ABSTRACT

There are many research works carried out across the world on the work and life conditions of women. But, India offers a very different situation that needs to be studied with special attention as the country has various dimensions that are non-existent in the context of various other countries. India, being a sub-continent and home to several cultures, has a very aggressive cultural mix happening in every office. People from various states, rural areas and towns are migrating to metros rapidly to take up the work in various national and multi-national companies to earn a financial and career wise growth. Women coming from rural backgrounds experience a cultural shock. It could also result in women becoming more vulnerable to various risks because of their lack of exposure, experience and relevant socialization. Indian societies are fundamentally conservative in terms of woman’s exposure to activities beyond her traditional role of a mother and home maker. The transforming sphere of gender roles, urbanization and globalization resulted in women having to actively take up various professional roles. Indian Chapter of Night shift work for women is young, when compared to the countries in the west which witnessed the beginnings of night shift work to men and women shortly after world war I. India is experiencing very rapid transformation and growth that sufficient time for the amalgamation and adaptation culturally itself is scarce. Hence, the work & life conditions of woman working in night shifts becomes a topic of acute importance as we get to conduct the study considering the vulnerabilities and possibilities that simultaneously influence the emergence of a sustainable work environment. The study explores the aspects of shift-preference, risk, freedom, health, sexual harassment, impact on marital relationships, impact on family, economic requisites, impact on appraisals and positional escalations etc in a holistic way to understand whether the country is yet ready to accommodate Night Shift work for woman as a safe and healthy option and if not how we could improve such conditions prevailing to make it safe and comfortable for women to work.

INTRODUCTION

21st century is a century of opportunities to every person irrespective of gender, caste, creed, colour, race, nation or cultural differences. At least, all societies across the world at some point of time must have hoped to witness a world in the best shape with an egalitarian setup and a boundary-less peace where all the people live in harmony. But, the real picture is far from the rosy dream and we still witness many inequalities and differences in every moment and aspect. One of the major achievements of humans in the 21st century is not the smart phone carried in hand every minute. It is the level of resistance to inequality that we consistently fought with to be where we are today. Firstly, before industrial revolution, women were not coming out to work nor they were paid as much as men were paid despite rendering the same services quantity wise or quality wise. For this situation to change, it took many decades of work of the sensible attorneys and Governments all across the world.

Now that the brittle shells stand broken in many countries with women venturing into the job markets with appropriate qualifications and full confidence. Despite all the liberty and power acquired by virtue of years and generations of resistance, discussions, inspirational discourses and fights for rights, women still face complexities in their everyday lives that demand patience, perseverance and silence. This situation may have its roots in the historic male domination in the societies. But, fortunately now the world is so much better with the active intervention of the legal systems to ensure strong protection of the rights of women.

Now the discussion is not about equality, but it is about identifying and addressing the diversity with all respect in all dimensions. Women, as much as they are equal in all aspects to
men, they are surely taking the larger stake in sexual vulnerability than men. Such pervasive sexual advancements were never recorded at an alarming number from women towards men at any point of time in the history. This sexual aspect alone can transform the dimensions of power, politics, work life conditions including but not limited to positional escalations, appraisals, performance evaluations and all such aspects of importance that revolve around work places.

On one side there is a high vulnerability to the women employees working in various corporates in the context of sexual harassment. In another perspective, sexuality could become a major weapon to turn various aspects to their advantage when women intend to do so. Rapid urbanization and highly complex societies are a maze of so many aspects that we couldn't so easily draw a line on any aspect and proceed to conclude. The current attempt is to understand this camouflaged space and analyze various aspects that influence the work life conditions of women. Since night shifts are further socially restricted spaces for women, studying the work and life conditions during night shifts could bring to light many fragile aspects of this women's work life domain.

When we say work & life conditions of women, we are studying how there is an interplay in between work and life aspects as well. The life is impacted financially, personality wise, capability wise, independency wise by the aspect of work. Working women are always confident and confident women are naturally with a higher level of self respect and uncompromising attitude. So, work has an impact on the life conditions, social interactions, personality and various such aspects of life. Further life conditions could also attack on work performance. For instance, a problem in personal life could reflect upon the performance of the women at work place. There are many conditions for every women where multitasking and handling multiple responsibilities becomes a routine way of life. Hence, the responsibilities on the personal front also could impact the work performance. In the context of a constrained or troublesome work place, the performance would further go down. This way, the night shifts, women and their work and life conditions form an interesting gamut of possibilities that simultaneously influence the emergence of a

LITERATURE REVIEW

The human activity during nights has a crucial evolutionary aspect involved. When we consider the historical account, the invention of fire several thousands of years ago may have given the opportunity for humans to remain active even after dark. When Thomas Alva Edison invented Electric bulb, it is a major contribution to the domain of Night Shifts as it allowed people to replace the darkness of the night with the brightness of the light. Night Shifts are not new to mankind as we could trace the origins to that of tribes in the forests. For the purpose of security, the tribal people used to take turns to guard their people during the nights. The risks could span from agents such as carnivorous animals to poisonous insects, reptiles, atmospheric calamities and from other rival human groups. The people used to work in night shifts during those days primarily for the purpose of security.

The beginnings of formal work during Nights could be dated back to the times of World War I when people worked for producing large volumes of ammunition. Over time several hospitals and law enforcement agencies started to work during the nights to handle the security and emergencies of people. Global Trade expanded the prospects for Night Shift work as it became necessary to adjust the work schedules to match the clientele of the companies who live in a different Time Zone. In the services sector such as hospitals, the role of women is more when compared to other Industries back in those days when IT & Software were not the main Industries.

Indian Story: For a period of time after the entry of women into work force, the legal systems of the states already operated restrictive rules and regulations on the work schedules of women. According to Section 66 (1), women are allowed to take up any job only till 7 PM on any given day. This measure has its origins from the notions that the quality of child care is also at risk because of the introduction of night shifts to women. But, in the recent past, the equal distribution of family responsibilities between men and women and the rapid urbanization paved way for a compelled relaxation of the rules by the legal systems of various states. The relaxation at the courts fundamentally considered the Equal rights to work for both men and women as the contesting reason according to the constitution of India. Now that in several major states, we could see men and women working during night shifts without any barriers. But, the risks and vulnerabilities that relaxation brought into the picture is what is discussable. The famous maxim says that with great power comes great responsibility. With the accord of liberty and power to work in the nights to women, the societies are to behave more responsibly by providing proper security and safety measures to the women working in night shifts.

Need for Study

There are many research works carried out across the world on the work and life conditions of women. But, India offers a very different situation that needs to be studied with special attention as the country has various dimensions that are non-existent in the context of various other countries. India, being a sub-continent and home to several cultures, has a very aggressive cultural mix happening in every office. People from various states, rural areas and towns are migrating to metros rapidly to take up the work in various national and multinational companies to earn a financial and career wise growth. Women coming from rural backgrounds experience a cultural shock. It could also result in women becoming more vulnerable to various risks because of their lack of exposure, experience and relevant socialization.

Indian societies are fundamentally conservative in terms of woman’s exposure to activities beyond her traditional role of a mother and home maker. The transforming sphere of gender roles, urbanization and globalization resulted in women having to actively take up various professional roles. Indian Chapter of Night shift work for women is young, when compared to the countries in the west which witnessed the beginnings of night shift work to men and women shortly after world war I. India is experiencing very rapid transformation and growth that sufficient time for the amalgamation and adaptation culturally itself is scarce. Hence, the work & life conditions of women working in night shifts becomes a topic of acute importance as we get to conduct the study considering the vulnerabilities and possibilities that simultaneously influence the emergence of a
sustainable work environment. The study explores the aspects of shift-preference, risk, freedom, health, sexual harassment, impact on marital relationships, impact on family, economic requisites, impact on appraisals and positional escalations etc in a holistic way to understand whether the country is yet ready to accommodate Night Shift work for woman as a safe and healthy option and if not how we could improve such conditions prevailing to make it safe and comfortable for women to work.

**Objectives of the Study**

- To analyse the factors that contribute to the choice of working in night shifts.
- To analyse the risk perceived by the families of women who work in night shifts.
- To analyse the impact of night shift work on family conditions and personal life.
- To analyse the aspect of Sexual harassment in the context of night shifts.
- To analyse the aspects of risk involved in Night Shift work.
- To understand and analyse various rules and provisions that are being implemented to ensure safety of women working in night shifts.
- To analyse the impact of night shifts on health of women.
- To analyse the socio-economic conditions that prevail in the context of night shift.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Demographic**

The demographic considered for research is not belonging to any single company. As there were many delicate questions which are part of the questionnaire, the researcher was not allowed to officially conduct the research in any of the companies. Hence, all the subjects approached for the study were met by the researcher in the eat-out locations near MNCs where the employees working in night shifts often hangout for a break. Confidentiality of the information they share was promised before handing over the questionnaires and recording their responses. The only segregation factor was to select women as subjects as the topic is related to women in particular. Women of ages 20 to 46 in the sample the researcher arrived at. Approximately 73.3% of the total sample were single women. This gives a briefing that more number of single women prefer to work for night shifts than married woman. The demographic considered has women from various castes, religions and financial backgrounds. Such totally random demographic allowed an understanding of the work and life conditions in a much generic way rather than pinning to any single demographic segment. The demographic is a mix of various ages from 20 to 46, though most of them are aged in between 20 and 38. The demographic were employees various corporates working at DLF buildings, gachibowli, Hyderabad.

**Sample size**

A total of 120 subjects were considered for research. Since each subject was separately approached for response, the sample size was prefixed as 150 and the endeavor to expand the sample seized when the 120th response was recorded.

**Sampling Technique**

Simple Random Sampling was utilized to consider the subjects for the research. When every sample considered in the situation has an equal likelihood of being considered as a sample, such a sampling is considered simple random sampling. At the DLF building, there was no segmentation exercise done other than selecting woman only for the study. Since the topic itself has women as the subjects on who the research is to be conducted all the males and transgenders were not considered for the study.

**Data collection**

In the initial days of the research, questionnaires were printed on papers and were handed over to the respondents to fill in with relevant responses. As a token of gratitude, Rs 20 Paytm Balance was gifted when they fill up the questionnaire. Realizing that this process is cumbersome, an interactive questionnaire was prepared by software which was easily shareable as a form through whatsapp or email. Then the respondents were requested to fill in the forms on their smart phones to easily contribute to the research.

**Research Design & Tools**

Interview technique, case studies, questionnaires are the major research tools utilized for the current study. Questionnaires have been prepared with all the appropriate questions and the results were tabulated later using excel for data analysis. Interviews were conducted in an informal way at the cafeteria over a period of three months. Not all the respondents accepted to give such time, but the ones that gave their time definitely contributed to the overall understanding. Analysis of the data was done weighted average method and the pictographic representation was done utilizing pie and bar diagrams. Pie diagrams were utilized to show how various parts of the whole were distributed. In a data set, if any section recorded Zero response, then bar diagrams had to be used for the purpose of convenience and clarity. In questions where multiple choices were allowed to be selected, bar diagrams were utilized to give a picture of the overall preference to various options.

**Scape & Scope of Research**

The research contributes to the understanding of work and life conditions of women working in night shifts in various companies. The unsegregated simple random sampling of the subjects allows us to arrive at a demographic that has individuals from all types of backgrounds. The research answers various questions such as how the sexual harassment complaint cells and policies are at work in various companies, how risky is night shift work to women, questions about their social and cultural conditions etc. The research outcomes will be easily comparable to similar night shift work conditions in any metro in the country that has similar conditions.

No corporate workplace is ready to allow any probing into the working conditions of women. After the failure of a lot of trials to get an official acceptance from any corporate to conduct research, it has been found that the best place to find people working in night shifts are the Food Courts established by various private parties around the corporate establishments. In between 1 AM and 2 AM there are a lot of men and women employees who hang around these food courts to quench their
appetites for a mid night meal as they work in night shifts. These employees work in various corporates and hence were instrumental in arriving at an analysis of work-life conditions with respect to various corporates. The eat streets around corporate office establishments like DLF Building, ISB Road – Gachibowli, Hyderabad were utilized as the avenues to find people who can provide some research inputs.

The initial days of research were tough as many women didn’t show any interest in considering the questions that were being asked. The introduction of digital questionnaires and repeated interactions with the women employees by visiting these places during nights, made the study possible. Attempts have been made to access the Human Resource Managers in the corporates to get a more insightful understanding about the night shift work and the prevailing conditions for women. The human resource managers felt insecure about disclosing internal information, however helped after repeated requests with a conditional promise that their identities shouldn’t be revealed under any circumstances. Some of the testimonials they shared helped in building case studies. Attempts were made to get the details from Police Commissionerate, Raidurgam to understand the cases of victims of sexual harassment, but such endeavors ended up with negligible results.

**Geographic zone**

Hyderabad city was the area considered for study as there are many established offices of several MNCs in the city with a lot of night shift work going on. DivyaSree Campus, DLF Building of Gachibowli were the two office locations where the research was primarily conducted. References of the colleagues of people I met were occasionally taken to expand the reach to various respondents. That way, some references came from GE campus of Uppal as well. But, all the respondents are from Hyderabad Geographic area itself.

**Limitations**

- Since research was not allowed to be conducted directly at the workplace in an authorized way, the responses were from the subjects of various companies which disables us from concluding on the efficacy of the policies of any single company.
- Not everyone hangout at the cafeterias during breaks. Some employees remain inside their work premises and continue to chat with their colleagues. Such people bring their midnight meals along with them and such subjects couldn’t be reached as permissions were not granted to enter the buildings. The ones who hangout at the cafeteria outside the building may be more outgoing and urbane in their socialization that could skew the results in a certain direction as the conservative type of subjects who stayed inside were missed. However, this is based on an assumption that the ones who remained are conservative, just because they didn’t hangout at the cafeterias.
- The subjects response and the integrity is always under question and as there were delicate questions related to sexual harassment asked in the questionnaire. Some subjects may have felt the questionnaire as in intrusion of their privacy and responded in an inappropriate and way.

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<td>46.7%</td>
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<td>Health check-up done before joining?</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Experienced sexual harassment at work place?</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Family happy regarding compensation</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
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**Findings**

Firstly, night shifts are not generally taken up as a choice. Most often people discover themselves working in night shifts after securing the job. Many MNCs have rotating rosters where every employee needs to work for 9 hour night shifts two to three times a week. There are companies and conditions where employees take up night shift work all through the week as well. Mostly women tend to work for night shifts in order to meet their financial necessities and retain the job in the interest of career development. There are women who take up work in night shifts to escape the stress from family issues as well. Individuality and Job Satisfaction are common factors and are not connectible specifically to night shifts as these aspects are considerable for day shifts as well.

Many women who are considered for the study are found to have migrated from various places to Hyderabad for career purposes. Hence they are not living with their families and most of them are living in paid accommodations. This made the parents adapt and develop a sense of confidence to send their daughters to work in other cities. The parents perceive it more like a hostel stay during their times of education where conditions could be controlled and safe. Further, the families are witnessed to prioritize career and offer support to their daughters in all endeavors to build the careers. At least, it could be understood that it is mostly with the moral support of the families that the women are continuing to work in night shifts. Further, it could be viewed as a balanced atmosphere
considering both pull and push aspects in the scenario. When the subjects were asked regarding the opposition in families against their night shift work, parents topped the list, followed by in-laws and spouse. Hence it could be analyzed that families remain warning their women regarding the vulnerabilities however support the endeavors that guarantee a career growth. Families, along with the working women adapt to the lifestyles and slowly consider the night shift work as routine and free from serious risk. Family members generally make phone calls every night before and after the work schedule to ensure that their daughters are safe and secure. This is a general routine that keeps them in confidence to allow their daughters to work in night shifts despite all the security vulnerabilities.

There is a significant difference between how night shift work is perceived by single women and married women. Night shift work is perceived as freedom and no hassle work schedule by many single women. Though such an ideology cannot be universalized, it cannot be discarded either. Married women consider night shift work as derogatory to harmony in relationships. Most of the single women who are considered for the study are migrants from some other place and hence they are anyway living away from their families. Hence, this is not effecting their family time in particular as night shifts are not the sole reason for their living away from their families. Married women and women with kids find night shifts very deviating from their family and personal life interests.

There is not sufficient evidence in our study to say that sexual harassment incidents are more in night shifts when compared to that of the day shifts. However, the respondents have opined that their identity and social image are sometimes tarnished by their decision to work in the nights. They expressed that the women working in night shifts are considered as more open to any interactions and easily accessible.

Suggestions

The lost confidence in the law and order systems should be restored. This happens only with the active engagement of the police to build sufficient rapport with the society. It is essential for Police to engage in conducting awareness programs regarding the risks and vulnerabilities during night shifts to women and equip them with enough knowledge to combat the situations. The Police will have an opportunity to build rapport with the subjects that could restore the confidence in the systems and change their image as inefficient people to handle any incidents of risk. Police could even conduct self-defense instructional campaigns to guide the women to self protect themselves in the event of any unexpected happenings.

Conveyance systems become efficient and complete only when they are designed to provide both comfort and security to the employees who utilize the services. With the rules mandating security measures in all ways possible, the space that is left for correction and intervention is the improvement of quality of conveyance. Norms are to be laid down regarding the maintenance of vehicles, hygiene and punctuality with which they operate. Orientation programs are to be conducted to the drivers before they join the job, that train them to interact decently and responsibly with the women employees. They are to be trained to handle any situation of risk in the context of conveyance. How a tyre flat situation or a malfunction in the vehicle could be handled without causing discomfort to the employees is to be essentially trained. Back up vehicles in the question of accident or malfunction also should be arranged as many vehicles have a long route and any situation to stop the vehicle mid route can increase the vulnerabilities.

All phones are to be shipped with an SOS application as an inherent feature, connecting the subjects to police and families in the event of any emergency. There is scope for technological advancement in the SOS space. The futur phones have been designed to auto report in the conditions of any suspicious user behavior with the help of sensors or any advanced technology. Aggression, screaming, sudden change in the speed of the vehicle or any such events are to be auto detected for reporting to the relevant law and order wing to ensure security of the women employees. Equipping the vehicles with CCTV and connecting the video streams from the vehicles with a central monitoring station operated by Police directly could be an ideal way of monitoring the fleets of vehicles to speed up their action in the event of any risk.

Health related checkups should be made mandatory before the women employees are engaged for night shift work. The insurance policies that are provided to the employees as part of their job benefits are to be ensuring coverage across all the health disorders. There are many insurance policies with a substandard coverage which is not helpful to the employees in reality. Hence, this has to be rectified appropriately. Companies should periodically implement health, nutrition and fitness related training programs for improved adaptions in view of the changing circadian rhythms. Health related goals could be designed and implemented at the work place with the help of innovative programs and events. Aspects related to pregnancy and the health conditions that get effected during the pregnancy period are to be properly addressed keeping the night shift work schedules in view.

Movies and Novels have always played a major role in creating a thought change in the society. There are not many films in which the woman protagonist goes to night shift work and succeeds in her life. Social perception could be improved only by active involvement of the people who create content that is relevant to the change required. Media and Press should take up active initiatives in bringing up change in the stereotyped thought processes of the societies regarding the liberty of women, their character and the identity they carry when they take up the night shift work.

CONCLUSION

The perception that women do not prefer to work in night shifts may not be true. Though not the initial preference, it could become the eventual preference to some women. Not all women consider night shift work as extremely risky. Many single women consider night shift work as freedom and as a comfortable schedule of work. Married women who opt for night shift work are less in number and they do so for their own individual or familial reasons than anything that has to do with the conditions at work place or their efficiencies.

There is no sufficient evidence to conclude that the sexual harassment cases are more prevalent in night shifts when compared to day shifts. There are no cases of Quid Pro Quo nature that have been recorded among the subjects that were considered for the study. Sexual harassment by staring and
commenting are considered as the most commonly witnessed sexually offensive behavior. But, many subjects consider such behavior is taken on a friendly note that could be ignored till a certain extent. This takes a serious color when unwanted physical advances are witnessed or comments regarding body parts, walk or behavior are made. The women employees are to be kept more informed about the sexual harassment cells or procedures that exist in the company for increased confidence and handling in the event of any discomfort.

Women expressed their serious concerns about their tarnished image and identity because of their work in night shifts. Night shift works cannot be equated to the openness or accessibility of any women to any social interactions. The intervention of tools such as Films, writings, media and press is necessary to change the thought process across the society regarding night shift work.

Laws have been created to ensure the safety and security to the women working in night shifts. A major improvement occurred with respect to the conveyance systems for sure. The situations prevailing now are a lot better than they were before in all ways. Implementation part has to be further improved for sure by engaging a more humanistic approach towards the various vulnerabilities and problems. The role of evidence in the question of a sexual harassment complaints could sometimes become derogatory to the proceedings of the case. In most of the situations, there is very limited scope to collect evidence regarding such cases. There is a definite scope for improvement in terms of how the complaints are handled and addressed.

Opinions of many women are based on what press and media have been actively publicizing. They have not witnessed any case personally or with in their work circle to actually comment on the law and order systems.

It is essential that the law and order systems become pro-active in building the rapport with the target groups and build confidence in their work towards ensuring safety to them. No story is too small to be ignored and confidence in the law and order systems could be ensured when all stories are patiently listened and sufficiently addressed.

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