

COVID-19 and its Economic toll on Women Workforce

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Abstract

Due to the gender segregation of economic activity in many countries, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a negative influence on both women's and men's employment at different periods of the crisis. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck India in the middle of 2020, it was the dispossessed, the already-disadvantaged, who suffered the most. The situation was particularly difficult for corporate executives, working women, and ambitious female entrepreneurs who had to balance two jobs. According to the 2021 Opportunity Index Report, more than 40% of women have been affected by the artificial development of dual task. Female labour workforce participation in India was reported by the World Bank in a report released in June 2020. After the pandemic began, predictions became more pessimistic. According to the report, women were 7 times more likely than men to lose their employment due to lockdown and 11 times more likely than men not to return to work when the crisis had passed and presumed normalcy had returned. During the epidemic, the majority of these women apparently gave up on their own. This research emphasises the relevance of economic implications on women's workforce owing to Covid-19, as everyone faced extraordinary obstacles during the pandemic, but women bore the brunt of the economic and social consequences.

Keywords-Women workers, Gender equality, Covid-19, women rights, social protection, employment, equal employment opportunity.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a lower respiratory tract infection that was initially discovered in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019. Since then, the number of COVID-19 infections has been steadily growing over the world. The World Health Organization named the COVID-19 epidemic a global Coronavirus outbreak in March 2020. Following that, some national governments imposed complete or partial lockdown measures to stop the virus from spreading further. Despite the fact that these tight procedures have shown to be extremely efficient in preventing the virus from spreading further.

As COVID-19 continues to have an impact on people's lives and livelihoods around the world, we can see how the pandemic and its economic consequences are affecting gender equality. Women's jobs are estimated to be 1.8 times more vulnerable to the crisis than men's jobs. Women make approximately 39% of worldwide employment, but they are responsible for 54% of job losses. One reason for the virus's larger impact on women is that it is dramatically increasing the cost of unpaid care, which is borne disproportionately by women. This, among other things, means that women's employment is declining faster than the national average, even when men and women work in different fields.

As we consider women's career advancement in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence is growing that we are in the midst of a "female recession," in which women are at considerably higher risk of dropping out of the profession and the gender gap in the workplace is likely to widen. The current state of affairs threatens to reverse advances made by women, especially working mothers and women of colour. With unemployment rates, four times more women than males left the workforce in September 2020. Prior to 2020, men and women left their jobs at similar rates; now, "women are 1.3 times more likely than men to have pondered leaving the workforce or slowing down their careers—particularly mothers and senior women."

Whatever the situation, leaders have a unique power to correct the structural and systemic wrongs that have long produced injustices for women at work. To assist, we've compiled a list of five significant problems women face in the new workplace, as well as initiatives leaders may take to promote gender equity.

- 1) **Inadequate childcare and caregiver assistance.** -The epidemic highlighted and amplified women's unpaid domestic and childcare responsibilities. Last year, women spent three times as much time as men on unpaid childcare around the world. Even after the epidemic, unequal caregiving distribution and a lack of employer support will be a hurdle for women at work.

Providing flexible working choices, such as the opportunity to telecommute Challenges Women Face in the New or Uncertain Workplace

- 2) **Issues with co-workers or employees**—whether it's employees, supervisors, or the boss, the workplace can be full with people who don't communicate properly, harass, or discriminate against others. Slackers, bullies, gossipers, troublemakers, whiners, complainers, saboteurs, or backstabbers are all examples of co-workers. Misunderstandings, distrust, worry, and stress are all possible outcomes. They can also have a negative impact on productivity, performance, mood, morale, and reputation.
- 3) **Lack of integrity**-At some point in their profession, everyone wants to be successful and will do anything to move ahead. They could, for example, take shortcuts, omit facts, lie and steal, or deceive others. These methods erode people's trust and relationships, and without trust, a company can't compete effectively and will fail.
- 4) **Uncertainty**-Uncertainty about what competitors are doing and how they are doing to tackle new technology and its effects on the business, as well as uncertainty about the global economy and credit markets, can lead to a short-term focus and people not getting anything done. Companies tend to make short-term plans rather than long-term goals, yet neglecting to plan 5-10 years ahead might result in the company's worth being destroyed.

Regulatory changes can have an impact on company decisions. Companies may face pressure from customers or shareholders to become "greener," increases in corporate tax rates, or higher costs as a result of new carbon levies, for example.

- 5) **Technological advancements**—Technology is rapidly advancing, and a competitor may decide to wait for the next-generation technology, which could be just a year away.
- 6) **Lack of sponsorship**. -Women who left the workforce or had their work hours curtailed due to the epidemic may have difficulty resuming their careers. A senior leader who uses their power to advocate for an individual's growth can make a major difference, especially for women of colour who may lack informal networking connections.

Sponsors will be crucial to ensure that women are not overlooked for promotion chances as more women choose to work remotely. Leaders must evaluate how sponsorship might benefit women or women in their workforce, particularly women of colour, and learn how to maximise sponsor relationships.

- 7) **Communication Issues-** Organizational success is usually determined by the clarity and efficacy of internal communication. A clear communication protocol should be in place in every organisation. This is, however, easier said than done.

Employees communicate in many ways. Some people respond to emails and texts in seconds, while others take hours or days. Many people don't even reply to emails or SMS. This lack of communication, as well as the resulting lack of coordination among personnel, might jeopardise organisational harmony and success.

Internal communication clarity and effectiveness are frequently indicators of organisational success. Every organisation should have a defined communication procedure in place. However, it is easier said than done. Employees interact in a variety of ways. Some people answer to emails and texts immediately, while others wait hours or days to respond. Many people do not respond to emails or text messages. This breakdown in communication, as well as the ensuing lack of coordination among employees, could jeopardise organisational harmony and success.

Which groups are most affected?

For two reasons related to the dangers of close contact, the pandemic recession is extremely difficult for everybody, but especially for women's work worldwide: -

- the restrictions on service jobs, and
- abolition of schools and day-care centres

While some of our economists believe that married or engaged women are particularly vulnerable to job losses, caregiving status and the lack of support are more important than marital status. Black women (who shoulder considerably more home responsibilities on their own) and Latinas are disproportionately affected in the United States (who work in greater proportions in sectors like leisure and hospitality, and are more likely to have informal employment). Some subgroups, such as moms with small children, babies, and single mothers, are being squeezed even harder. As a result of the pandemic, less educated individuals and those whose tasks can not be done from home (C or D grade jobs) have seen increasing unemployment. High status employment, however, do not protect women from stress and burnout. Because of the fatigue

associated with being” always on” and juggling many jobs during the epidemic, senior-level women are substantially more inclined than their male counterparts to consider reducing their hours or leaving the workforce.

Women sustain deeper job losses and increased responsibilities for unpaid work

Prior to COVID-19, women made up 47% of the workforce in the United States, but they lost 55% of their jobs as a result of the pandemic, in part because they were over-represented in occupations and sectors that were particularly hard hit during the pandemic, such as lodging, food, sales, and manufacturing, among others. Growing up with unpaid domestic responsibilities, including the newly added burden of home-schooling children, is also causing women to drop out of the labour market. Mothers are three times more likely than men to take on the majority of housekeeping and childcare during the pandemic. Moms, particularly single mothers of small children in dual-career marriages, are disproportionately affected; they are twice or three times more likely to have a child.

Five steps that governments and businesses can take to mitigate the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 on women.

- **Direct income support for Women**—Introduce economic support packages or strong economic support packages for vulnerable women and their children, such as direct tax cuts, cash transfers, enhanced jobless benefits, and expanded family and child benefits. Direct cash transfers, which would provide cash directly to poor or low-income women, would serve as a lifeline for those unable to buy basic commodities or food during the pandemic. These strategies provide immediate assistance to women in the workforce.
- **Assistance to women-led and owned enterprises**- Women-led businesses should be eligible for special grants and stimulus money, as well as subsidised and state-backed loans. Tax constraints should be reduced or eliminated, and governments should purchase food, personal protective equipment, and other vital goods from women-led enterprises whenever possible. Economic aid should also go to areas and businesses where women make up a high percentage of the workforce.

- **Support for women workers-** To support women's income stability, implement gender-responsive social protection programmes. For example, increased access to affordable and high-quality childcare services will enable more women to work. Closing the gender pay gap is critical, and it starts with legislation and policies that ensure equal pay for equal labour and stop undervaluing women's contributions.
- **Assisting informal employees**—Provide social security and benefits to informal workers. Cash transfers or unemployment compensation for unemployed informal employees, as well as postponing or exempting taxes and social security payments for workers in the informal sector, might assist reduce the financial load.
- **Reconciliation of paid and unpaid work** -Providing all primary necessities or caregivers with paid leave and reduced or flexible working arrangements. Unprecedented measures to address the economic fallout have already been taken, but comparatively few measures have been directed at supporting families grappling with paid and unpaid work, including care needs. More efforts are also needed to engage citizens and workers in public campaigns that promote equitable distribution of care and domestic work between men and women workforce.

Conclusion

Workplace challenges abound, and they are an inevitable aspect of professional life. As you can see from the examples of workplace obstacles, businesses must be prepared to deal with a variety of issues. "Building forward fairer," according to the brief, entails putting gender equality at the centre of the recovery process and implementing gender-responsive strategies. These consist of

- Investing in the care economy because the education, health, and social work sectors are important job creators, particularly for women and their workforce, and because care leave policies and flexible working arrangements can encourage a more equitable division of work at home between men and women.
- Working to ensure that everyone has access to complete, adequate, and long-term social protection can help close the gender gap in social protection coverage.
- Promoting *equal pay for equal work* of equal value.

- Domestic violence and work-related gender-based abuse and harassment intensified throughout the epidemic, significantly limiting women's capacity to work for a living. Workplace violence and harassment must be eliminated. Women's participation in decision-making bodies, social discourse, and social partner institutions should be encouraged.

Challenges at work are everywhere and also it is *part and parcel* of professional life. As you have seen from the examples of challenges at work, organizations must be prepared to tackle some common problems. The brief emphasizes that “building forward fairer” means placing gender equality at the core of the recovery effort and putting in place gender-responsive strategies. These include:

- Investing in the care economy because the education, health, and social work sectors are important generators of jobs, especially for women and its workforce and because care leave policies and flexible working arrangements can encourage a more even division of work at home between women and men.
- Working towards universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection for all can lead to reduce the current gender gap in social protection coverage.
- Domestic violence and work-related gender-based violence and harassment worsened during the pandemic, further undermining women's ability to engage in paid employment. Eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. Promoting women's participation in decision-making bodies, social dialogue and social partner institutions.

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