rajindar K. Koshal Yuko Yamada Sasuke Miyazima Manjulika Kosha Ashok K. Gupta	Japan	Journal of International women studies	Quantitative	Males and females	N=121
Helen H. Yu, Texas A&M	USA	Feminist criminology	Mixed method	women from law enforcement agencies	N=168
Wiza Munyeka Ashika Maharaj	South Africa	SA Journal of Human Resource Management	Quantitative	Female ICT professionals	N=50
Ahmed Al- Asfour, Hayfaa A. Tlaiss, Sami A. Khan, James Rajasekar	Saudi Arabia	Career Development International	Qualitative	Saudi working women	N=12

Lona Whitmarsh Donalee Brown Jane Cooper Yolanda Hawkins-Rodgers Diane Keyser Wentworth	New Jersey	The Career Development Quarterly	Qualitative	Females' teachers, physicians, attorney and professors 13	N=27
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 3 provides a quick overview of the problems identified by each study individually. These problems are discussed after categorizing accordingly.

Table 3 Problems identified in the selected studies

Author	Problems identified in the selected studies
Huagui Zhu, Hafiz Ghufuran Ali Khan Muhammad Ilyas	inequality with women, lack of opportunities for women in job market, discriminatory gender policy, lack of trainings, pick and drop facility, non-availability of basic facilities such as separate washrooms or daycare, inflexible timings lack of appreciation for their work, internet facilities at workplace, lack of official accommodation and cafeteria facility
Mansi Tiwari, Dr. Garima Mathur, Dr. Suvijna Awasthi	gender-based stereotype & prejudices, gender orientation, workload participation, work & family
Dima Jamali, Yusuf Sidani	Cultural expectations; Patriarchal attitudes Corporate culture favoring men; Perceived lack of commitment, Exclusion from networks, Lack of corporate support mechanisms
Mai Thuy Doun, Ibiwani Alisa Hussain, Anusuiya Subramaniam	job stress, co-worker support role expectation conflict
Trinkenreich, B., Britto, R., Gerosa, M. A., & Steinmacher, I.	Work life balance issue; Sexism; Recognition issues Lack of peer parity; Impostor syndrome; Glass ceiling Prove it again; Maternal wall
Ruzungunde, Vongai S.; Sindiso Zhou; F., Chamisa Shingirayi	work-family conflict, discrimination, glass ceiling, wage gap differentials, stereotyping and sexual harassment
Maxwell Chuma and Florence Ncube	held back in terms of the exercise of authority, performance, and career; male chauvinism, informed by masculinity and traditional notions of the patriarchal

	system,
Jepkemboi Ruth Choge	lack of promotion, unequal advancement opportunities, motherhood responsibilities, career immobility due to geographical, immobility due to family responsibilities, lack of role models, the dominance of males in the leadership network, lack of self-esteem to seek the administrative posts aggressively.
Rajindar K. Koshal Yuko Yamada Sasuke Miyazima Manjulika Kosha Ashok K. Gupta	male-dominance, and less support for females, general disrespect for females, discrimination, glass ceiling,
Helen H. Yu,	Pervasive negative attitudes from male colleagues, lack of high-ranking female role models, and work–life balance issues
Wiza Munyeka I Ashika Maharaj	Gender stereotypes, Flexibility, Dependent adults/children-related tasks, Work/home interference, Time management, Sense of accomplishment and skills acquisition
Ahmed Al-Asfour, Hayfaa A. Tlaiss, Sami A. Khan, James Rajasekar	Limited range of job and career-advancement opportunities, Excessive workload caused by a lack of family-work balance, Challenges related to pregnancy and women’s mobility, Gender discrimination and a lack of equality in the workplace
Lona Whitmarsh Donalee Brown Jane Cooper Yolanda Hawkins-Rodgers Diane Keyser Wentworth	variations of career/family patterns, career encouragers, career obstacles, personal compromises, career changes, career decision-making patterns.

Gender Stereotypes: Among all selected thirteen studies, nine studies discussed that women faced issues related to gender stereotyping such as; Gender prejudices, gender orientation, male chauvinism, and gender-based discrimination (Tiwari and Mathur, 2018; Ruzungunde, Zhou, & Shingirayi, 2022; Chuma & Ncube, 2010; and Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022). Furthermore, the studies highlighted that male colleague considered themselves as superior than females. The issues such as inequality with women, sexism, corporate culture favoring men, impostor syndrome, discrimination, informed by masculinity, negative attitude from male colleagues (Zhou, Khan and Ilyas, 2012; Jamali and Sidani, 2005; Trinkenreich et al., 2022; Yu, 2015; Al-Afsour, Khan & Rajasekar, 2017) were also identified in the studies. It is mentioned that due to such issues, females held back in terms of the exercise of authority, performance, and career (Chuma & Ncube, 2010).

Work-Life Balance: Females are expected to manage their homes even though they work outside home. Seven out of fifteen studies discussed that females faced issues in managing their work and family life (Tiwari & Mathur, 2012; Ruzungunde, Zhou, & Shingirayi, 2022; Yu, 2015; Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). It was highlighted by the females in software houses that they are expected to sit extra hour after their working hours to learn new things or to complete the task which become difficult for them (Trinkenreich et al., 2022). Similarly, the excessive workload caused due to the efforts of managing home and work equally is also a hindrance faced by females. In the same way, those working women whose kids are dependent on them faced more difficulties. The issues highlighted in this regard includes, Challenges related to pregnancy, Dependent adults/children-related tasks, motherhood responsibilities, and Maternal wall (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Choge, 2015; Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022).

Non-Availability of basic facilities at workplace: This category summarized the lack of basic facilities at the workplaces such as internet facility, separate washrooms for females, day care centers to support working mothers, lack of official accommodation and even cafeteria facility (Zho, khan and Ilyas, 2012). Furthermore, Challenges related to women's mobility, and pick drop facilities were also discussed in literature (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2012).

Issues related to coworker: It is also evident from the literature that female colleagues faced the issues from their male colleagues. Females face difficulties in collaborating socially, also, the studies highlighted the issues of glass ceiling, prove it again, and sexual harassment (Ruzungunde Zhou, & Shingirayi, 2022; Trinkenreich et al., 2022).

Organizational issues: The studies also highlighted some issues that can be counted under the category of organizational issues due to the perceived involvement of organization in such matters. The summarized organizational category includes the issues such as discriminatory gender policy, lack of trainings, inflexible timings and lack of opportunities for females (Zhu, Khan & Ilyas, 2012), lack of corporate support mechanisms (Jamali & Sidani, 2005), wage gap differentials (Ruzungunde, 2022), workload participation (Tiwari & Mathur, 2018), lack of promotion, unequal advancement opportunities, the dominance of males in the leadership network (Choge, 2015), limited range of job and career-advancement opportunities and a lack of equality in the workplace (Al-Asfour, Khan & Rajasekar, 2017).

Social or cultural issues: Two studies highlighted that female faced the issues from the society, the issues include Cultural expectations, and traditional notions of the patriarchal system (Jamali and Sidani, 2005; Chuma & Ncube, 2010). Similarly, Koshal et al., (2004) also highlighted that Japanese culture generally disrespect women, and do not like to see them at better positions than men.

Individual issues: Apart from the issues of the workplace, there are some issues that are relevant to itself. The issues such as time management and flexibility where women shared that they do not have time other than their working hours to learn any new things (Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022). Similarly, they shared that they have to compromise where they sacrifice their personal choices for the sake of peace in their lives (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). In the study of Choge (2015), females shared that they face the issues of career immobility due to geographical immobility because of their family responsibilities. Also, females perceived that they lack self-esteem to seek the administrative posts aggressively. The lack of any role model in the field was also highlighted in two studies (Choge, 2015; Yu, 2015). It was also observed that females faced the issue of recognition and appreciation (Zhu, Khan & Ilyas, 2012; Trinkenreich et al., 2022), job stress and role expectation conflict (Duong, Hussain and Subramanian, 2020) and exclusion from networks because of the virtue of being women (Jamali & Sidani, 2005).

Issues related to career: Adding to the problems identified in the literature it is observed in one of the studies that female face the issues related to careers such as career encouragers, career obstacles, career changes, and career decision-making patterns (Whitmarsh et al., 2007).

In this systematic literature review researcher studied the problems via literature review and others works that females in the workplace face a lot of problems. This study contributes to the theoretical synthesis of workplace issues encountered by female professionals at different organizations. Problems indicated in selected published literature were categorized as; Gender stereotypes, work-home balance, social problems, lack of basic needs, individual problems, and administrative/organizational problems. Gender-based discrimination cast down the female employee's capabilities toward innovation. They couldn't give their best unless they received due appreciation and credits. For female active participation at the workplace, male chauvinism and negative attitudes toward female work performance should be discouraged.

CONCLUSION

In 21st century, people need to understand that women are not less than men in anyway. They are giving their best to manage their works and homes simultaneously. It is the high time that world start giving them the equal opportunities and rights. In the same way, women need to understand their own basic rights, they need to confident enough to stand up for themselves. All the problems highlighted in literature are manageable. Every stakeholder needs to play their proactive and needed role for the betterment of this society.

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