



VOICE
OF WOMEN
AT WORKPLACE
-2020

A research initiative by
Her Career Foundation
under the nationwide campaign
"Hear HER Voice"



Your
VOICE
MATTERS

"HERE'S TO STRONG WOMEN.
MAY WE KNOW THEM!
MAY WE RAISE THEM!
MAY WE BE THEM!"

FOREWORD

FOREWORD

Women, today, have every bit as much game-changing talent and have proved themselves as successful entrepreneurs and “organization builders” as do men. The problem is, millions of potential star women leaders are on the side-lines, and this isn’t good for the economy, organizations, or communities.

Despite being equally qualified, capable and proving themselves time and again, women tend to get a cold shoulder. There are many challenges women face which seldom get a platform to voice them.

Women feel
“Often our views, opinions, and ideas are brushed off or deemed insignificant. Even today, we are judged or looked down upon because of gender stereotypes. Though there are numerous precedents of women overcoming challenges to reach at the top, but not all get the recognition they deserve.
OUR VOICES MATTER and are equally important.”

Progressive organizational changes are the key to women empowerment at workplaces. The inclusiveness in various organizations have started to pave way for better policies but we are still far from achieving our target. These initiatives should be appreciated and be readily adopted by other organizations as well.

There are innumerable **SUCCESS STORIES** where women have defied all the odds and made a remarkable impact not just at their workplaces but for the society as a whole.

AND, WE AIM TO ADD MORE TO THEM IN THE YEARS TO COME!

CONTENTS

- 3 About Us
- 4 Survey Statistics
- 5 Major Touchpoints
- 6 Sense of Belonging
- 11 Sense of Progression
- 16 Sense of Support
- 21 Sense of Unbiasedness
- 26 Sense of Aspiration
- 31 Words from Experiences
- 35 The Bright Side - Returnee Internship Programme



SARLA SHARMA
CHAIRWOMAN
HER CAREER FOUNDATION

ABOUT US

A NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION



VISION

Empowering Women to Lead with Dignity

MISSION

Empowering Women by re-skilling, re-building and re-shaping the workplace. We deliver programs that contribute towards the personal and professional development of women.

WE SUPPORT WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN ON CAREER BREAKS AND WANT TO REJOIN THE WORKFORCE THROUGH



LEARNING



NETWORKING



MENTORING

OUR INITIATIVES



RETURNEE
INTERNSHIP
PROGRAMME



FOCUSED
RESEARCH
PROGRAMMES



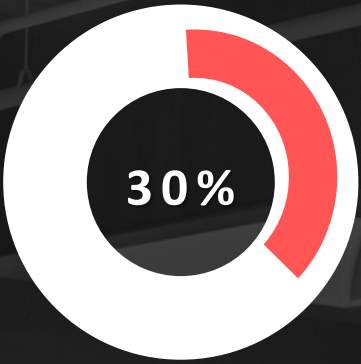
WOMEN
ENTREPRENEUR
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES

STATISTICS

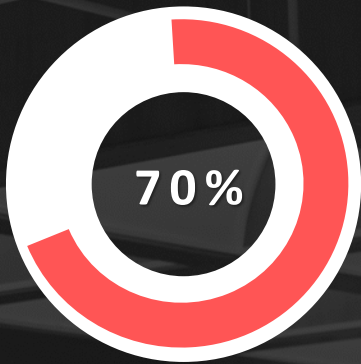


Participation from
more than 500 women
professionals

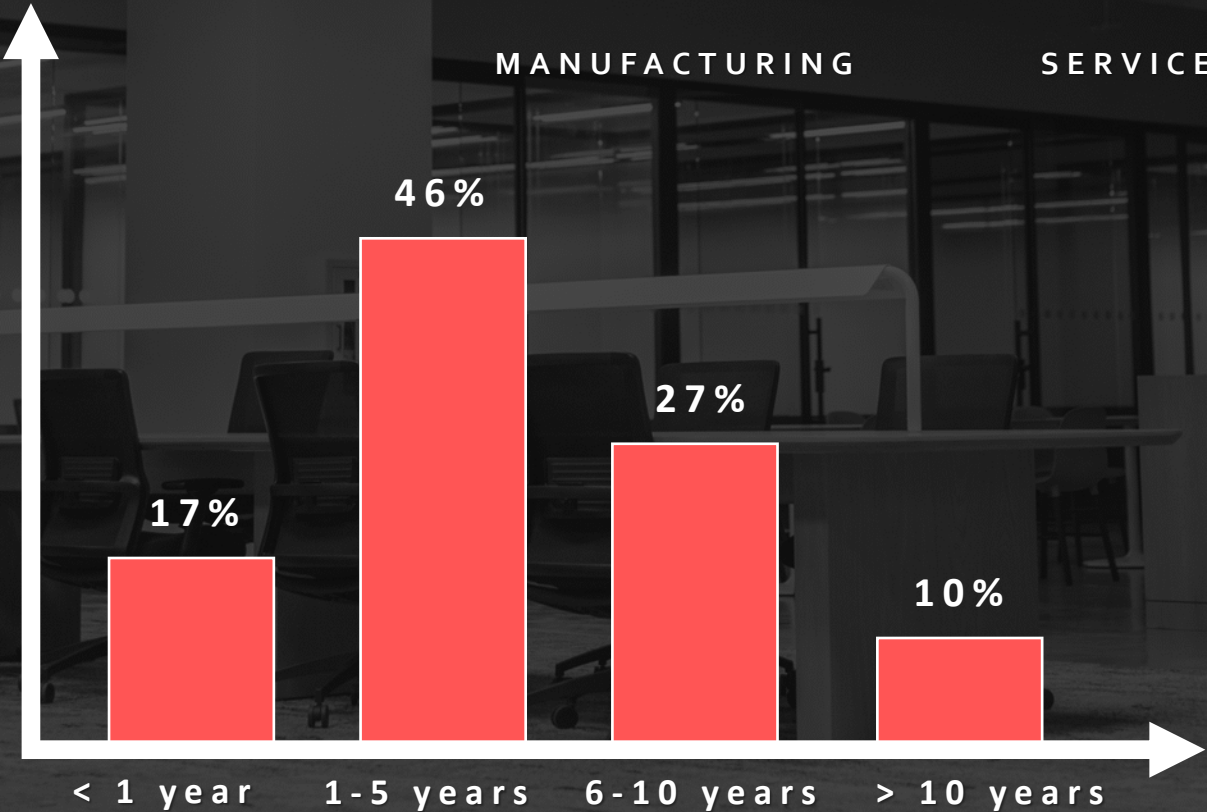
INDUSTRY SEGMENT



MANUFACTURING



SERVICE



< 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years > 10 years

WORK-EXPERIENCE

MAJOR TOUCHPOINTS



SENSE OF BELONGING

Are women employees being heard, and given a chance to present their opinions?



SENSE OF PROGRESSION

Are organizations really helping their women employees to progress in their careers?



SENSE OF SUPPORT

Are organizations doing enough to build up a conducive environment at workplace for their women employees?



SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

Do organizations focus on "equity" for women?



SENSE OF ASPIRATION

Why do women suffer gender "as an obstacle" in career advancement?



SENSE OF BELONGING

POINTS ADDRESSED

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF BELONGING FOR WOMEN AT WORKPLACE?

The feeling of inclusiveness and the sense that their voices are heard and their opinions matter



WHERE DO WOMEN FEEL MOST INCLUSIVE?

In workplaces where the culture is open and understanding and women can be in their usual self rather than trying to fit in

TO WHOM DOES IT AFFECT?

Every employee in the workplace, especially women professionals who have to tackle added responsibilities at the home front as well



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Employees spend most parts of their day working at the organization and so its important that they feel they belong to the place of work

WHEN DO WE FEEL IT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

During general interactions and meetings with seniors, managers and colleagues



HOW DOES IT AFFECT A PERSON?

A person who feels less inclusive at workplace slowly lose the sense of commitment towards their work as well as the organization as a whole

SENSE OF BELONGING

A high majority of women employees consciously and sub-consciously tend to put away their individuality and traits because they believe it would be difficult for them to assimilate these with the organizational culture.

But what if one can be oneself at their workplace and have the liberation to feel at home?

Are women employees being heard, and given a chance to present their opinions?

While we talk a lot about diversity and inclusion and celebrate ground-breaking successes in terms of bringing in more women to the workforce, we often do not realize that

Just because someone is “included” in the organization, it does not mean they feel they “belong” to the organization.

Though Diversity and Inclusion in an organization should be a basic and underlying support, it is not sufficient unless you take the *Sense of Belonging* into the equation. It forms the basis for psychological safety and employee engagement.

It is important to address this as we still need answers to the following questions:

- ❑ How respected and valued do women feel at workplace, by their managers and peers?
- ❑ To what degree do women have a positive and negative experience at workplace?
- ❑ Do companies have policies for open communication?

SENSE OF BELONGING KEY INSIGHTS

71%

Respondents agreed that they feel less belongingness when something negative happens with them at the workplace

36%

Respondents disagreed when asked if they think they belong to their organization

36%

Respondents said that their opinions are not valued when they speak up

35%

Respondents disagreed when asked if they are respected and valued by their managers

25%

Respondents disagreed when asked if they are respected and valued by their teammates and colleagues

"I feel there is a bit more importance given to the male employees. Because being a woman, it's not possible for me to be approachable all the time because I have family and other responsibilities to take care of."

- Woman professional with 8+ years of work experience

In our interviews with women employees from various industries:

- ❖ Workplaces that lacks robust safety policies, processes, work ethics, trust, respect and do not recognize the work and accomplishments, fails to create and foster the sense of belonging
- ❖ It is imperative for women to have an inclusive environment, where they can be in their true selves, freely express their opinions, are considered an integral part of the team, their contributions are valued, and their successes celebrated.

SENSE OF BELONGING ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



Acknowledge, appreciate and recognize women's contribution towards building the realize



Value their opinions by actively involving women employees in decision-making



Give feedbacks for personal and professional growth

"We speak up our opinions and are allowed to express what we think. No one is treated differently, and everyone is given equal opportunities. Seniors are also open to those ideas and give their timely feedback on the same. This really makes me feel that I belong to this workplace."

- Woman professional with 12+ years of work experience

Organizations must engage women to foster the sense of belonging in them. Inclusivity and belonging must be weaved into the fabric of organizational culture. All these initiatives must work in tandem to holistically improve the engagement mechanism:

- > Companies need to engineer empathy as an integral part of the engagement process and interactions. It will lead to less bureaucracy and to be more in sync with priorities.
- > Women employees should be recognized for their accomplishments at work and their achievements need to be celebrated.
- > An open and transparent environment help women employees to articulate their thoughts and opinions without the fear of getting rebuked or looked down upon. This will lead to increased motivation and participation.
- > Fostering a culture that allows employees to be their true self i.e. to maintain their individuality will make them feel more at ease.

SENSE OF BELONGING ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

Women should always be receptive to learning from their seniors and colleagues at the same time they must seek feedback that would help them improvise and be more effective at their workplace.

- > They should learn to articulate their point of view and opinions in office and team meetings.
- > Start Networking - It has many intangible benefits. As it's rightly said "Your NETWORK is your NET WORTH", women should interact with their colleagues to develop better interpersonal relationships with them, which in turn will increase the sense of belonging for their organization.
- > Women should proactively participate in team-building and other extra-curricular activities at their workplaces. This helps develop team spirit and create amicable relationships with colleagues.



Ask for feedback from your seniors and colleagues



Socialize and interact with your team members and managers



Pro-actively participate in team building and other activities at workplace

"Yes, I feel very homely at my workplace. The seniors are great and give timely feedback. We have some fun activities as well at our workplace. Overall, my organization is very supportive and listens to our suggestions and opinions."

- Woman professional with 4+ years of work experience



SENSE OF PROGRESSION

POINTS ADDRESSED

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF PROGRESSION FOR WOMEN AT WORKPLACE?

The progress a woman seeks in an organization in terms of capability development, training, and learning opportunities to get ahead in their careers, not only in terms of organizational hierarchy but also in better pay, responsibilities, and working conditions



WHERE DO WOMEN FEEL MOST PROGRESSIVE?

Organizations where capability development programs and training are a part of work-culture and there is no gender bias in the opportunities to improve and grow within the organization

TO WHOM DOES IT AFFECT?

The women employees who are not getting enough opportunities or facing biases in terms of regular training and capability development programs or are not or less motivated to take up learning initiatives on their own



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

To be able to transition to the next level of the career, get better opportunities, new challenges and foster women leadership in the organization.

WHEN DO WE FEEL IT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

During capability development programs, training or motivational sessions and performance reviews for promotions and appraisals decisions



HOW DOES IT AFFECT A PERSON?

An aspect of working is also about "getting better at what you do" so that you are open to new opportunities and challenges in your career. A person feeling stuck at the same place, and not seeing any progression within the organization, is prone to disappointment and would not likely continue his/her association with the organization

SENSE OF PROGRESSION

Today, organizations are not just places of work, but where an individual learns and grows professionally.

Women have experienced very slow progression in their careers right from the onset of it. Though it is claimed by many organizations that the decisions for career progression are done very fairly, the problem lies at the grassroots i.e.

Are women exposed to avenues from where they can learn, improve and develop real-life skills that will help them in career progression?

Are organizations really helping their women employees to progress in their careers?

Many organizations focus on capability development for their employees by offering them training and in-house courses and sponsorship for higher studies. However, only a small percentage of women employees take advantage of these resources.

Organizations need to understand that -

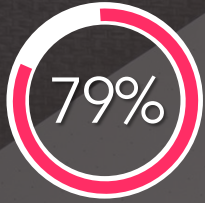
Just making them available for women is not enough, but rather motivating them to take them up.

Women employees who are not self-motivated or fixated to just perform well in the work assigned, miss out on opportunities that would help them develop their career within the organization.

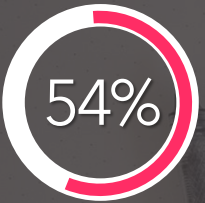
Firms need to step in by motivating their women employees to **take up learning as one of the key aspects of working.**

SENSE OF PROGRESSION

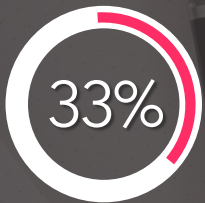
KEY INSIGHTS



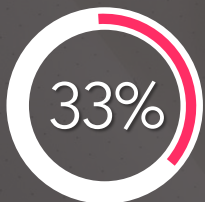
Respondents said that organization do not provide SPONSORSHIP to women for higher education



Respondents with 11+ years of work experience said that their organizations do not support them with capability development programmes



Respondents disagree that their organization believes in women's capability development



Respondents said that the women employees in their organizations are NOT SUPPORTED with capability development programmes



Respondents said that their organization DOES NOT HAVE capability development programmes

"We have policies regarding capability development and there are certain criteria for that as well. Not everyone, but few employees are getting benefit out of these. Specifically, about me, I haven't been a part of such activities for the past few years"

Woman professional with 15+ years of work experience

In our interviews with women employees from various industries:

- ❖ Most women agreed on having capability development programmes in their organization but in the past few years, they did not have enough motivation to take these up due to added responsibilities from the home-front.
- ❖ Women also said that for a senior role there are not many home-grown talents that the organizations give opportunities to but rather prefer external hiring.

SENSE OF PROGRESSION ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



Motivate your women employees to take up capability development programmes



Train women professionals to develop real-life skills that help them rise the corporate ladder



Test their skills with challenging projects and assignments

"...once a person starts working, they usually don't get a chance to pursue a fresh course. But if a company provides training and workshops, we could learn new skills, and can apply it in our work also, so it is profitable for both."

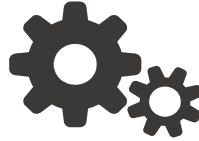
- Woman professional with 13+ years of work experience

- Organizations must motivate their women employees to take up capability development programmes, by telling them about the upside of those and how they will help them in their career progression.
- Efforts should be made in making the women employees trained in leadership, communication, strategic thinking, etc. that would help them rise in the corporate ladder.
- The assessment of these trainings and learnings should also be a part of the corporate culture. Assignments and projects related to the trainings as well as timely feedback should be provided.

ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

- Women should be proactive in asking for specialized courses and trainings for personal and professional development. This shows to their managers that they are willing to learn and contribute to the workplace.
- Women should make the best out of trainings and mentoring sessions, whenever the opportunity arises. Learning from the experiences of their seniors can go a long way in developing their own paths to greatness.
- Women should support other women, especially their subordinates with their knowledge and should encourage them to take up specialized trainings, which have helped them in their careers.



Ask for specialized courses and trainings from their organization



Participate actively in training and mentoring sessions in organizations



Support other women employees by educating them about the perks of specialized trainings

“In my opinion, they (women) should be ready to take more responsibilities at the workplace, which would help them in their careers ahead. They should speak to their immediate managers, regarding their growth plans and not shy away from any opportunities that come to their way.”

- Woman professional with 19+ years of work experience



SENSE OF SUPPORT POINTS ADDRESSED

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AT WORKPLACE?

The initiatives from the organizations to help their women employees in maintaining the work-life balance and offering them flexible work environment and helping them get back to workplace after maternity or sabbatical leaves



WHERE DO WOMEN FEEL MOST SUPPORTED?

Organizations which provide facilities such as for work-from-home, flexible timings, relocation etc. as and per required and most of all women don't have to face repercussions of availing such facilities

TO WHOM DOES IT AFFECT?

Work-life and flexibility support is extremely helpful for women who would otherwise want to drop off from the workforce due to added responsibilities from the home front, which can be due to multiple factors



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A supportive work-culture can help a woman stay active at the professional front, while she handles personal responsibilities of family and childcare simultaneously

WHEN DO WE FEEL IT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

During interactions with seniors and managers regarding leaves, breaks, transfer requests to a different location or department within the organization, etc.



HOW DOES IT AFFECT A PERSON?

The lack of support from the organizations leads many women employees to leave the workplace due to family reasons, which can be moving to a new place after marriage, assuming parenthood and childcare, etc. or not being able to put in extra hours senior management expects them to

SENSE OF SUPPORT

Added responsibilities of family and children down the career path forces a lot of women employees to take a career break (as sabbatical or maternity leave) or a permanent exit from the workforce. With too stringent policies in most organizations, women are compelled to make such decisions.

Are the organizations doing enough to support their women employees in maintaining the work-life balance? And are they supportive towards women who want to join back the workforce after sabbatical or maternity leaves?

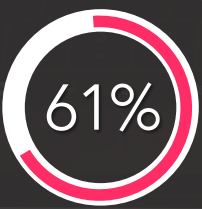
Many companies claim to have a very supportive work-environment with people allowed to take breaks during their work hours, in-house childcare support, emergency leave provision, and work-from-home options. However, women have faced the consequences of availing these services in terms of negative impact during performance reviews and inappropriate appraisals and promotions.

That raises an important question:

Is this genuine support or just support for the sake of it?

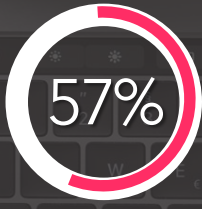
- ❑ Owing to family-related pressures and responsibilities, a lot of women employees are forced out of the corporates. While, the support from the family's side is imperative to their career progression, it is equally important for the organizations to step-up at the right moment to help the women employees, who want to continue on their career path.
- ❑ However, it is seen that corporates often turn a cold shoulder to such employees and so they have to either resort to career breaks or complete drop off from their career path. After coming out of career breaks due to maternity or sabbatical leaves, women are not recognized as ideal candidates even for the same position and pay-scale and most of the time are assigned sub-par work as compared to people with similar work-experience.

SENSE OF SUPPORT KEY INSIGHTS



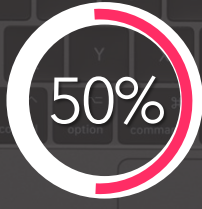
61%

Respondents with 11+ years of work experience said that their organizations are not doing enough to support work-life balance



57%

Respondents with 11+ years of work-experience believe their organization does not have a flexible work-culture



50%

Respondents from the **Manufacturing** sector said that their organizations are not doing enough to support work-life balance



49%

Overall respondents said that their organizations are not doing enough to support work-life balance



47%

Overall respondents said that their organization does not have a flexible work-culture

"...so whenever I would use these facilities and rush from my workplace to home, that thing would ultimately show up in my performance report and they'd be like you should take less work pressure and would give you less important work."

- Woman professional with 10+ years of work experience

In our interviews with women employees from various industries:

- ❖ Multiple women said that though their organizations allowed them to take short breaks during the work hours, or opt for WFH during specific family emergencies, they have faced repercussions in terms of performance appraisals and the quality of work assigned to them.
- ❖ Women also said that when a female employee joins the workforce after maternity or sabbatical, they have had to compromise on the salary and designation.

SENSE OF SUPPORT ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



Allowance for flexibility in timings with proper breaks



Hold counselling and mentoring session on effective time-management and importance of work-life balance



Support women who want to come back after maternity and sabbatical leaves

“We have flexible work hours and WFH is also allowed, provided you deliver your tasks on time. Particularly for women, who have to handle various responsibilities in their families alongside their work, I think this is a great thing in our organization.”

- Woman professional with 21+ years of work experience

- Organization must start emphasising on productivity and results rather than time spent on the desk. One should ensure that for any assignment, deliverables are clearly laid out and rather than micro-managing, results at the end of the process are evaluated fairly.
- For women who find it difficult to juggle responsibilities between work and home, organizations should come forward to listen to their grievances and help them with effective time-management .
- Rather than neglecting the returnee women employees or giving them sub-par assignments, organizations must help them get back in the work-flow by letting them know about various developments that their workplace went through and help them familiarize with the changes.

ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

- Women should place themselves in the “value bracket” when it comes to delivering quality within the allocated time. If any woman wants to make a mark in her workplace, she must limit her distractions and stay focussed on the task at hand.
- Women should open up with any issues they are facing at the work or home front. They should not hesitate from counselling sessions as well as asking for any piece of advice from their seniors and colleagues.
- It is very important for women to prioritize the work and plan accordingly. One should focus not just on “effectiveness” but “efficiency” as well. Also, women should learn to draw a line between work and home. Leave work at the workplace and enjoy yourself when you are with your family.



Focus on delivering great quality work within deadlines



Talk to your seniors about problems related to maintaining work-life balance



Set out your priorities, both personal and professional and draw a line between work and home

“The company believes that every person is responsible for their own work. They don't pressurize us regarding time but rather give us the work and let us decide the deadline to complete and turn the work in. I think this flexibility really enables us to perform better at our workplace.”

- Woman professional with 10+ years of work experience



SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

POINTS ADDRESSED

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS FOR WOMEN AT WORKPLACE?

The focus of organizations to remove any gender biases in terms of opportunities for career development, training, motivation, salaries and appraisals, promotions and leadership opportunities



WHERE DO WOMEN FEEL MOST UNBIASED?

Organizations with "equal pay for equal work" policy, parity in the capability development, training for all employees, and transparency in terms of performance reviews and appraisals

TO WHOM DOES IT AFFECT?

The entire workforce in an organization is affected by unconscious or implicit gender bias



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

An unbiased work-culture increases the organization's recognition as an inclusive workplace and empowers the women employees to achieve better results and reach greater heights in their careers

WHEN DO WE FEEL IT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

During recruitments, general interactions, meetings, performance reviews, decision making for salary increments, appraisals, promotions, opportunities for capability development, etc.



HOW DOES IT AFFECT A PERSON?

A lack of proper representation, an unfair and biased work-culture, gives rise to under-confident employees, which hampers their growth, and in some cases, causes mental issues such as work-related stress and depression

SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

A lot is talked about getting “equality” at workplaces for men and women. Still, we often fail to realize that to empower women in the workplace; we need “equity” rather than “equality.”

Equality focuses on equal treatment without considering the need while Equity focuses on giving more to those who need it more.

But do organizations focus on “equity” for women?

While most organizations are working towards making their workplaces more gender-neutral, according to the World Bank

India has seen a decline in the participation of women employees in the workforce in the last 25 years.

One of the reasons why gender parity is still a big concern around the globe is that

MALES DON'T UNDERSTAND

the privileges they are entitled to just because of their gender.

If you are a male, then it's highly unlikely that:

- You are paid unfairly with respect to your colleagues
- You're overlooked for a position just because you've recently married or assumed parenthood
- You face problems with travelling late from work or feeling safe in the office premises
- You won't land the job you're qualified for just because the hiring person believes you won't be able to handle stressful situations or put in extra hours

Females, on the other hand, face these issues every day!

SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

KEY INSIGHTS

55%

Respondents said that promotions decisions in their workplaces are not taken fairly

50%

Respondents said their compensation is not fair according to similar roles in the organization

48%

Respondents said they don't have fair compensation at their workplace

48%

Respondents said that performance evaluation is not done fairly in their workplaces

38%

Respondents disagreed when asked if their organization promotes gender equality at workplace

"Gender bias is so deeply ingrained in most organizations that one doesn't have to look for too long to experience it."

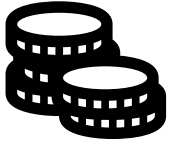
- Woman professional with 18+ years of work experience

In our interviews with women employees from various industries, we found out that:

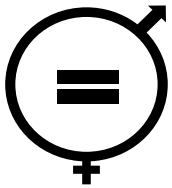
- ❖ Women experience a disparity in salaries and the nature of the work for similar roles in their organizations.
- ❖ Most women agree that there are strong stereotypes that guide the behaviour of appointing a woman for a particular role, especially in higher positions, just because of her gender.

SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



Support "Equal Pay for Equal work" and pay transparency in the workplace



Emphasize on the importance of Gender Equity and Equality among the employees



Take strict actions against any instances of gender biasness at the workplace

"...even if a woman is capable of a leadership position, they are not considered as worthy as their male counterparts for putting in their best at their jobs. There are still strong stereotypes regarding women in the mindset of people even though they are getting ahead in their career."

- Woman professional with 15+ years of work experience

- Women across our country continue to face wage gaps as much as 15-20%. It's high time all the organizations start following "Equal Pay for Equal Work" policy in their workplaces. Also, there should be a transparent process for performance evaluation leading to appraisals and promotion decisions.
- Organization must emphasize on Gender Equity and Gender Equality in their workplaces by means of compulsory Workplace Diversity, Sensitivity and Inclusivity training for all employees.
- To bring any changes to the workplaces, innate biases and stereotypes should be eliminated and so, strict actions are required to be taken against any bias behaviour in the organization.

SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

- Women should talk to their managers and colleagues regarding any biased behaviour they have experienced or have witnessed against any colleague, subordinate or senior.
- Take ownership of the assignments and tasks you have performed and always be proactive in the face of an opportunity. Appreciate your women colleagues and seniors for the contribution they have made to the workplace.
- **ALWAYS BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.** As it is said "You can do it only if you think you can do it!" As a working professional, focus on your strengths and keep honing your skills. Don't be disheartened by setbacks, instead learn from it and come stronger the next time.



Be vocal about any incidents of gender related biases at your workplace



Take up ownership of tasks and acknowledge the work you and other women are doing for the organization



Believe in yourself and trust your ability to perform even in a tough situation

"Yes, there were a few instances of biases and I think they are present everywhere. I used to raise my voice regarding certain concerns that we had as I was in HR, but not always are our grievances addressed."

- Woman professional with 7+ years of work experience



SENSE OF ASPIRATION

POINTS ADDRESSED

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF ASPIRATION FOR WOMEN AT WORKPLACE?

The support in terms of fulfilment of short and long-term career aspirations and the gender unbiasedness in the opportunities provided for the same.



WHERE DO WOMEN FEEL MOST MOST ASPIRING AND ACCOMPLISHING?

Organizations where women are given equal opportunities as men to move up the corporate ladder and be at a decision-making position

TO **WHOM** DOES IT AFFECT?

The women employees who have been side-lined due to innate gender bias in the organization, owing them to not reach their full potential in the career.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Women at leadership positions can pave the way for more women to enter and prosper in the workforce. It will help close the pay gap, foster capability development for new women entrants, and help bring forward gender parity issues in the workplace

WHEN DO WE FEEL IT IN ORGANIZATIONS?

When women are not recognized for their contribution in the workplace and are overlooked for promotions and lead roles.



HOW DOES IT AFFECT A PERSON?

Women who are not recognized for their work and not provided opportunities for career advancements face issues ranging from a decline in productivity at the workplace to mental health problems such as stress and depression

SENSE OF ASPIRATION

The efforts towards women empowerment at workplaces are fruitless until we address the issue of women in leadership roles.

With decision-making still beyond the grasp of women leaders, how could other women pave their path to the top?

Why do women suffer gender “as an obstacle” in career advancement?

Despite all the efforts towards boosting gender diversity at workplaces, the corporates still struggle to bring women to the forefront of the organizations.

Out of every 100 CEOs and Managing Directors in top 1000 companies in India, only 3 are women.

Even after SEBI's 2018 mandate to appoint an independent women director on the Company Board, as many as 150 out of 1000 top companies in India have not complied with the directives.

This is either due to:

- ❑ Shortage of deserving women professionals in the industry
- ❑ Negligence on the part of corporates to provide women with relevant opportunities to lead from the front

Both of these are equally detrimental in the path of incorporating women empowerment at workplaces.

SENSE OF ASPIRATION KEY INSIGHTS

86%

Respondents said that diversity at the workplace is very important for them

65%

Respondents with 11+ years of work experience are not confident that they can develop their career in their current organization

64%

Respondents agreed that working at their company is important to the way that they think of themselves as a person

47%

Respondents are not confident that they can develop their career in their current organization

39%

Respondents are not comfortable with voicing any contrary opinions, without the fear of consequences

"Women are appointed just for namesake and to make up for the gender diversity policy that is in place at the organization. They rarely have a say in decision making of the organization and are never hired for a senior role; only for low or mid-level. There were very few instances where women were asked to take up a call on some important things."

- Woman professional with 7+ years of work experience

In our interviews with women employees from various industries:

- ❖ Almost every woman agreed that they have a minimal representation of women leaders in their organization.
- ❖ Women responded by saying that their voices are often not heard or neglected in meetings and are very rarely involved in the organization's decision-making process.

SENSE OF ASPIRATION ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



Support “Equal Pay for Equal work” and pay transparency in the workplace



Emphasize on the importance of Gender Equity and Equality among the employees



Take strict actions against any instances of gender bias at workplace

“If there is a career plan in place, and things are moving towards it, I’d definitely prefer staying in this organization. Ultimately growth in the organization comes first, culture or comfort in the workplace is secondary.”

- Woman professional with 13+ years of work experience

- Organizations must start developing women’s talent in their workplace and have them take leadership roles, whenever an opportunity arises. A woman at a leadership role will not only affect the individual but a lot of other young women as well to strive for success in their careers.
- Discuss career progression plans with women employees. Talk to them about the vision of the organization and how they can play a pivotal role in the same. This brings out a sense of responsibility and credibility in women and they perform better at their workplaces.
- Remove any communication gaps and biases from your organization and have a proactive approach towards developing women’s talent at the workplace.

SENSE OF UNBIASEDNESS

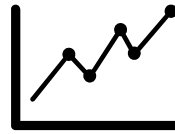
ACTIONS FOR TODAY

WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

- Women should discuss their short and long term career aspirations with their seniors in the organization and see if they align well with the vision of the organization. Pro-active and responsible behaviour is well-appreciated in any organization.
- Women should always be ready to take charge and lead from the front whenever the opportunity arises. This is vital for their career growth and to win the trust of their seniors.
- One should always be ready to learn from the experiences of their seniors. A person who is willing to learn and put effort towards the same is highly regarded in the workplace. Seek mentorship from the senior leadership of the organization and try to incorporate these leadership skills within you as well.



Talk about their aspirations and their career goals to their seniors.



Ask for opportunities to lead and improve.



Seek mentorship from senior leadership in the organization.

"I always used to think it's not about the organization it's about the way you work. If I am happy here I'll be working here. I don't think every day about negative things. I've always been thinking about ways to overcome the obstacles I face but then if something is really bad that cannot be worked up or that is not working at all, you would think about taking a break and move out."

- Woman professional with 30+ years of work experience



WORDS FROM EXPERIENCES

In our interactions with women professionals across the country, we received some eye-opening insights from their experiences at various corporates, which clearly highlighted the many problems women are facing with regard to gender neutrality and parity.

WORDS FROM EXPERIENCES

"I would say that organizations do give us these facilities such as flexible work hours and other facilities, but they don't want us to avail of those facilities. Speaking from personal experience in my previous organization, I had other responsibilities as well so whenever I would use those facilities and rush from my work place to home that thing would ultimately show up in my performance report and they'd be like you should take less work pressure and gives you less important work. To conclude this, I would say that generally organizations have shown that they provide these facilities but deep down they don't implement them properly or in the desired manner."

-Sr. HR and Operations Executive with 10+ years of experience

"The gender ratio is skewed in the organization and I haven't seen many women rising to the top positions in my organizations as of now. We have a CORE programme, where certain level talents are picked up and trained under top universities or given opportunities for higher studies if they want to take that up. However, I haven't seen many women who are benefitting from it. Few women are there in the leadership positions out of which some are appointed from outside while some are home-grown talents."

-Sr. Manager Communications with 12+ years of experience

"Our organization doesn't provide any help in professional development but I feel they should provide learning opportunities, training and workshops for the employees. Because once a person starts working, they usually don't get a chance to pursue a fresh course. But if a company provides training and workshops, we can not only learn new skills we can apply it in our work also, so it is profitable for both. "

-Sr. Marketing Manager with 13+ years of experience

"So, if a woman takes leave for her child, she is considered less productive than her male counterpart because males are not taking such leaves and are spending more time at the workplace. Some consider women took leave just for their enjoyment but only a woman can understand why it is necessary for her to take that leave."

-Business Associate with 7+ years of experience

WORDS FROM EXPERIENCES

"Definitely biases are there in the organizations, especially if the job is on-field or on-site or if it requires travelling, etc. Also, even if a woman is capable of a leadership position, they are not considered as worthy as their male counterparts for putting in their best at their jobs. There are still strong stereotypes regarding women in the mindset of people even though they are getting ahead in their careers. Organizations can have all the rules and regulations set in place, but the clarity is needed in the mindset of the person who is the decision-maker."

-Product Manager with 15+ years of experience

"Yes, biasedness it's definitely there because India as a country is still not mature enough and if you see the women in the upper bracket, the number is very less, somewhere even less than 10% or so. And if you see in the IT industry, where I was previously working, I was the only woman in a senior position as the Vice president for the organization.

As time goes on you see the percentage of women in the organization goes down due to family, kids and like that and then they don't indulge back for the work or end up working for lower positions as they cannot manage the workload between their house and office."

- Head-Delivery Division with 30+ years of experience

"From the organizations side, putting trust in people is very important. Though, I have seen many executive level women reach high in their career and even settling abroad with their spouses and families, most organizations still have that mindset of not giving opportunities to their own executive level employees for any openings at mid-managerial levels. They won't train that existing employee or plan their career path but rather look outside the organization for the role. This mindset needs improvement in the sense that growing talent within the organization is as important as external hiring."

-Talent Acquisition and Administrative specialist with 19+ years of experience

WORDS FROM EXPERIENCES

"In terms of appreciation I don't really feel that my work is getting more encouraged as compared to other male employees. I feel there is a bit of more importance given to them.

Because being a woman, it's not possible to be accessible all the time because you have family & other responsibilities to take care of. So, at that time men are easily accessible whenever they need someone to work for more than the office hours then the male employees accept it."

- Manager - Customer Service with 8+ years of experience

"I don't think I am getting good promotions. One male candidate joined the company later after I joined Just one-week difference was there but I can see that he has received promotion & two SPOT prices and IPA's also. And I could see that he was getting selected for various projects and I was not even given a chance to prove myself. And I was just loaded with some work which someone else could have taken and divided, but it never happened. Actually, this was faced by many female candidates, but they were not very much eager to grab new opportunities and grow, but I'm a person who wants to work on different projects, but I don't even get a chance to prove my capability. And I believe my knowledge & skill set could benefit the company also but, still I don't get a chance to prove."

-Sr. HR manager with 10+ years of experience

"Career progression plans are not laid down for each and every employee and it is at the discretion of management. It depends upon the profile if it's very important for the company or the employee is particularly very talented. However, there are very few such employees who get these opportunities."

-Manager - Communications with 12+ years of experience

"Women need to be dedicated as well as open to taking opportunities and rising to the occasion. For them, balancing work-life is an important factor with support from family playing a huge part, but they should add value to their workplaces, so that when the need arises to step-up the ladder, they are not neglected."

- HR- Talent Acquisition with 19+ years of experience

THE BRIGHT SIDE

ABOUT RETURNEE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
FROM HER CAREER FOUNDATION

It is seen that for a vast majority of working women, a career break is imminent. They are burdened to shoulder the impracticalities linked with shouldering domestic responsibilities with a full-time career. Once they are in a comparatively smoother phase with reference to their domestic engagements, the restlessness to return back to the mainstream workforce gains momentum for most of them. It is at this phase the role of the industry towards these returnees becomes very crucial and important. But it has been noticed that the Indian Corporate sector, by and large, are still sceptical to extend opportunities to these women for a short or long-term career option.

These women form a huge talent resource that can be tapped for their experience, and corporates must take lead and be more forthcoming in engaging these women. When these returnees are seriously supported by their professional network, it will help them break the shackles and speed up their return.

Rejecting their credentials just because of sabbatical or maternity leave, for any reason, and not giving them an opportunity to be heard is same as disrespecting their invaluable and priceless contribution to the workplace. All we need to do is understand their potential and give them a second chance to establish their career for we never know what they can bring to the table.

Let's partner this drive and support these women who wants to come back to main workforce stream.



RETURNEE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Returnee Internship (RETURNSHIP) Programme, an initiative of Her Career Foundation, are 4 weeks to 6 months internships that provide opportunities to women professionals who are planning to restart their careers after an extended absence from the workforce, with strong hand holding through coaching, mentoring, networking and job opportunities.

THE NEED FOR RETURNSHIP PROGRAMME

Professional women who have been on a hiatus when plan to return to workforce face a lot of dilemma and challenges. They need a support system that can handhold them for a brief period, wherein they get opportunity to develop the necessary skills, learning & mentoring support.

They are an amazing source of talent and Returnee Internship programmes can help them assimilate in the main workforce by which they can contribute towards the growth & development of the organization.

Returnee Internship programs helps returning women to come out of their cocoon. It helps them to take progressive steps towards their professional career after a hiatus. It helps them in rebuilding their careers by providing them opportunities to relearn & reskill & rebuilt themselves.

“Be the change, you want to see in the world.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Want to partner with us?

Visit: www.hercareerfoundation.org

E-mail: mail@hercareerfoundation.org

Find us on:



DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this report is provided by HER CAREER FOUNDATION (HCF) for general guidance and is intended to offer the user general information of interest. Utmost care and caution has been taken in compilation of the information provided by participants.

Although we endeavour to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future.

The information presented should not be construed as any professional advice or service. You should consult with a professional advisor familiar with your particular factual situation for advice before making any decision.

The information is provided 'as is' without warranties of any kind, including accuracy, timeliness and completeness. In no event shall HCF be responsible or liable for any direct or indirect consequence or damage arising out of or in connection with the report.

As content of the report including any concepts, ideas, know-how, designs, graphics and information may be copyrighted, proprietary and subject to intellectual property or other rights owned by HCF, any unauthorized use of any information of the report may violate copyright, trademark and other laws.