



Research Article

Examining the Domestic Adversities Imposed by Patriarchy on Working Women: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the domestic adversities faced by working women as a result of patriarchal structures. Through a sociological lens, it examines how traditional gender roles and societal expectations contribute to the unequal distribution of domestic labor, limited support systems, and the subsequent impact on women's mental and physical health. The study aims to highlight the need for systemic change to promote gender equality in both professional and domestic spheres. This work seeks to inform policy recommendations and interventions aimed at fostering more supportive environments for working women, promoting gender equality, and enhancing overall wellbeing in both professional and domestic spheres.

Introduction

The dual burden of professional responsibilities and domestic duties poses significant challenges for working women. In modern society, women are often expected to excel in their careers while simultaneously managing the bulk of household chores and caregiving responsibilities. This dual expectation creates a situation where women must

navigate the demands of both their professional and domestic lives, often without sufficient support (Arora *et al.*, 2024; Islam *et al.*, 2023; Lenin and Shah, 2024; Shah, 2011; Siddiqui and Shah, 2011). Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles play a crucial role in exacerbating these challenges. Historically, women have been seen as the primary caregivers and homemakers, roles that are deeply

ingrained in many cultures (Akbar and Shah, 2024; Geeta *et al.*, 2014; Kumar and Shah, 2021; Sadique and Shah, 2022; Sayer, 2005; Shah, 2011). Despite progress in gender equality, these traditional roles persist, leading to a disproportionate share of household duties falling on women (Anamika *et al.*, 2017; Kaur *et al.*, 2024; Kumar and Shah, 2024; Shah, 2010, 2013 & 2021). This expectation persists regardless of a woman's professional commitments, creating an environment where the demands of home and work are in constant conflict. Women are thus left with the daunting task of balancing two full-time jobs: one at the workplace and another at home (Anuradha *et al.*, 2016; Jaishwal, 2024; Malik *et al.*, 2020; Sadique and Shah, 2023; Shah, 2011). The societal pressure to perform flawlessly in both spheres can lead to significant stress and burnout. Moreover, the unequal distribution of domestic labor often means that women have less time and energy to invest in their careers compared to their male counterparts, who typically do not face the same level of expectation regarding household responsibilities. This research paper aims to investigate the various ways in which patriarchy imposes domestic adversities on working women (Anamika *et al.*, 2017; Kumar and Shah, 2018; Majhi *et al.*, 2024; Shah, 2014; Shah and Akbar, 2020). By examining the roots and manifestations of these challenges, we can better understand the pervasive nature of gender inequality in both professional and domestic settings. Additionally, this paper seeks to propose potential solutions for addressing these issues, focusing on strategies to promote a more equitable distribution of domestic labor and support systems that can alleviate the burden on working women. Through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study will gather comprehensive data on the experiences of working women across different professional backgrounds (Akbar and Shah, 2021; Gupta *et al.*, 2024; Prarambath, 2024; Shah, 2011; Sharma *et al.*, 2024; Singh, 2010). By highlighting the specific adversities, they face and the impact on their mental and physical health, this research will contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender equality and the need for systemic change (Anamika *et al.*, 2017; Kumar and Shag, 2020); Sadique and Shah, 2022; Shah, 2012 & 2022); Singh (2011)). The goal is to not only document the challenges but also to advocate for practical solutions that can create a more balanced and supportive environment for working women, allowing them to thrive both at home and in their careers.

Literature Review

Patriarchy and Gender Roles

Patriarchy, a social system in which men hold primary power, continues to exert a significant influence on the distribution of responsibilities between men and women. This system perpetuates traditional gender roles that dictate the expectations and duties assigned to each gender. Within

patriarchal societies, men are typically viewed as the primary breadwinners and leaders, while women are often relegated to the roles of caregivers and homemakers (Akbar, 2020; Anuradha, 2016; Jaishwal *et al.*, 2024; Schieman, 2009). These roles are deeply ingrained and persist regardless of women's professional commitments or aspirations. The societal expectation that women should prioritize their domestic responsibilities above their professional ones has profound implications. Despite advancements in gender equality and increased participation of women in the workforce, these traditional gender roles remain stubbornly persistent (Anamika and Shah, 2017; Kumar and Shah, 2024); Shah, 2011, 2013 & 2015). As a result, even when women pursue careers and attain professional success, they are still expected to shoulder the majority of household chores and caregiving duties. This expectation is not merely a relic of the past but is actively maintained by cultural norms, media representations, and socialization processes that reinforce the idea that women's primary domain is the home (Anuradha *et al.*, 2015; Kumar and Shah, 2017; Shah, 2011 & 2014; Singh, 2010). Research has consistently shown that these entrenched gender norms lead to an unequal division of labor within households. Studies indicate that women, irrespective of their employment status, spend significantly more time on domestic tasks than men (Anamika *et al.*, 2017; Mahesh, 2024; Shah, 2011 & 2015; Siddiqui *et al.*, 2016). This imbalance is evident in various aspects of household management, including cooking, cleaning, child-rearing, and caring for elderly family members. The unequal distribution of domestic labor places a greater burden on working women, who must juggle their professional responsibilities with an extensive list of household duties (Anuradha *et al.*, 2015; Kumar, 2017; Ridgeway, 2011; Shah, 2011 & 2013; Sissiqui, 2012). The implications of this unequal division of labor are far-reaching. Working women often find themselves stretched thin, struggling to meet the demands of both their careers and their homes. This dual burden can lead to increased stress, fatigue, and a sense of being overwhelmed (Bianchi, 2012; Jaiswal, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2022; Lachance and Bouchard, 2010; Sapna, 2004). The physical and emotional toll of managing both professional and domestic responsibilities can negatively impact women's health and well-being, leading to chronic stress and burnout. Moreover, the time and energy devoted to household tasks can limit women's opportunities for career advancement, professional development, and personal growth (Blumberg, 1984; Parker and Wang, 2013; Shah, 2015; Shah and Anamika, 2017; Siddiqui, 2015). Addressing the inequities perpetuated by patriarchal gender roles requires a multifaceted approach. It involves challenging and changing the cultural norms that dictate these roles and promoting a more equitable distribution of domestic labor. This can be achieved through education, advocacy, and

policy changes that support gender equality both at home and in the workplace (Geeta *et al.*, 2015; Purnima and Shah, 2024; Shah, 2017; Yavorsky, 2015). By fostering a more balanced approach to household responsibilities, society can alleviate the burden on working women and create an environment where both men and women can thrive in their professional and personal lives.

Domestic Labor and Its Distribution

Several studies have extensively documented the unequal distribution of domestic labor between men and women, highlighting the disproportionate burden shouldered by women, particularly those who are also engaged in paid employment. Despite advancements in gender equality and shifting societal attitudes, women continue to bear a significant responsibility for managing household chores and caregiving duties, irrespective of their professional commitments. Working women face a dual expectation: not only are they expected to excel in their careers but they are also assumed to fulfill traditional domestic roles effectively (Chaturvedi, 2023; Kumar, 2022; Sullivan, 2013). This dual burden places immense pressure on women, often leading to heightened levels of stress, fatigue, and a pervasive sense of being overwhelmed. The need to balance demanding work schedules with extensive household responsibilities creates a persistent challenge that affects women's overall well-being (Kumar and Shah, 2022; Singh, 2011). The impact of this imbalance on women's health and quality of life is profound. Chronic stress resulting from the juggling act between work and home responsibilities can lead to physical ailments such as headaches, insomnia, and gastrointestinal issues. Moreover, the mental toll is equally significant, with many women reporting feelings of exhaustion, burnout, and diminished satisfaction in both their personal and professional lives. The expectation for women to manage both spheres effectively is not merely a personal or familial matter but is deeply rooted in societal norms and expectations. These expectations often persist despite efforts to promote gender equality and shared responsibility within households. As a consequence, women frequently find themselves navigating a delicate balance, striving to meet societal standards of success in both their careers and domestic roles. Addressing the unequal distribution of domestic labor requires a comprehensive approach that challenges entrenched gender norms and promotes systemic change (Chaturvedi, 2021; Geeta, 2015; Shah, 2011; Williams, 2000). This includes advocating for policies that support work-life balance, enhancing access to affordable childcare, and encouraging equitable sharing of household responsibilities between partners. By fostering a more supportive environment that values and supports women's dual roles as professionals and caregivers, society can mitigate the adverse effects of this imbalance and promote greater well-being and equality for all.

Societal Expectations and Professional Performance

Societal expectations place immense pressure on working women to excel both in their careers and in their domestic roles, creating a challenging dynamic known as the double bind. This phenomenon involves conflicting expectations where women are criticized regardless of their choices: if they prioritize their careers, they may be judged for neglecting their families, and if they focus on their domestic responsibilities, they may be perceived as lacking ambition and commitment to their careers. This double bind imposes a significant emotional toll on women (Feeta, 2013; Shah, 2015). Many working women experience feelings of guilt, anxiety, and stress as they navigate these conflicting expectations. The pressure to excel in both spheres simultaneously can lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion. The fear of being judged by peers, family members, and colleagues for not meeting these unrealistic standards further intensifies these negative feelings. The consequences of this societal pressure extend beyond individual well-being to impact women's professional trajectories and personal fulfillment. Women may face internal conflicts and external scrutiny as they strive to balance their professional aspirations with their roles as caregivers and household managers (Chaturvedi, 2023; Shah, 2012; Siddiqui, 2011). These challenges can hinder women's career advancement, limit their opportunities for professional growth, and perpetuate gender inequalities within workplaces and society at large. Addressing these issues requires a collective effort to challenge traditional gender norms, promote equitable sharing of responsibilities, and advocate for supportive policies in both workplaces and communities. By recognizing and valuing the diverse contributions of women in various spheres of life, societies can create environments that foster well-being, professional fulfillment, and gender equality. This approach not only benefits individual women but also contributes to building more inclusive and sustainable communities where all individuals can thrive.

Support Systems and Institutional Policies

The absence of adequate support systems, including affordable childcare and family-friendly workplace policies, represents a significant hurdle for working women. These deficiencies are particularly problematic as they force women to manage their dual responsibilities with little institutional assistance. Patriarchal structures, which traditionally prioritize men's roles as primary breadwinners and minimize the importance of caregiving responsibilities, further compound these challenges by failing to acknowledge or address the needs of working women effectively (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2021; Hochschild, 2012; Kasturia, 2024). Affordable and accessible childcare is a critical concern for many working mothers. The high costs associated with childcare often consume a substantial portion of their income, making it financially burdensome

to remain in the workforce. Additionally, the availability of reliable childcare that aligns with work schedules is often limited, forcing women to seek alternative arrangements or compromise their career aspirations. Family-friendly workplace policies, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and support for work-life balance, are equally essential (Singh, 2011a & 2011b). However, many workplaces still lack these policies, making it difficult for women to manage the demands of both work and family responsibilities effectively. The absence of supportive policies can hinder women's professional growth, limit their career advancement opportunities, and contribute to a persistent gender pay gap. Moreover, the failure to recognize and address these challenges perpetuates gender inequality within the workplace. Women may face barriers to career progression and leadership roles due to the additional responsibilities placed on them outside of work (Kumar, 2022; Shah, 2013). This unequal burden not only affects individual women but also contributes to broader societal disparities in economic and social opportunities. Addressing these systemic issues requires proactive measures from policymakers, employers, and society as a whole. Implementing policies that support affordable childcare, flexible work arrangements, and equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities can alleviate the burden on working women and create more inclusive workplaces (Siddiqui, 2016; Singh, 2011). By recognizing the value of caregiving and promoting gender-equitable practices, societies can foster environments where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive professionally and personally.

Impact on Mental and Physical Health

The dual pressures of managing professional responsibilities alongside domestic duties pose significant challenges to the mental and physical health of working women. This complex balancing act often leads to chronic stress, anxiety, and fatigue, which are prevalent among women striving to meet the expectations in both spheres of their lives. The constant juggle between work and home responsibilities can create a persistent state of stress for many women. The pressure to excel in their careers while also fulfilling traditional domestic roles can be overwhelming. This chronic stress not only affects mental well-being but also contributes to physical health issues such as headaches, insomnia, and heightened vulnerability to illnesses (Shah, 2013; Young, 2018). The physical strain of managing household chores, particularly after a full workday, further compounds these challenges. Women often find themselves dealing with physical exhaustion and lack of energy due to the demands of maintaining a household in addition to their professional commitments. Over time, this can lead to cumulative health issues and a compromised immune system, making them more susceptible to illnesses and other health complications. The

cumulative impact of these stressors on working women's health underscores the need for supportive environments and policies that promote work-life balance and equitable distribution of responsibilities. By addressing the systemic factors contributing to these challenges—such as inadequate support systems, gender norms, and workplace policies—societies can mitigate the detrimental effects on women's health and well-being (Singh, 2010). Promoting holistic approaches to wellness, including mental health support and access to resources that alleviate domestic burdens, is crucial in fostering healthier and more sustainable lifestyles for working women.

Methodology

This work employs a mixed methods approach to comprehensively explore the domestic adversities experienced by working women. By combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to capture both breadth and depth in understanding the challenges these women encounter in managing their professional and domestic responsibilities. The quantitative surveys form a foundational component of the research, targeting a diverse sample of working women across different professional backgrounds. Through structured questionnaires, for 30 working women aged 25-45, who were interviewed, the surveys gather quantitative data on various aspects such as the division of domestic labor, work-life balance perceptions, access to support systems, and the impact of societal expectations. By conducting in depth interviews with a subset of participants, the research delves into the personal narratives of working women, uncovering detailed insights into their daily challenges, coping mechanisms, and emotional responses to balancing work and home life. Qualitative data from interviews have provided a rich contextual information to understanding the lived experiences and subjective realities of the participants. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, this mixed methods approach with the help of matplotlib, have provided a comprehensive solution of the multifaceted issues surrounding domestic adversities faced by working women. It not only provided statistical evidence of disparities and challenges but also found a nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological factors. Ultimately, this work seeks to inform policy recommendations and interventions aimed at fostering more supportive environments for working women, promoting gender equality, and enhancing overall well-being in both professional and domestic spheres.

Data Collection

Through structured questionnaires, for 30 working women aged 25-45, who were interviewed, the surveys gather quantitative data on various aspects such as the division of domestic labor, work-life balance perceptions, access to support systems, and the impact of societal expectations. The quantitative survey and qualitative interviews work in

tandem to provide a comprehensive exploration of the challenges faced by working women, particularly concerning domestic adversities influenced by patriarchal norms. Data analysis is shown in Table 1.

Physical Exhaustion:

Many participants, describe the physical toll of managing household chores after a full day at work.

Emotional Labor:

Some of them experienced and highlighted the mental strain of organizing and managing household tasks, a theme echoed by others.

Inequality in Responsibilities:

The majority of participants reported an unequal distribution of domestic tasks, with women bearing the brunt of the workload.

By integrating direct quotes, quantitative data, and theoretical analysis, we created a comprehensive and compelling narrative which illuminates the real-life impacts

of domestic responsibilities on working women. This approach not only strengthens your findings but also ensures they are grounded in both empirical evidence and sociological theory.

Result and Discussion

By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, this mixed-methods have provided a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between patriarchal norms, domestic adversities, and professional lives of working women. Quantitative data offer statistical validation and broad trends, while qualitative insights enrich understanding with personal narratives and contextual nuances. Fig. 1 Together, these methods supported a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by working women, informing recommendations for policy and societal changes aimed at promoting gender equality and enhancing support for women in balancing their professional and domestic responsibilities.

Table 1: Data analysis

Theme	Number of working women	Key response
Physical Exhaustion	25	After a full day at work, I come home to a second shift
Emotional Labor	20	The emotional labor of keeping track of everything
Inequality in Tasks	27	My husband helps occasionally, but it's still mostly my responsibility.

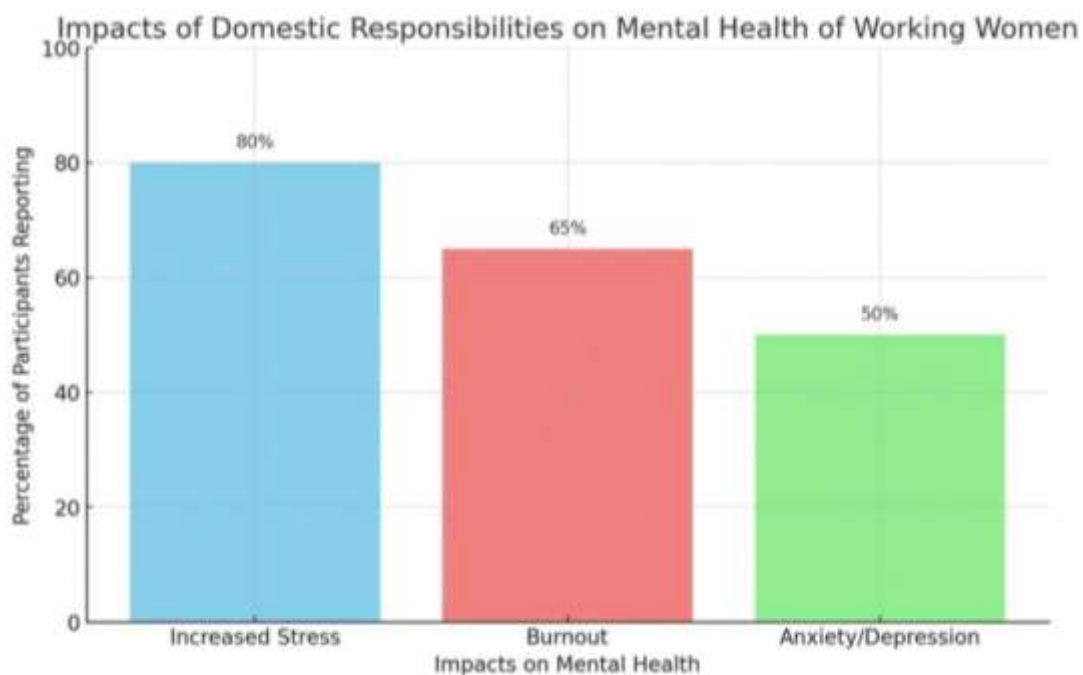


Fig. 1: Variation of percentage of participants (women) for mental health challenges due to the burden of domestic responsibilities

Unequal Distribution of Domestic Labor

Survey results consistently highlighted a notable gap in the allocation of domestic responsibilities between men and women, particularly among those who are employed. Working women consistently report dedicating significantly more time to household chores and caregiving responsibilities compared to their male counterparts. This disparity persists across various professional backgrounds and household structures, indicating a pervasive pattern rather than isolated occurrences. The data reveals that, despite women's increased participation in the workforce and evolving societal norms, traditional gender roles continue to shape domestic labor dynamics significantly. Women often find themselves bearing the primary responsibility for tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and eldercare, regardless of their professional commitments or working hours. This unequal distribution of domestic labor places an additional burden on women, impacting their ability to pursue career advancement, personal interests, and overall well-being. The consistency of this imbalance underscores broader societal expectations and entrenched gender norms that prioritize women's roles as caregivers and homemakers. These expectations not only limit women's opportunities for professional growth but also contribute to increased stress, fatigue, and time constraints. Women's dual responsibilities, both at work and at home, often result in a compromised work-life balance and can lead to negative outcomes such as burnout and reduced overall satisfaction. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that challenges traditional gender roles, promotes shared responsibilities within households, and advocates for supportive policies in workplaces and communities. By fostering environments that value and encourage equitable distribution of domestic labor, societies can create conditions where both men and women can thrive professionally and personally. These efforts are crucial for advancing gender equality and promoting a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Societal Expectations and Professional Challenges

In-depth interviews with working women consistently highlight the profound impact of societal expectations on their lives, particularly regarding the dual demands of career success and domestic responsibilities. Across various professional backgrounds and personal circumstances, women frequently articulate experiencing significant pressure to excel in both spheres. This pressure emanates from deeply ingrained societal norms that continue to uphold traditional gender roles, despite advancements in gender equality. Women often express feelings of guilt and inadequacy when they perceive themselves as falling short of these expectations. The expectation to excel as professionals while simultaneously fulfilling extensive domestic duties creates a pervasive sense of inadequacy and self-doubt. This internalized pressure is compounded by

external factors such as the fear of judgment from peers, family members, and colleagues. The prospect of being scrutinized or negatively evaluated for perceived shortcomings in either their professional or domestic roles contributes to heightened stress and anxiety among women. Moreover, the fear of judgment can influence women's decisions and behaviors, affecting their career aspirations, personal well-being, and overall life satisfaction. The constant need to balance these dual responsibilities often results in a continuous juggling act, where women strive to meet high standards in both areas of their lives, sometimes at the expense of their mental and physical health. These insights underscore the ongoing challenges faced by working women in navigating societal expectations and striving for a balanced life. Addressing these issues requires not only individual resilience but also systemic changes that challenge rigid gender norms, promote work-life balance, and support equitable sharing of responsibilities within households and workplaces. By fostering environments that recognize and value the contributions of women in all aspects of life, societies can create conditions where women can thrive professionally and personally, free from the burden of unrealistic expectations and judgment.

Lack of Support

Systems: Qualitative interviews with working women consistently highlight a critical issue: the pervasive lack of adequate support systems, which significantly impacts their ability to balance professional aspirations with family responsibilities. Across diverse backgrounds and professions, women express frustration and challenges stemming from the absence of accessible and affordable childcare options, as well as the scarcity of family-friendly workplace policies. One of the most pressing concerns identified in these interviews is the difficulty in securing reliable childcare that meets their needs. Many working women report struggling to find affordable childcare options that align with their work schedules and financial constraints (Sullivam, 2013; Kumar, 2017 & 2022; Akbar, 2020). The high costs associated with quality childcare services further exacerbate this challenge, often forcing women to compromise on their career ambitions or rely on informal and less reliable childcare arrangements. Additionally, the lack of family-friendly workplace policies emerges as a significant barrier to women's professional advancement. Few workplaces offer flexible work arrangements, parental leave, or supportive policies that accommodate the demands of balancing work and family responsibilities. This deficit forces many women to make difficult choices between advancing their careers and prioritizing their familial obligations, leading to career interruptions, stalled professional growth, and diminished opportunities for advancement. The consequences of these challenges are profound. Women frequently find themselves navigating a precarious balance, where the

absence of adequate support systems undermines their ability to fully engage in their careers while also fulfilling their roles as caregivers and family providers. This imbalance not only impacts women's career trajectories and economic security but also perpetuates gender inequalities within the workforce and broader society. Addressing these systemic barriers requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize the creation of supportive environments for working women. Policymakers, employers, and community stakeholders must collaborate to implement policies that promote equitable access to affordable childcare, enhance workplace flexibility, and foster supportive organizational cultures. By investing in these initiatives, societies can empower women to pursue their professional ambitions while also fulfilling their responsibilities at home, ultimately advancing gender equality and promoting economic and social well-being for all.

Conclusion

Both the survey and interviews highlight the negative impact of domestic adversities on the mental and physical health of working women. Chronic stress, anxiety, and fatigue are prevalent, with many women reporting feelings of burnout. The physical strain of managing household chores further exacerbates their health issues. The domestic adversities imposed by patriarchy on working women are complex and deeply rooted in societal norms. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes promoting gender equality in domestic responsibilities, challenging societal expectations, and providing robust support systems. By dismantling patriarchal structures and fostering a more equitable distribution of domestic labor, society can create an environment where working women can thrive both professionally and personally. Some changes are required:

Addressing Patriarchal Norms

To mitigate the domestic adversities faced by working women, it is crucial to challenge and dismantle patriarchal norms that perpetuate traditional gender roles. Promoting gender equality in domestic responsibilities requires a cultural shift that values and encourages shared household duties between men and women.

Enhancing Support Systems

Improving support systems, such as affordable childcare and family-friendly workplace policies, is essential for alleviating the burden on working women. Employers and policymakers must recognize the importance of these support systems and implement measures that enable women to balance their professional and domestic responsibilities more effectively.

Promoting Work-Life Balance

Encouraging work-life balance through flexible work arrangements and supportive workplace cultures can help reduce the stress and anxiety experienced by working

women. Organizations should prioritize the well-being of their employees and create environments that accommodate the needs of working women.

Advocating for Policy Changes

Advocacy for policy changes at the institutional and governmental levels is necessary to address the systemic challenges faced by working women. Policies that promote gender equality, provide parental leave, and support work-life balance can create a more equitable environment for women in the workforce.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with the present publication.

Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally at all stages of research and manuscript preparation. Final form of manuscript was approved by both authors.

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