

The Impact of Health Issues on Career Progression Among Working Women in India: A Comparative Analysis Across Industries

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Abstract- The level of women involvement in the workforce has grown considerably over the last few decades, but the career advancement amongst working women remains to be affected by a number of structural, social, and health-related aspects. Physical health problems, mental health-related problems, reproductive health concerns, and work-related stress are major factors contributing to the professional path of the women. Whereas there has been growing academic focus on the topic of gender inequality and barriers to career success at work, few studies have attempted to study the overlap between health concerns and career mobility among working women in various sectors. This is a review paper and it will be able to synthesize the existing literature to analyse the impact of the health related challenges on career progression in working women in India. The article is comparative of industry-specific experience in industries like information technology, healthcare, education, corporate services and manufacturing. The contribution of the workplace policies, such as maternity leave, menstrual leave, occupational health and mental health programs are also looked at. Using extensive literature review, the study establishes the gaps in research, policy constraints, and structural disparities on career development of women. The results indicate that the key to improving the career progress of women can be the supportive organizational practices, inclusive policies, and health-related interventions. The review fits into the academic discussion because it incorporates the viewpoints of occupational health, gender studies, and organizational management besides providing recommendations to policymakers, employers, and researchers.

Keywords: Working Women, Career Progression, Health Issues, Occupational Health, Gender Equality, Workplace Policies

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the workforce has significantly increased over the last several decades because of the rising access to education, economic growth, and the

alteration in social norms that promote the employment of women. The growth of education and emergence of professional fields have seen more women take up careers in different fields. Nevertheless, even with this development, the career advancement of women remains affected by a large number of structural and social barriers that limit their professional development (Rao, 2018; World Bank, 2021). Most developing economies such as India tend to face the issues that are faced by women, as a result of the interplay of workplace relations and the failure to live up to societal expectations. Such difficulties not only impact their future employment opportunities but also impact their career development in the long term and leadership prospects (Chatterjee, 2019; Gupta, 2019).

Health-related issues are one of the most important determinants of career development that has been significantly under-researched among others. Problems with health among working women may directly influence their productivity, job satisfaction, and occupational paths. Among the most important aspects that determine the experiences of women in the workplace, one can single out physical, mental, reproductive health issues, and work-related stress. Such health issues may have impediments to professional growth, undermine performance in the workplace, and even cause interim or permanent workforce exit (Sinha, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). Although, increased awareness about the significance of occupational health has been created, most workplaces have failed to create policies and support systems that can effectively meet the unique health requirements of women workers.

In most instances, work systems and organizational practices are not established with gender related health factors in sight. This can lead to women experiencing

problems in coping with health-related issues and being able to continue with their professional work. As an example, a poor access to healthcare assistance, failure to provide flexible employment terms, and insufficient knowledge of health problems faced by women may be the factors that result in career disruption and reduced progression (Connerley and Wu, 2016; Nair, 2021). Moreover, working environments that do not freely communicate and solve health related issues might deter women in obtaining the required assistance, which increases the severity with which health conditions affect their careers.

These problems are also exacerbated in Indian context by structural inequalities and gender norms on which the Indian culture is built. Women are also expected to juggle work life and parenting duties in the family and this may cause extra strain on their physical and emotional health. The role imposed on women by society in terms of their duties at home, caring about their children, and taking care of their elderly parents is not always proportional, which means that women have to balance work and personal life quite hard (Verma, 2018; Desai, 2022). As a result, women tend to be stuck in careers, slow in getting promotions and tend to leave more than their male colleagues. It is also reported that workplace trends show that gender differences remain in leadership opportunities and career advancement opportunities, which is evidence of the barriers in the system (McKinsey and Company, 2023; Deloitte, 2022).

It is maternity and menstrual health and psychological well-being health-related factors that are especially significant in forming the professional experience of women. Maternity is perceived to be linked with career disruptions, which can impact the promotion rates and the professional development in the long term. Even though maternity leave policies are aimed at benefiting women during the process of pregnancy and child birth, there are some unintended side effects of this policy, including the bias or assumptions in hiring concerning the women commitment to the career (Srivastava and Murthy, 2019; Ideas for India, 2024). Besides that, attitudes in the workplace towards maternity and caring duties may also contribute to the way women are perceived and rated in the work environments.

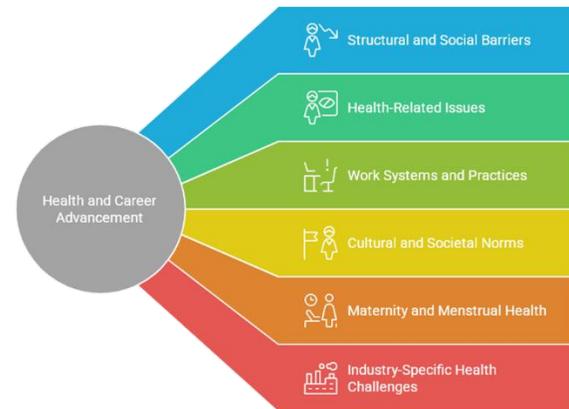


Fig. 1: Unveiling the multifaceted impact of health on women's careers

In like manner, menstrual health has come out as a significant, but under-researched, contributor to well-being at the workplace. The issue about menstrual health in most organizations is still under-discussed because of the social stigma and cultural taboos. Recent debates and policy discussions have however stressed on the need to establish conducive conditions that acknowledge menstrual health requirements. The discussion of workplace inclusivity and gender-sensitive practices in some organizations has been triggered by the enactment of menstrual leave policies (Devaki and Shery, 2024; Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, 2023). These changes demonstrate why organizations should embrace the policies that accommodate and promote the health of women holistically.

Those links between health matters and career advancement are even more complicated when the analysis is done in various industries. In every industry, there are special work conditions, demands, and work-related hazards that may affect the well-being and health of the workers. To illustrate, women in the healthcare industry might develop emotional stress and numerous working hours because of the stressful work they have in the area, but women in the manufacturing industry might encounter physically challenging work and job risks (Singh and Pandey, 2018; Das, 2019). In the same way, women can be subjected to excessive workload, strict deadlines, and office environments, which can lead to physical and mental health issues in the case of corporate and information technology sectors (International Labour Organization, 2022; Sharma and Kaur, 2020).

These differences in industries imply that the health problems being experienced by the working women are not universal and need to be looked at within their respective occupation. Cultural difference in workplaces, access to medical amenities, and support systems in the organization can greatly affect the way women cope with their health challenges as they strive to secure career growth. As such, the study of health influence on career development has to be done in a holistic way that considers both personal experiences and industry in its specifics.

Considering these complexities, there is need to investigate the connection between health problems and career advancement among working women in a multidisciplinary and systematic fashion. The realization of how the health-related issues affect professional development will contribute to pointing out the gaps in the current workplace policies and emphasising the areas that intervention should take place. This is a review paper that seeks to explore the literature that is available regarding the effect of health problems on the career advancement of working women in the different professions. Based on the combination of the results of the research conducted in occupational health, gender studies and organizational management, the paper aims to give a total picture of the obstacles that women experience and the measures that could be taken to assist them in their career growth.

Moreover, the research is meant to add to the current debates concerning the inclusivity and gender equality in the workplace by highlighting the significance of health-sensitive policies and organizational supportive culture. This review offers a solid basis upon which future research and policy interventions to address the needs of working women because of recognizing research gaps and industry-related issues, which affect the nature of the working experience and career achievement of the targeted population. Ultimately, promoting women's health and well-being in the workplace is not only essential for individual empowerment but also for fostering sustainable economic growth and organizational effectiveness.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: LINKING HEALTH AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Career progression means the systematic development of the individuals in an organization in terms of promotions, increased role, leadership, and recognition. It portrays the personal growth of the employees as well as the chances given by the organizations in order to harness talents and reward performance. Career progression has become one of the important indicators of employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and long-term professional success in the contemporary work place (Kapoor, 2020). But in the case of working women, the career advancement depends on a wider scope of factors and is not just dependant on professional competence. The career patterns of any female in various fields are influenced by personal health conditions, work organization, and socio-cultural expectations altogether (Mukherjee, 2017; Patel and Shah, 2020). It is crucial to understand the nature of interaction between these elements in order to create a conceptual map which connects health and career progression.

Health is key in defining how individuals can be effective in their professional practice. Employees are bound to be more productive, satisfied at work and engaged, when they are physically and mentally in good health. On the other hand, health issues have the ability of hampering the performance of work, reduce engagement in career opportunities and slack career progression. Health issues tend to overlap with the workplace policies and expectations in the case of working women, which makes the issue a complicated set of conditions that affect the career results of the women in question. Consequently, analyzing the possibility of health and career development interdependence, it is necessary to combine various theoretical approaches, which can be used to explain the interaction of individual and organizational factors.

The human capital theory is one of the most important theoretical approaches that can be used to explain this relationship. This theory posits that development of individuals in their career is based on their skills, education, experience, and productivity in general. It is believed that physical and mental health are

valuable elements of human capital as they directly affect the competence of a person to make a valuable investor into the organizations objectives (Kabeer, 2016). This process may be interrupted by health problems like chronic illnesses, stress or reproductive health issues that affect productivity, absenteeism or an ability to take part in the professional development opportunities. Thus, women with health-related issues can be challenged by the inability to remain employed or struggle to secure a promotion. The labour market analysis also reflects that through favourable workplace practices, such as maternity insurance and health insurance, the difficulties can be overcome and women have a better chance of improving their career opportunities in the long term (International Labour Organization, 2023).



Fig. 2: Health and Career Progression

One more valuable approach, which justifies the connection between health and work growth, is the work-life balance theory. This theory points out the necessity of the individuals to balance between the professional and personal engagements in a manner that is supportive to the overall wellbeing of the individual. To working women, a balance between the two can pose extreme challenges especially in the societies where care giving is seen as a role assigned to the women. Work-family balance can cause physical exhaustion, mental health issues and burnout, which can adversely impact on professional development (Mahida and Chauhan, 2023; OECD, 2021). In case organizations do not offer supportive policies like flexible working arrangements, childcare and wellness, women will struggle to maintain career growth in the long term. As a result, the lack of work-life balance systems can lead to deteriorating health issues and slow career advancement (Bhattacharya, 2021).

Along with these views, occupational health frameworks can be used as useful information on how

the workplace conditions affect the health and professional performance of the employees. These frameworks point to the fact that inclusive, safe, and supportive work conditions are central in ensuring physical and mental health of employees. When organizations are able to focus on occupational health through safety, wellness-related and mental health support system, employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention are more likely to increase (World Health Organization, 2021). This kind of environment helps employees including women to work well and seek leadership without affecting their health. The studies of workplace well-being additionally note that the organizations where employers invest in employee health-related programs tend to have higher organizational performance and lower turnover rates (Connerley & Wu, 2016).

Gender role theory was also useful in the Indian context in terms of understanding the correlation that exists between health and career advancement among working women. The conventional social expectations usually place the burden of care giving and other domestic duties mostly on the women, and this may pose extra strain on their physical and mental health. Such expectations can restrict the time and efforts that women can commit to their careers hence their chances of promotion. Also, the perception of society about the role of women in the workplace may affect the organizational perception of the ability to lead women, and commitment to work (Verma, 2018; Sagarkar, 2024). This means that physical and psychological health issues will have a disproportionately negative impact on the capacity of women to continue growing their careers and attain leadership roles.

In general, the theoretical framework of health and career advancement demonstrates the interrelation between personal welfare, workplace regulations, and socio-cultural relationships. Combining the insights of human capital theory, the work life balance theory, occupational health frameworks, and gender role theory, one may get a better idea about the issue the working women face and come up with strategies that can help them further their career. This framework also reflects the significance of establishing inclusive and health-sensitive work environments, which are sensitive to the needs of diverse women employees,

and which permit them to reach their full professional potential.

III. HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING WORKING WOMEN

The nature of health-related issues is essential in determining the career paths and professional experiences of working women. Health concerns in most places of work affect productivity, attendance and career advancement opportunities directly. The women tend to face a range of health problems related to biological, social, and occupation. Such challenges can be industry-specific, job-specific, and support-system-at-place-specific. To curb the obstacles that influence the career advancement of women among various other health concerns, it is important to understand these health issues to help formulate policies that would enhance a healthier and more accommodative work environment.

3.1 Physical Health Challenges

The physical health is one of the basic factors that determine how an individual can work effectively at the place of work. Physical health issues that female employees are often faced with include the reproductive health issues, the pregnancy complications and the chronic, long-term illnesses that can negatively impact the working performance and the long-term career growth. Such health issues can increase absenteeism, lower productivity, and, in certain situations, employment disruptions that influence the promotion prospects and career advancement (Ramaseethu, 2015; Bongale and Sabanna, 2022). Moreover, poor access to healthcare or insufficient treatment may also exacerbate these problems, and due to this, women find it hard to maintain a regular work force.

The occupational health hazards also vary greatly in different industries with women being the opposite. Women with jobs in physically challenging sectors (manufacturing industry, construction industry, or the job requiring to work in the field) might be more vulnerable to workplace-related risks, including poor working conditions, excessive physical workload, and environmental exposure (Das, 2019). Those issues may add to exhaustion, trauma, and health-related problems in long term. Conversely, women employed

in corporate or office-based structures tend to face office-based sedentary lifestyle conditions that may result in lifestyle diseases including musculoskeletal disorders, obesity, and diseases caused by stress (Sharma and Kaur, 2020). Sedentary lifestyles, long working hours and physical inactivity are also likely to aggravate these problems.

The other factor that contributes to the physical well being of women in the workplace is the presence of proper health facilities and security. In most organizations, mostly in third world economies, there is inadequate or poor infrastructure of work places in health-related issues of gender sensitivity. The absence of access to healthcare support, sanitation facilities, as well as insufficiency of occupational safety policies can further increase the health problems of women employees (International Labour Organization, 2022). It is also statistically indicated that companies that are keen on employee welfare by instituting health programs, wellness exercises, and preventive health services have increased employee satisfaction and productivity rates (World Health Organization, 2021). Thus, it is necessary to address the physical health issues not only with the aim of enhancing personal well-being but also with the purpose of the better organizational performance.



Fig. 3: Health challenges affecting working women

3.2 Mental Health and Workplace Stress

There is a growing concern among working professionals across the world on mental health, which would mean that women are more susceptible to psychological stress because of the various roles they undertake in the workplace and the home. Working women are under stress having to balance work and family roles as well as take care of children and other domestic chores, which may cause them stress and

psychological exhaustion. Such an imbalance frequently leads to burnout, anxiety, and less job satisfaction, which ultimately impact on career growth and eventual professional commitment (Mahida & Chauhan, 2023; Sinha, 2021).

The level of stress at the workplace is particularly common in stressful work environments like the information technology sector, corporate management, and finance among others where workers are bound to meet tough performance requirements and hard deadlines. The females who are employed in these industries usually face heavy workloads, work hours, and constant performance reviews that may have a serious effect on their mental health (Sharma and Kaur, 2020). Moreover, the lack of representation in leadership positions and discrimination at the workplace may also be added as a cause of psychological stress and professional insecurity (Singh and Pandey, 2018).

These problems are also exacerbated by the fact that there are no proper mental health support systems put in place in organizations. Most of the workplaces do not have counseling services, stress management programs, and supportive leadership practices that would assist employees in managing the pressures of the work place. Nonetheless, studies have shown that companies that have mental health programs, flexibility, and employee assistance programs tend to perform better in employee satisfaction, productivity, and employee retention (Deloitte, 2022; McKinsey and Company, 2023). In its turn, this means that mental health issues should be addressed to provide women with a sustainable work environment and supportive workplaces.

3.3 Reproductive and Menstrual Health

Another significant aspect that has been found to impact the experiences of women at the workplace is reproductive and menstrual health issues. These problems are often stigmatized or even not mentioned in the work setting, though they are natural and widespread health issues. Most women also avoid speaking about menstrual health issues in the workplace because they are afraid of being judged or discriminated against by workforce and their bosses (Devaki and Shery, 2024). This insincerity may deny

women the needed support, which may interfere with their comfort, productivity, and job satisfaction.

The debate surrounding the policies of menstrual leaves has been on the agenda in the last couple of years when organizations have started to realize the significance of managing menstrual health in the workplace. According to scholars, supportive policies regarding menstrual health would have a positive impact on employee well-being and productivity, as well as promote a more inclusive workplace (Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, 2023). Legal viewpoints also focus on the necessity to have institutional frameworks that would recognize menstrual health as a valuable element of workplace rights and gender equality (International Journal of Integrated Research in Law, 2023).

Moreover, organizational cultures and social attitudes are important in influencing inclusivity in the workplace in terms of menstrual health. By implementing friendly policies at workplaces and raising awareness about the health-related concerns of women, employers will have a chance to decrease stigma and make their work more positive and inclusive (Amikus Qriah, 2023). Not only do such initiatives help in benefiting the women employees but it also adds to harmony and productivity in the overall organization.

3.4 Maternity and Career Interruptions

One of the strongest aspects of health-related impact of women on their career development is maternity. Women are also forced to have temporary leave during pregnancy and child birth and therefore this may interfere with their career paths. Even though the purpose of maternity leave policies is to protect the employment of women and ensure their health during the timeframe, the adoption of the policies differ in industries and organizations (Srivastava and Murthy, 2019).

In other situations, the policy of long maternity leave can have unintended effects, including prejudice in hiring, a decrease in the rate of promotion, and the assumption of the lack of professionalism in women. The literature indicates that employers can view women who take maternity leave as less willing to work in leadership positions, which will influence

their chances of career growth (Ideas for India, 2024). According to the media sources, workplace prejudices connected to maternity leave are still a problem that women have to struggle with, in order to pursue career growth (Business Standard, 2024).

In spite of these adversities, properly formulated and put into practice maternity policies can play a critical role in helping women to continue in their careers. Institutions that offer reasonable maternity leaves, job flexibility, and childcare services are likely to have better retention and working morale in the workplace (Times of India, 2022). According to the international bodies, the policies of full maternity protection are necessary to ensure gender equality and to make sure that women have the opportunity to be a full-fledged part of the workforce without impairing their health or career goals (International Labour Organization, 2023).

IV. INDUSTRY-WISE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Health problems have different effects on the career ladder among working women depending on the industry. Women are subjected to various working conditions, expectations, and workplace cultures in different areas of work, and they affect their physical and mental health. These differences also define the degree of organizational support that women have and the magnitude to which the health issues can influence the growth of their careers. A comparison of the working conditions of women across major industries, such as information technology and corporate services, healthcare, education, and manufacturing would give further insights into the influence of industry-related factors that affect the career trajectories of working women.

4.1 Information Technology and Corporate Sector

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a tremendous rise in the role of women in the information technology and corporate arena. Such industries are usually people who give them a chance to gain professional experience, good pay and experience with international work conditions. Nevertheless, female employees in such industries often feel under intense occupational stress as they have to consider intense work schedules, tight

deadlines, and performance-based pressure (Sharma & Kaur, 2020). The boundaries between professional and personal life may also become unclear because of the constant connectivity due to the digital technologies and the long working hours, which result in fatigue and burnout.

Regardless of these issues, corporate and IT organizations tend to have relatively higher health benefits and workplace facilities than other sectors do. Most often, health insurance, wellness programs, maternity benefits, and employee assistance programs are offered by many companies to promote the well-being of workers (Kapoor, 2020). Over the last few years, flexible work practices including remote working and the hybrid approach have enabled numerous women to balance work and personal life more effectively (Deloitte, 2022). Working mothers who are taking up care giving duties as well as those upholding their professional lives have found these changes very favorable.

Nevertheless, the problem of gender gaps in the leadership in these fields still remains. Women have difficulties in advancing to senior management positions because of the workplace prejudices, fewer mentorship opportunities, as well as the effects of career breaks on health or family issues (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Consequently, despite some benefits offered by the corporate and IT industries in the form of health support and flexibility, structural constraints continue to influence female progression in the long term.

4.2 Healthcare Sector

The healthcare industry is another area that working women are facing with challenges and opportunities. Women constitute a large proportion of the healthcare workforce especially in areas like nursing, medical practice and allied health professions. Nevertheless, the work of a healthcare professional can be quite stressful, which may subject women to excessive working hours, irregular work hours, and emotionally demanding circumstances (Singh & Pandey, 2018). The conditions have the potential to cause physical fatigue as well as emotional stress that can influence job satisfaction and career sustainability.

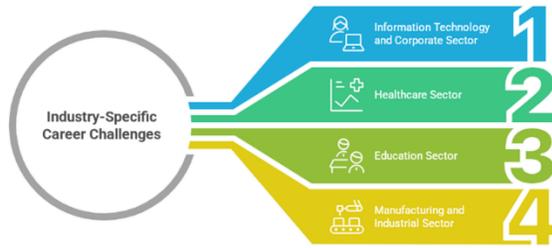


Fig. 4: Unveiling Industry specific career challenges for women

Occupational health hazards are also common among healthcare professionals; these incidents include infections in the workplace, stressful patients and heavy workloads. It has been found that the employees working in this sector are likely to be affected by burnout and mental stress because of the nature of their tasks and the urgency of their duties (World Health Organization, 2021). These issues can be even more hard to accommodate in cases of women who have to take care of family matters as well.

Better working conditions in the health sector is necessary in promoting the career growth of women. Stress and work-life balance can be minimized through provision of mental health support services, adequately staffed departments and policies that are geared towards ensuring work-life balance. By investing in the well-being of employees, healthcare institutions can not only increase the career sustainability of women, but also increase the quality of healthcare provided.

4.3 Education Sector

The education sector is also perceived as a fairly accommodative and adaptable work location to women. Teaching and academic institutions are some of the careers that many women prefer due to the job stability and scheduled work hours. Nonetheless, studies have shown that females in this industry still have to contend with a number of issues, which affect their professional growth. These are the unequal distribution of the workloads, an increasing number of administrative duties, and fewer opportunities to occupy leadership roles (Desai, 2022).

Most of the learning institutions have women in the teaching department and have limited representation in the top administrative and decision making posts.

This gap indicates that there is an existence of structural constraints that limit the professional advancement of women. Also, professional obligations, including teaching, research, and administrative activities, and the family life may be a major source of stress among women educators (Sagarkar, 2024).

These challenges can only be overcome through organizational support. Women may advance their careers by taking on a healthy work-life balance through institutions that encourage mentorship programs, leadership development, and flexible work. The education sector can also be more gender equal by ensuring that there are equal opportunities of appointment into leadership positions.

4.4 Manufacturing and Industrial Sector

In the manufacturing and industrial industries, women are also some of the most exposed to difficult working conditions than in other industries. Occupations in such industries might also be physically taxing, working in dangerous conditions, and have a lack of proper health facilities in the workplace (Das, 2019). Such circumstances may have a significant impact on the physical health of women and become obstacles to the employment and career development in the long term.

The issue of occupational safety is also significant in ensuring the health of women in industries. To mitigate risks in the workplace, it is necessary to ensure safe working conditions, equip them, and introduce health and safety standards (International Labour Organization, 2022). Nonetheless, most industrial places do not have the infrastructure designed to be gender sensitive and this may not allow women to work in a comfortable and safe manner.

Besides health-related problems, the women in the manufacturing industries tend to be exposed to gender prejudices and lack of chances to acquire skills and be promoted. This may negatively impact the development of their career and deter women to take up long-term careers in industrial sectors (Patel and Shah, 2020). The solution to these barriers is through organizational dedication to inclusive policies, training programs, and equal opportunities that would

allow women to achieve success within the industrial work environments.

All in all, the comparative analysis of these industries shows that although all of these industries have different challenges, the availability of conducive policies, healthy workplaces, and career advancement can be an important factor to consider in the context of women health and career development.

V. WORKPLACE POLICIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

The organizational support systems and workplace policies have a crucial role in solving the health related issues that working women encounter as well as influence their career trajectory. The contemporary workplace environments require policies that affirm inclusivity, health safety, as well as equal opportunities to affect the ability of women to work effectively and enhance their careers. Whenever the organizations identify the special needs of women in the organization and adopt positive support, the work culture developed helps to promote productivity, well-being, and career growth. Some of the most significant workplace policies that shape the experience of women in workplace settings include maternity benefits, menstrual leaves, flexible working policy, and employee wellness programs (Nair, 2021).

The most notable policy that can help women and benefit them during pregnancy and childbirth is maternity benefits. These policies are meant to secure jobs and offer financial and health-related services at an important stage in the lives of women. Proper maternity leave will enable the women to heal both physically and emotionally even as their careers are sustained. The success or failure of these policies however, lies in the manner in which organizations adopt them and the level in which the workplaces remain conducive throughout and after the maternity leaves. Maternity benefits applied together with other programs like childcare assistance, re-entry programs and creating flexible schedules can assist women to come back to their jobs easily and decrease the chances of losing employees.

Besides maternity benefits, a debate of the policy of menstrual leave has also become popular in recent

years. Menstrual health is another significant issue of the well-being of women that has never been a focus of the workplace policy. Women can also be offered menstrual leaves or conducive health policies to reduce the pain and stay productive without having to undermine their health. More to the point, such programs can work towards the diminution of stigma and the spread of awareness about the issue of women health in the professional environment. Companies that recognize menstrual health as a workplace health issue show concern in laws and policies about gender and care towards employees.

Another important element of organizational support of working women is flexible work arrangements. Remote working, hybrid working, flexible work schedules, and part-time employment have greatly enhanced the work-life balance in most of the employees. These arrangements help women to balance professional and personal life easier especially taking care of the family and those dealing with family. The current policies of flexible work became particularly topical during the last few years when numerous organizations have acknowledged the need to adjust the work organization to the requirements of employee health and performance. Such policies, implemented efficiently, are beneficial not only to women workers but they also help an organization to perform better and retain its employees.

Employee wellness programs are also effective in facilitating health and well being of women at work place. Such programs might involve health check-ups, mental health counselling, stress management seminars, fitness programs and awareness programs on occupational health. Organizations can show their interest in their physical and mental health by investing in wellness programs. This can be used to curtail stress in the workplace, boost the morale and increase overall job satisfaction. In the long run, these advantages lead to enhanced career results among women since they feel able to continue being active and productive in their work.

In addition to organizational policies, the initiatives of the government and regulations of labour have the same significance in favouring gender equality and safeguarding women rights in the workplace. The issue of alignment of workplace conditions, equitable

opportunity, and protection of the welfare of the employees can be one of the areas of change in organizations by means of public policies. In India, different programs and regulations by government institutions have been developed to empower women in the workforce and tackle the problem of employment, health, and occupational safety (NITI Aayog, 2022; Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2023). These programs influence organizations to embrace the inclusive policies and establish a workplace conducive to the career growth of women. When carried out practices are inclusive and supportive work environments, organizations tend to gain positive results, including increased employee engagement, increased productivity, and organizational commitment. Studies have shown that when employees are empowered and appreciated by their companies, they will be motivated to work and achieve organizational targets (OECD, 2021). In the case of women workers, who are specifically targeted, supportive policies at the workplace can help to minimize the obstacles to promotion and job growth and empower female employees to become leaders.

Moreover, the international studies have given a strong focus on workplace policies that are gender responsive in enhancing the number of women taking up leadership positions and other decision making positions. Companies that are more gender equitable, offer mentorship programs, and diversity programs are more likely to have higher representation of women in high-ranking positions (UN Women, 2022). This is not only important in improving the career ladder of women, but also in establishing more open and creative work environments.

To sum it up, workplace policies and organizational support systems play an essential role in solving health-related issues and enhancing career outcomes in working women. Employing gender-based approaches, and serving the interests of their workers with the aim of enhancing their well-being, and positioning organizational functions to align with domestic and international standards, employers can establish the conditions conducive to the well-being and professional development of women employees. These actions are necessary in order to have equality in the workplace which is sustainable and empower

the women to achieve their potentials in the workplace.

VI. RESEARCH GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

The organizational support systems and workplace policies have a crucial role in solving the health related issues that working women encounter as well as influence their career trajectory. The contemporary workplace environments require policies that affirm inclusivity, health safety, as well as equal opportunities to affect the ability of women to work effectively and enhance their careers. Whenever the organizations identify the special needs of women in the organization and adopt positive support, the work culture developed helps to promote productivity, well-being, and career growth. Some of the most significant workplace policies that shape the experience of women in workplace settings include maternity benefits, menstrual leaves, flexible working policy, and employee wellness programs (Nair, 2021).

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Another important element of organizational support of working women is flexible work arrangements. Remote working, hybrid working, flexible work schedules, and part-time employment have greatly enhanced the work-life balance in most of the employees. These arrangements help women to balance professional and personal life easier especially taking care of the family and those dealing with family. The current policies of flexible work became particularly topical during the last few years when numerous organizations have acknowledged the need to adjust the work organization to the requirements of employee health and performance. Such policies, implemented efficiently, are beneficial not only to women workers but they also help an organization to perform better and retain its employees.

Employee wellness programs are also effective in facilitating health and wellbeing of women at work place. Such programs might involve health check-ups, mental health counselling, stress management seminars, fitness programs and awareness programs on occupational health. Organizations can show their interest in their physical and mental health by investing in wellness programs. This can be used to curtail stress in the workplace, boost the morale and increase overall job satisfaction. In the long run, these advantages lead to enhanced career results among women since they feel able to continue being active and productive in their work.

In addition to organizational policies, the initiatives of the government and regulations of labour have the same significance in favouring gender equality and safeguarding women rights in the workplace. The issue of alignment of workplace conditions, equitable opportunity, and protection of the welfare of the employees can be one of the areas of change in organizations by means of public policies. In India, different programs and regulations by government institutions have been developed to empower women in the workforce and tackle the problem of employment, health, and occupational safety (NITI

Aayog, 2022; Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2023). These programs influence organizations to embrace the inclusive policies and establish a workplace conducive to the career growth of women. When carried out practices are inclusive and supportive work environments, organizations tend to gain positive results, including increased employee engagement, increased productivity, and organizational commitment. Studies have shown that when employees are empowered and appreciated by their companies, they will be motivated to work and achieve organizational targets (OECD, 2021). In the case of women workers, who are specifically targeted, supportive policies at the workplace can help to minimize the obstacles to promotion and job growth and empower female employees to become leaders.

Moreover, the international studies have given a strong focus on workplace policies that are gender responsive in enhancing the number of women taking up leadership positions and other decision making positions. Companies that are more gender equitable, offer mentorship programs, and diversity programs are more likely to have higher representation of women in high-ranking positions (UN Women, 2022). This is not only important in improving the career ladder of women, but also in establishing more open and creative work environments.

To sum it up, workplace policies and organizational support systems play an essential role in solving health-related issues and enhancing career outcomes in working women. Employing gender-based approaches, and serving the interests of their workers with the aim of enhancing their well-being, and positioning organizational functions to align with domestic and international standards, employers can establish the conditions conducive to the well-being and professional development of women employees. These actions are necessary in order to have equality in the workplace which is sustainable and empower the women to achieve their potentials in the workplace.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The literature review results present the necessity to implement specific policy interventions and

organizational approaches that help to enhance the career advancement of working women. With increasing role of women in the workplace, there is need to consider the presence of structural and health-related obstacles to their professional development. Inclusive, gender sensitive, and health-oriented policies are capable of providing a conducive work environment that helps in improving the well-being of the employees and also boosts the productivity of the organization.

Among the implications that are of the utmost importance to policy and practice, there are the creation of gender-sensitive workplace policies. Organizations should also understand that women usually have special problems as far as health, family issues, and the expectation at the workplace. Some of the gender-sensitive policies are equal pay, safe working environments, anti-harassment, and proper promotion. By implementing such policies in the organizations, they contribute to diluting the systemic inequalities and provide women with a chance to progress in the leadership positions. Moreover, these policies encourage the culture of respect, diversity, and inclusion, which will help both the employees and the employers in the long run.

The other important practice is the introduction of menstrual and maternity leaves policies. The reproductive health is a significant factor of the well-being of women in general and may considerably affect their work and performance. Allowing women to deal with health-related issues without interfering with their career advancement can be achieved through maternity benefits, paid parental leaves, and menstrual leaves. Such policies also help in the reduction of absenteeism, enhancement of employee satisfaction, and organization commitment. Progressive employment policies are also being adopted in most countries to accommodate women at various life stages and this is a wider trend of accommodating women as part of an inclusive employment policy.

The mental health initiatives at the workplace should also be encouraged to facilitate the development of women in their careers. Workload pressure and dual responsibility of work and family stress many working women, burn them, and leave them with emotional

problems. Organizations are supposed to set up employee assistance programs, counselling services and mental health awareness programs in order to mitigate these issues. Health-checks, stress management seminars, and a supportive leadership style can also be used to make the workplace healthier. When mental health is taken seriously, there are higher chances of employees staying engaged and motivated in their roles and productive.

Another significant policy implication is the provision of flexible work practices and childcare. Flexible working hours, the possibility of remote work, and a hybrid work model help women to integrate professional and personal life to a greater extent. These structures proved particularly important in the recent years, as organizations were adjusting to new work environments and the digital transformation. Besides flexible working hours, childcare facilities or childcare support programs can also alleviate stress on working mothers and enable them concentrate on career progression. These do not only enhance the work life balance, but also enhance the retention rates of women workers.

This should also be accompanied by increased occupational health and safety, especially among women in physically taxing or risky workplaces. The organizations should make the workplaces safe, hygienic, and that they meet the health needs of women. These involve equipment of adequate safety gears, ergonomic work areas as well as training programs that help to deal with health-related dangers that are gender specific. In industries like manufacturing, health care, and agriculture sectors, the occupational safety standards can be greatly improved to increase the role of women and the ability to sustain their careers in the long term. Good health and safety policies also indicate the interest of the organization in the wellbeing of her employees and her good management practices.

Besides organizational initiatives, policymakers, organizations, and researchers should also work together to establish inclusive workplaces. Gender equality can be enhanced through the efforts of governments which means labour laws, social protection policies as well as awareness campaigns should be taken to ensure that women are employed

and well. Research institutions can also play a role by coming up with evidence based information about the difficulties encountered by working women and how that can be solved practically. As UN Women allege, there should be synchronized activities of various parties to develop fair and favourable places of work. All in all, the effective execution of these strategies should be a long term investment of both the government and the private enterprise. Companies should not only take superficial actions but implement holistic models, which would take care of health, equality, and career advancement. Societies can make sure that women enjoy equal opportunities to succeed in their careers without losing their health and well-being by investing in organizational practices that are inclusive and supportive of workplace policies. These initiatives will eventually lead to a sustainable growth of the economy, social development and a more balanced workforce.

CONCLUSION

The present review paper has indicated the importance of health-related factors in determining career trajectory of working women in various industries. With women remaining as active members of the workforce, there is a greater need to comprehend the impact of physical, mental and reproductive health complications on their career development and career longevity. The reviewed literature in this study shows that women usually experience various problems that may affect their effectiveness and professional development. Such barriers are stress at the workplace, excessive work hours, work-related risks and the stress of being a professional and a family person.

The physical challenges of fatigue, ergonomics, and working conditions that result in exposure to dangerous working conditions may restrict productivity and job satisfaction. Women in these sectors including manufacturing and healthcare may face physically challenging activities that predispose them to health complications. Likewise, stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion are some mental health issues that affect working women especially in stressful work environments. Research has indicated that long-term stress at work place may be detrimental to performance as well as career advancement. The World Health Organization lists workplace well-being

and mental health assistance to be crucial elements in ensuring sustainable employment and productivity.

The problems of reproductive health are also significant determinants of the professional path of women. Maternity policy, menstrual health policy and parental support policy have assisted in alleviating the working conditions of women in most organizations. These programs have helped in the achievement of work life balance and higher retention rates among women employees. Nevertheless, even with these changes, there still exist structural inequalities and cultural rules which tend to counterbalance the opportunities women can get in terms of access to leadership positions and career progression opportunities. The problem of gender stereotyping, unfair distribution of household chores, and discrimination in the workplace is still a serious issue that needs to be resolved.

The results of this review underline the necessity of providing working women with a multi-dimensional and holistic approach. Governmental policy changes as well as inclusive organizational behaviour can be used to establish healthier and fairer workplaces. Organizations should be emphasizing on having gender-sensitive policies, mental health support, and safe working environments. Meanwhile, the attitudes of society toward gender roles and employment of women should be changed in order to facilitate the equality of opportunities in the workplace.

Moreover, the questions need to be addressed in more detail in future studies that would bring more evidence-based information. The longitudinal studies that monitor the career development of women over a period of time can also be used in determining the effects of health interventions on professional outcomes. Moreover, the comparative research across industries has to be done to learn about the peculiarities of the challenges women can meet in various industries. These researches will lead to the creation of more efficient policies and practices at work.

To sum up, health-related barriers should be addressed to enable women to realize their potential in the workplace. The collaborative strategy through policymakers, organizations, and researchers will

enable the societies to establish conducive environments that will enhance the welfare of women as well as their career growth.

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