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Inequalities Faced by Working Women: A Comprehensive Study of 4 States of India

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ABSTRACT

Innumerable women work very hard to pursue their dream career. At the same time, the working women are vulnerable to harassment and several dimensions of discriminatory practices at workplace. The paper starts with concepts of gender homophily, queen bee syndrome, analysis put forth by Raweyn Connell, status characteristics theory, and functionalist and feminist approaches of gender inequalities. Further, the findings of past research works and review of literature in relation to gender pay gaps, latent inequality in veil of special provisions for women at workplace, the preferences in job interview, psychological pressure because of dual responsibilities of home and work are discussed. To understand the various dimensions as well as trends in which inequality is prevalent at workplace, a survey across four states of India namely Bihar, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal. The findings of the empirical part of research are then presented. The points of analysis draw light on major aspects which are considered next in this paper. The study further provides recommendation with a concluding note on positive trends and total elimination of gender inequality at workplace.

Keywords: Gender, women, inequality, men, workplace

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is an issue that plagues the mankind since times immemorial. In the past, we women were often treated as second-class citizen. Over the years, several men and women have contributed to help the situation change but the mindset of patriarchal dominance persists. It took years for women of even developed economies to get the right to vote after independence. The right to participate and be represented at workplace was a tougher battle in itself. Even after facing the challenges with strong will, the struggle for equality in the lives of 21st Century women continues. Entry of women in offices has diversified the manners in which gender inequality is manifested with new ways of verbal abuse, financial abuse, stalking, sexual abuse, etc. hurting the self confidence, dignity and integrity of working women. The condition worsens when the fact of gender is coupled with race, motherhood, more dependants in family,

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crisis and poverty.

CONCEPTS USED

Analysis of Gender Inequality by R.W. Connell

Gender and Power (1987), The Men and the Boys (2001) and Masculinities (2005) are influential works of Australian sociologist, Raweyn Connell. According to her, every day practices and interactions shape gender relations. The three realms of power relations between masculinities and femininity are:

★ Labor

Women in division of labor have childcare and domestic responsibility in domestic sphere as well as unequal pays and occupational segregation at workplace.

★ Power

It operates in the lives of women through ideology prevalent in institutions, military, state and authoritative dominance in domestic life.

★ Cathexis

It is concerned with the dynamics within personal emotional relationship.

Further, she explains the crisis tendencies in gender regime through:

1. Crisis of Institutionalism
2. Crisis of Sexuality
3. Crisis of Interest Formation

Gender Homophily and Queen Bee Syndrome

Homophily refers to men favoring other men and women favoring other women. It is used to explain that superior positions in organizations are occupied by men. Even years later, the trends remain the same which is a product of gender homophily.²

Researches prove same is not the case with female superiors as both men and women devalue the work of woman employee.³ These findings are explained through queen bee syndrome that observes women in position of power do not help other working women as they subscribe to

² Rudman, Laurie A. and Stephanie A. Goodwin. 2004. "Gender Differences in Automatic InGroup Bias: Why Do Women Like Women More Than Men Like Men?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87(4):494–509.

Tsui, Anne S. and Charles A. O'Reilly. 1989. "Beyond Simple Demographic Effects: The Importance of Relational Demography in Superior-Subordinate Dyads." *Academy of Management Journal* 32(2):402–23.

³ Heilman, Madeline E. and Michelle C. Haynes. 2005. "No Credit Where Credit Is Due: Attributional Rationalization of Women's Success in Male-Female Teams." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90(5):905–16.

stereotypes and gender norms.⁴

Functionalist Approach of Gender Inequality

The functionalists try to show how integration and social stability is brought by gender differences. ‘Natural differences’ school of thought claim biological basis of division of labor. Anthropologists like George Murdock contest that it is biological programming of women to take responsibility of family and let men work outside.⁵ Talcott Parsons expressed key to successful socialization is supportive families where women take the ‘expressive roles’ of emotional support and men perform ‘instrumental role’ of breadwinning.⁶

Feminist Approach of Gender Inequality

Radical Feminism

Radical feminists interpret basis of patriarchy differently but agree on subordinate position of women because of male supremacy. Shulamith Firestone uses ‘sex class’ to explain social position of women which can only be emancipated by abolition of power relations.⁷ ‘Personal is political’ has drawn widespread attention laying emphasis on objectification of women.

Socialist and Marxist Feminism

Socialist feminists sought to defeat capitalism along with patriarchy. This is based on Friedrich Engels argued capitalism intensifies patriarchy by concentration of wealth in hands of men and termed it as ‘historic defeat of female sex’. Further, socialist feminists think capitalism exploited proletariat with low wages and women with no wages referred as ‘domestic slavery’.⁸

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is concerned with emancipation of women by political and legal equality. In ‘The Subjection of Women’, John Stuart Mill, prominent English philosopher, advocated right to vote. They are vocal about discrimination and sexism against women at workplace in the recent decades.⁹

Black Feminism

American Black feminist bell hooks and others emphasize on historic aspects to explain

⁴ Staines, Graham, Carol Tavris, and Toby E. Jayaratne. 1974. “The Queen Bee Syndrome.” *Psychology Today* 7(8):55–60.

⁵ Murdock, George Peter 1949. “Social Structure”

⁶ Bales, Robert F. and Parsons, Talcot 1956. “Family: Socialization and Interaction Process”

⁷ Firestone, Shulamith 1971. “The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution”

⁸ Doyle, Jennifer 2021. “The Feminist Vision of Friedrich Engels” *Jacobins* Retrieved from <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/09/socialist-feminism-fredrich-engels-marx-theory-private-property>

⁹ Meany, Paul 2021. “An Introduction to Mill’s “The Subjection of Women” Libertarianism

problems of black women influenced by segregation, slavery and civil rights. Class dimensions need to be taken into account to explain oppression of black women.

Postmodern Feminism

These feminists emphasize on ‘deconstruction’. The binary distinctions of ‘bad versus good’, ‘wrong versus right’, ‘ugly versus beautiful’, etc. are deconstructed with adoption of positive and new dimension to opposites.¹⁰

Status Characteristics Theory

The theory is based on the belief that perception of competence and prestige of an individual is characterized from status determinants such as gender, motherhood, race, age, etc.¹¹ According to this theory, both men and women managers tend to pay less and expect less competence from women employees since women are generally viewed as lower status than men.¹²

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

GENDER PAY GAPS

Women are paid less compared to men with lower labor force participation.¹³ They are more in proportion in areas of precarious employment and underrepresented at higher management levels.¹⁴ Same is the case with housework, family work, and volunteered work.¹⁵

Although Nordic countries have come a long way in respect to economic parity, even then onus of taking care, payment disparity and digital divide continue to persist.¹⁶ The distribution of

¹⁰ Elam, Diane 2001. "Feminism and deconstruction". In C. Knellwolf & C. Norris (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, pp. 207-216). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-history-of-literary-criticism/feminism-and-deconstruction/08C27304576B41D4D2CA266788B8B22F>

¹¹ Berger, Joseph, Bernard P. Cohen, and Morris Zelditch. 1972. "Status Characteristics and Social Interaction." *American Sociological Review* 37(3):241-55.

¹² Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 1997. "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *American Sociological Review* 62(2):218–35

Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69(1):93–113.

¹³ BASS (Büro für arbeits- und sozialpolitische Studien) 2010. "Analyse der Löhne von Frauen und Männern anhand der Lohnstrukturhebung". Bern: Bundesamt für Statistik

¹⁴ Miranda, V. 2011. "Cooking, caring and volunteering: unpaid work around the world". OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 116.

Van der Lippe, T., de Ruijter, J., de Ruijter, E., Raub, W. 2010. "Persistent inequalities in time use between men and women: A detailed look at the influence of economic circumstances, policies, and culture." In: *European Sociological Review* 27, 2, pp. 164–179.

¹⁵ Schempp, D., Schief, S. & Wagner, A. 2015. "Determinants of detraditionalization of the division of housework and family work in Swiss couple households". In: *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, 41, 1, pp. 333–57.

Nollert, M. & Huser, C. 2006. "Freiwillig Aktive in der Schweiz. Einflussfaktoren und typische Profile. In: *Farago*" P. (eds.) (2006): *Freiwilligenarbeit in der Schweiz*. Zürich: Seismo. pp. 14–54.

¹⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

work is considered to be fair if paid and unpaid work between men and women is symmetrically shared.¹⁷ The inequality is added with the number of working hours referred as gender time inequality.

Apart from the gender inequality, differential wages between women without children and women with children is also noted.¹⁸ The latter is generally paid less which is indicative of monetary situation in such inequality complicated by domestic care.

JOB INTERVIEW PREFERENCES

Studies reveal academic curriculum vitae containing female-gendered name costs candidates in peer evaluation process for hiring, promotions and tenure even when vitas used were identical.¹⁹ In “Ruth/Robert” vita study, stellar and average were used with equal number of men and women names of Professors. The valutors had to assess teaching experience and research productivity of the candidates and were informed to be hired at their University. In case of stellar candidates, gender had no role to play. However, gender inequality was evident in average vitas where male name average vitas were rated ‘good productivity’ and that with female name were ‘low productivity’. In case of hiring a man, 70% were approved but it was just 45% for females.²⁰

PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN: THE HIDDEN TRUTH

The gendered effect of parenthood on employment is the main reason behind inequality on the basis of gender. However, the results of a research indicated lower working hours and working rates for fathers with longer working hours of women. Few instances of increase in paid works by mothers is noted as a supportive function but no rise in its probability is noticed. It, in turn, negatively reduces the probability of working for young women without children.²¹

Evaluating the result that employers discriminate mothers in term of promotion, compensation

¹⁷ Gornick, J. C./Meyers, M. K. (2008): Creating gender-egalitarian societies: An agenda for reform. In: *Politics & Society* 36, 3, pp. 313–3

¹⁸ Gough, Margaret, and Mary Noonan. 2013. “A Review of the Motherhood Wage Penalty in the United States.” *Sociology Compass* 7(4): 328–42.

Harkness, Susan, and Jane Waldfogel. 2003. “The Family Gap in Pay: Evidence from Seven Industrialized Countries.” *Research in Labor Economics* 22: 369–413.

Budig, Michelle J., and Paula England. 2001. “The Wage Penalty for Motherhood.” *American Sociological Review* 66(2): 204–25.

¹⁹ Weners, Christine and Agnes Wold. 1997. “Nepotism and sexism in peer-review”. *Nature* 387:341-43.

Steinpreis, Rhea E., K. Anders and D. Ritzke. 1999. “The impact of gender on the review of the curricula vitae of job applicants and tenure candidates: A national empirical study”. *Sex Roles* 41:509-28.

²⁰ Steinpreis, Rhea E., K. Anders and D. Ritzke. 1999. “The impact of gender on the review of the curricula vitae of job applicants and tenure candidates: A national empirical study”. *Sex Roles* 41:509-28.

²¹ Nollert, M. & Schief, S. 2016. “Cantonal patterns of gender-specific time-inequalities in paid and unpaid work: Empirical results and political-institutional conclusions”. In: Liebig, B./ Gottschall, K./ Sauer, B. (eds.) (2016): *Gender Equality in Context: Policies and Practices in Switzerland*, Verlag Barbara Budrich, pp. 181-197

etc, apart from the notion that they are less committed²², taking maternity leave which leads to less work is also cited as a determinant.²³ This shows that the facility is in a way a share of just income which they are usually deprived of. Maternity leave is relates to gender wage gaps revealing the policy adversely affects women.²⁴

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND APPEARANCES

Segregation based on sector bias is commonly noticed in gender inequality. Working women dominate in teaching, care-giving, marketing, counseling etc.²⁵ Occupation bias also has a role to play which is evident from greater percentage of women working in clerical support, services, fishery, forestry and sales.²⁶

By virtue of racial identities especially color, the female faculties did not fit popular image of a college professor. It is indicative of persistent racism and sexism in academia as well as society at large.²⁷

FAMILY AND WORKING WOMEN

In German speaking part of Switzerland, majority families had male breadwinners with female part time career model.²⁸ Increasing demand in tertiary sector and urbanization create favorable conditions of work for women whereas increase in care needed towards elderly and children drives women out of the labor market.²⁹ Studies in late 20th century also show that women tend to maximize family responsibilities and paid work by jobs with flexible working hours.³⁰

²² England, Paula. 2005. "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation." *Social Politics* 12(2): 264–88

²³ Budig, Michelle J., and Paula England. 2001. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review* 66(2): 204–25

Staff, Jeremy, and Jeylan T. Mortimer. 2012. "Explaining the Motherhood Wage Penalty During the Early Occupational Career." *Demography* 49(1): 1–21.

²⁴ Ruhm, C. J. 1998. "The economic consequences of parental leave mandates: lessons from Europe". *The Quarterly Journal of Labor Economics*, 113, 285-317

Ondrich, J., Spiess, C. K. and Yang, Q. 2003. "Changes in women's wages after parental leave". *Schmollers Jahrbuch*, 123, 125-138.

Edin, P. A. and Gustavsson, M. 2008. "Time out of work and skill depreciation". *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* , 61, 163-180.

²⁵ ILO, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Women*. International Labour Organization, 2017

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Griffin, Kimberly A. 2013. "The Calculus of Yes and No: How One Professor Makes Decisions about Academic Service." *Thought and Action* 29:35– 43.

²⁸ Pfau-Effinger, B. 2010. "Cultural and institutional contexts". In: Treas, J./Drobnič, S. (eds.) (2010): *Dividing the domestic: men, women, and household work in cross-national perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 125–146.

²⁹ Sullivan, O./Gershuny, J. 2001 "Cross-national changes in time-use: Some sociological (hi)stories re-examined". In: *British Journal of Sociology* 52, 2, pp. 331– 347.

³⁰ Marini, Margaret M., and Mary C. Brinton. 1984. "Sex Typing in Occupational Socialization." In *Sex Segregation in the Workplace: Trends, Explanations, Remedies*, edited by Barbara F. Reskin.

Glass, Jennifer. 1990. "The Impact of Occupational Segregation on Working Conditions." *Social Forces* 68(3): 779–96

DUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND STRESS

Research has shown that women perform most of the domestic work irrespective of the paid work they do.³¹ Unequal workload also causes psychological distress among these working women especially who belong to lower socio-economic strata.³² Further, it is highlighted that responsibility of domestic work rather than the amount of it builds up mental distress which is clearly associated with gender inequality.³³

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

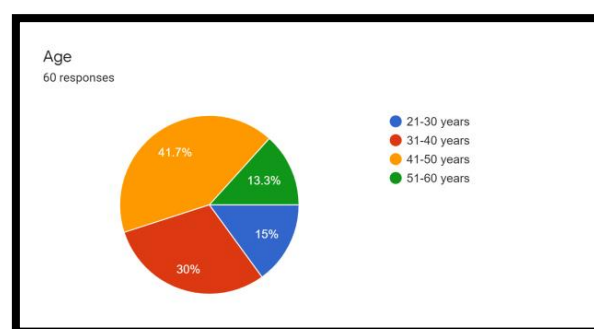
The present empirical work has following objectives:

- to analyze the current pay scale and monetary condition of working women
- to look into the harassment which takes place in workplace
- to review the maternity and menstrual leave policies
- to understand the role of appearance and beauty standards for working women
- to evaluate the domestic and emotional support of the family

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative research based on legislations and secondary data collected from e-books, websites, journals and e-books. The research is also based on primary data collected from survey through Google Forms.

II. FINDINGS



³¹ Statistics Sweden. 2008. "Women and Men in Sweden". Orebro: Statistics Sweden.

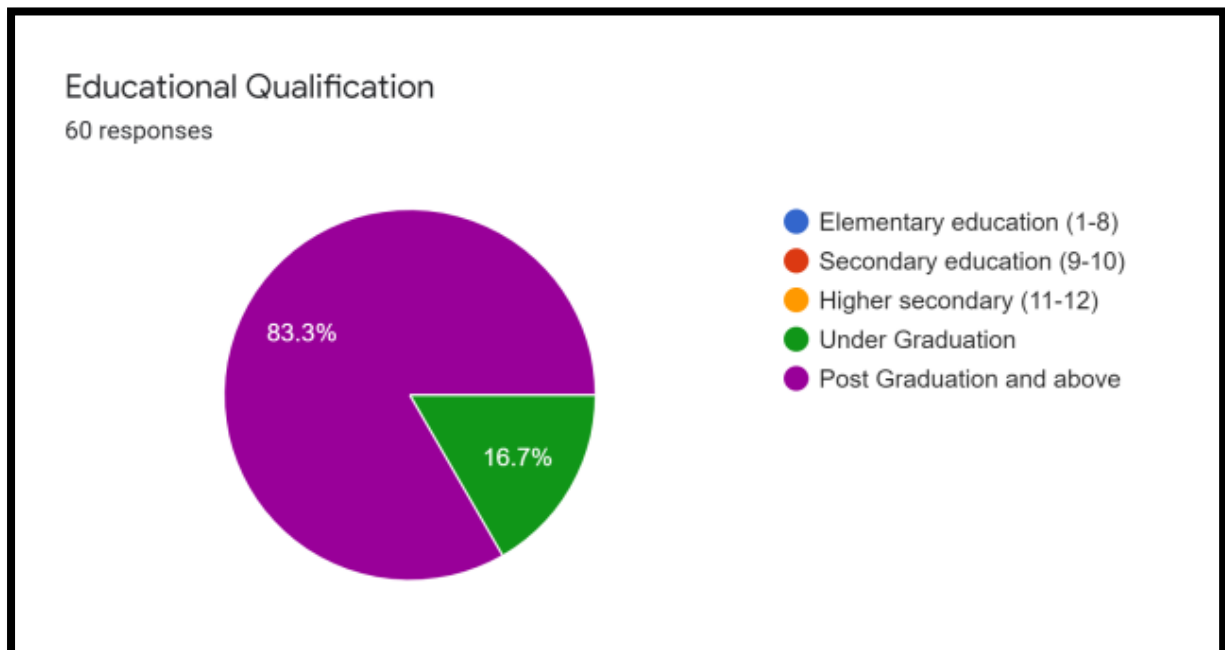
Berntsson L, Lundberg U, Krantz G.2006. "Gender differences in work-home interplay and symptom perception among Swedish white-collar employees". J Epidemiol Community Health.

³² Matthews S, Power C, Stansfeld SA. 2001. "Psychological distress and work and home roles: a focus on socio-economic differences in distress". Psychol Med.

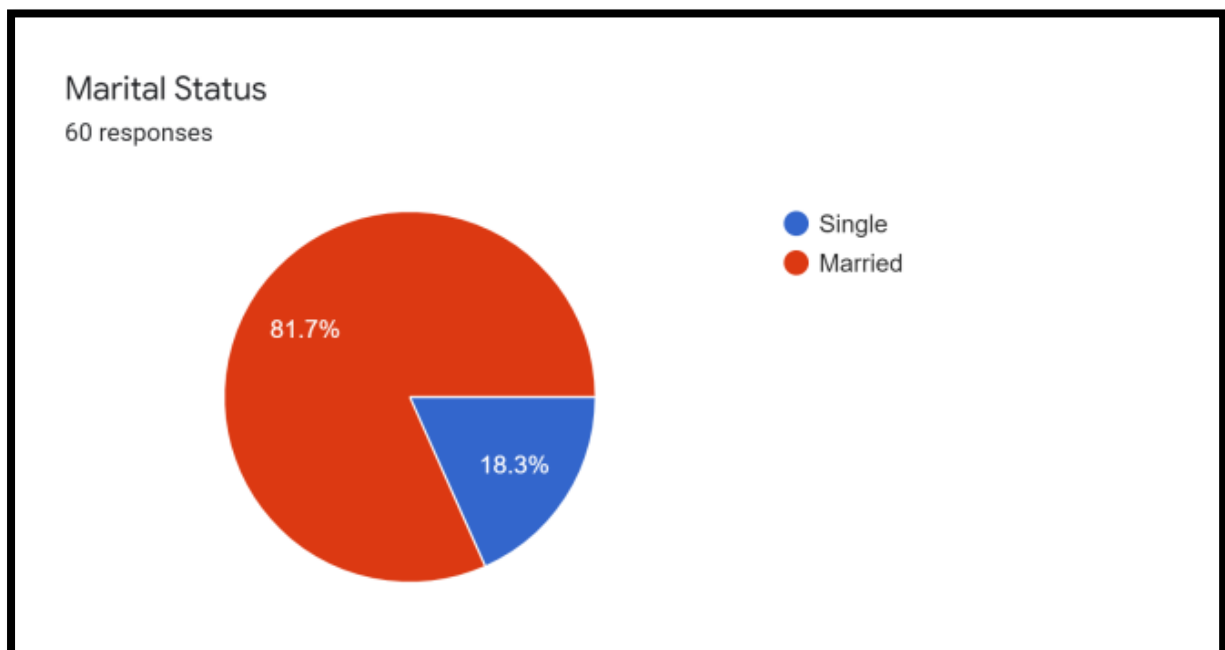
³³ Bird CE. 1999. "Gender, household labor, and psychological distress: The impact of the amount and division of housework". J Health Soc Behav 40, pp. 32—45.

Glass J, Fujimoto T.1994. " Housework, paid work, and depression among husbands and wives". J Health Soc Behav 179, pp. 91.

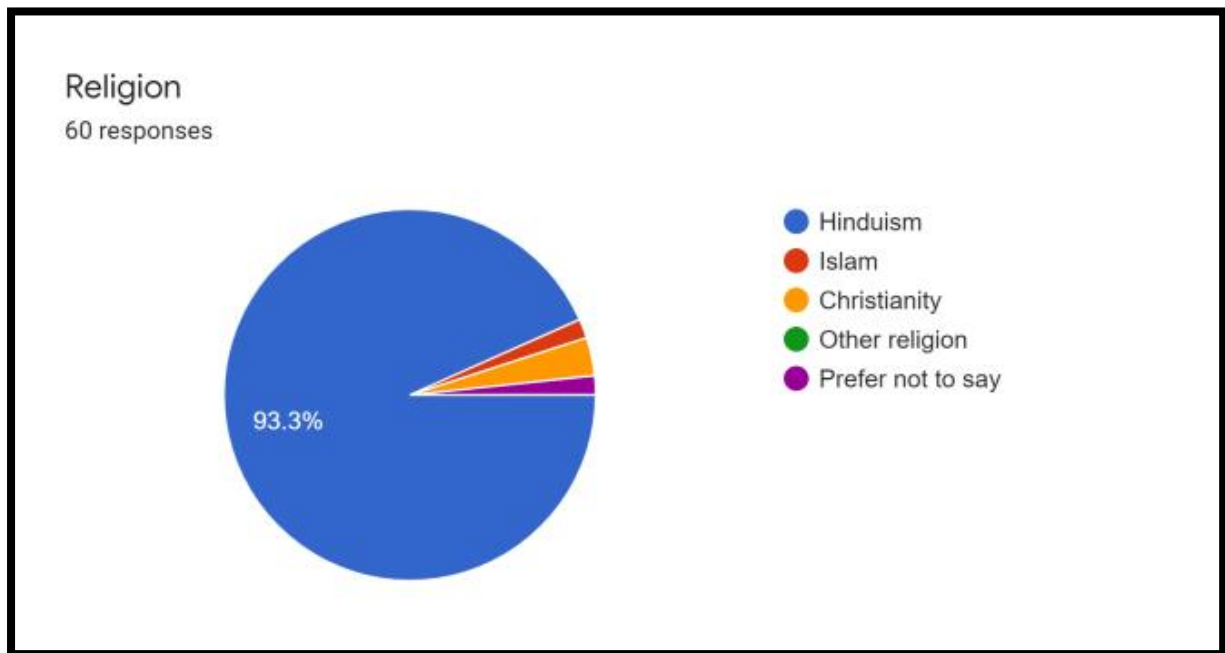
41.7% of the respondents were of the age group 41-50 years. Other 30% were of 31-40 years. A comparable 15% and 13.3% of the respondents were of age groups 21-30 years and 51-60 years respectively.



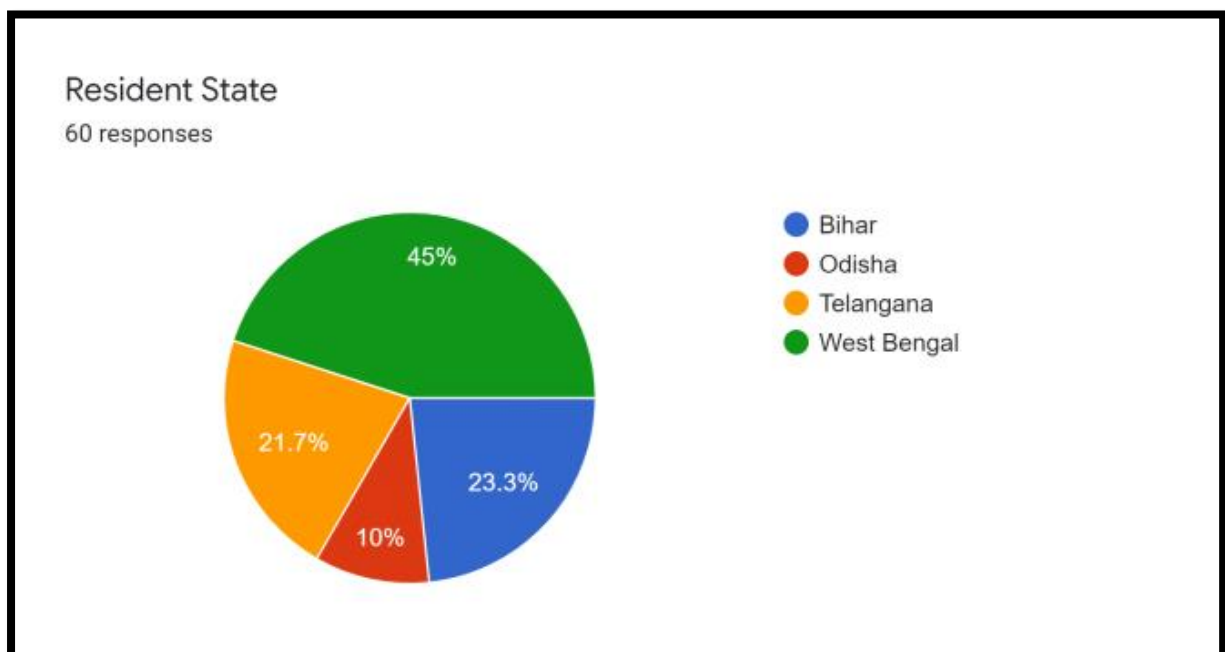
83.3% of the total respondents had completed their post graduation. Other 16.7% of the respondents were just under graduates. No respondent were of educational qualifications less than under graduation.



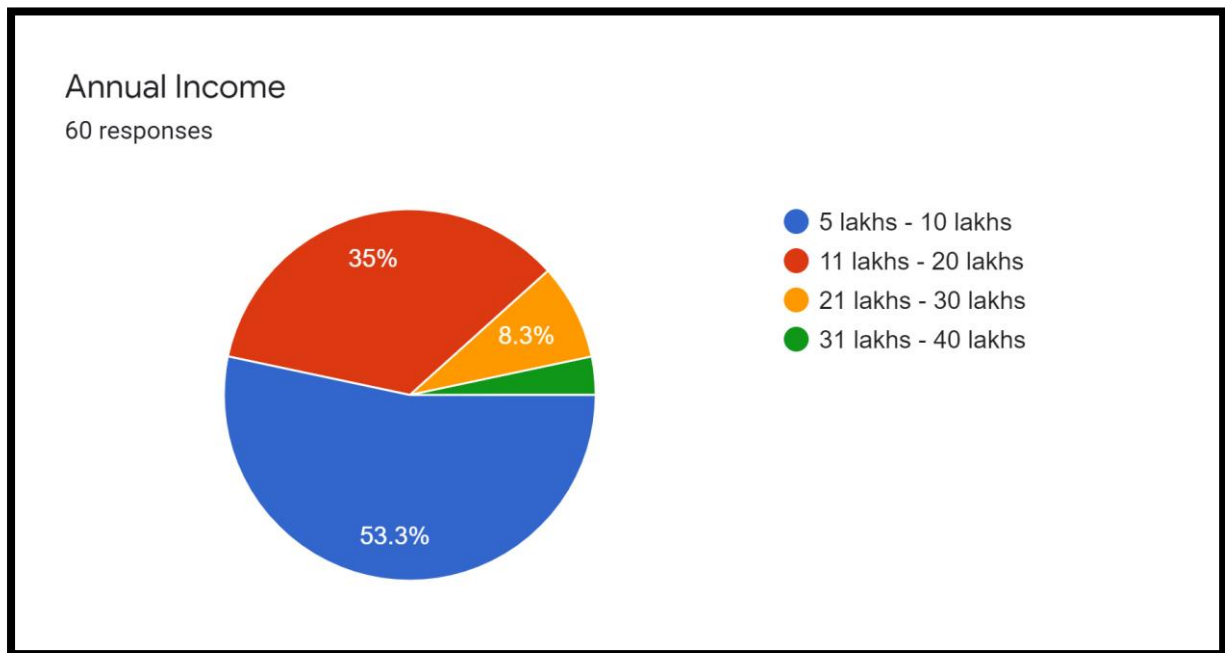
81.7% of the women were married as the other 18.3% were single.



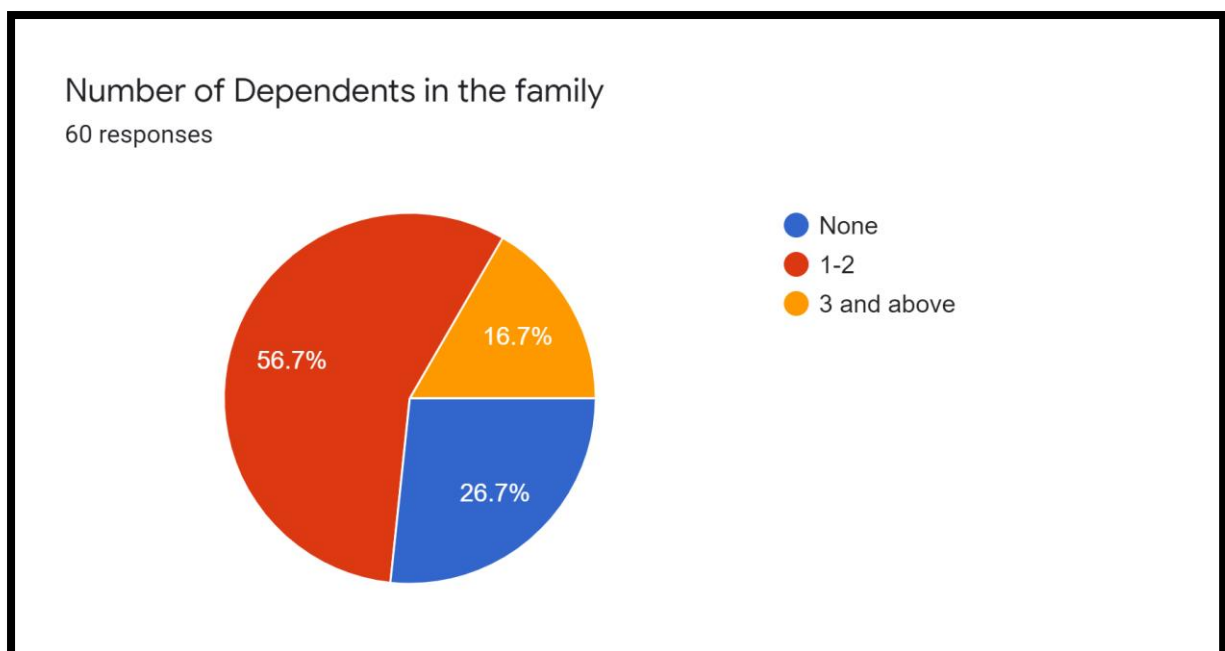
93.3% followed Hinduism. 3.3% of these working women were Christian. 1.7% of the respondents identified Islam as their religion. However, rest 1.7% preferred not to respond to this question.



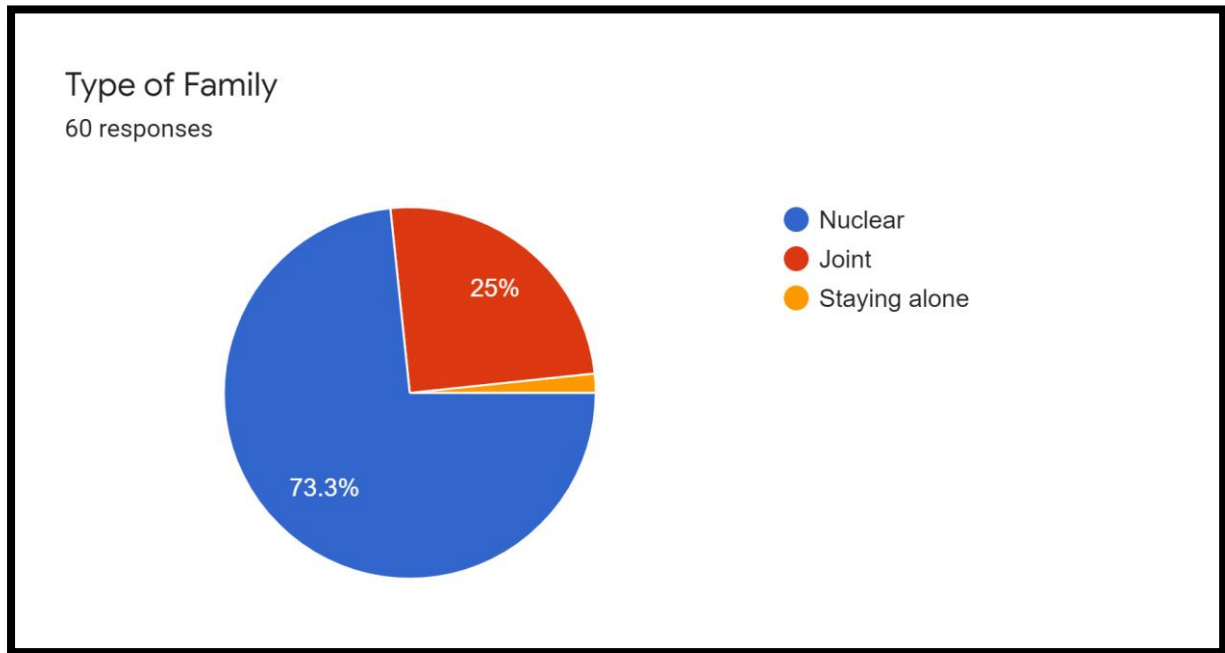
27 working women or 45% of the total were residents of West Bengal. 14 respondents or 23.3% were residents of Bihar. Other 21.7% or 13 respondents were from Telangana. Rest 10% of the working women or 6 of the total 60, were from Odisha.



53.3% respondents earned an annual income between 5 to 10 lakh rupees. 35% of the working women earned 11 to 20 lakh rupees annually. Other 8.3% annually earned between 21 to 30 lakh rupees. Rest 3.3% had an annual income of 31-40 lakh rupees.

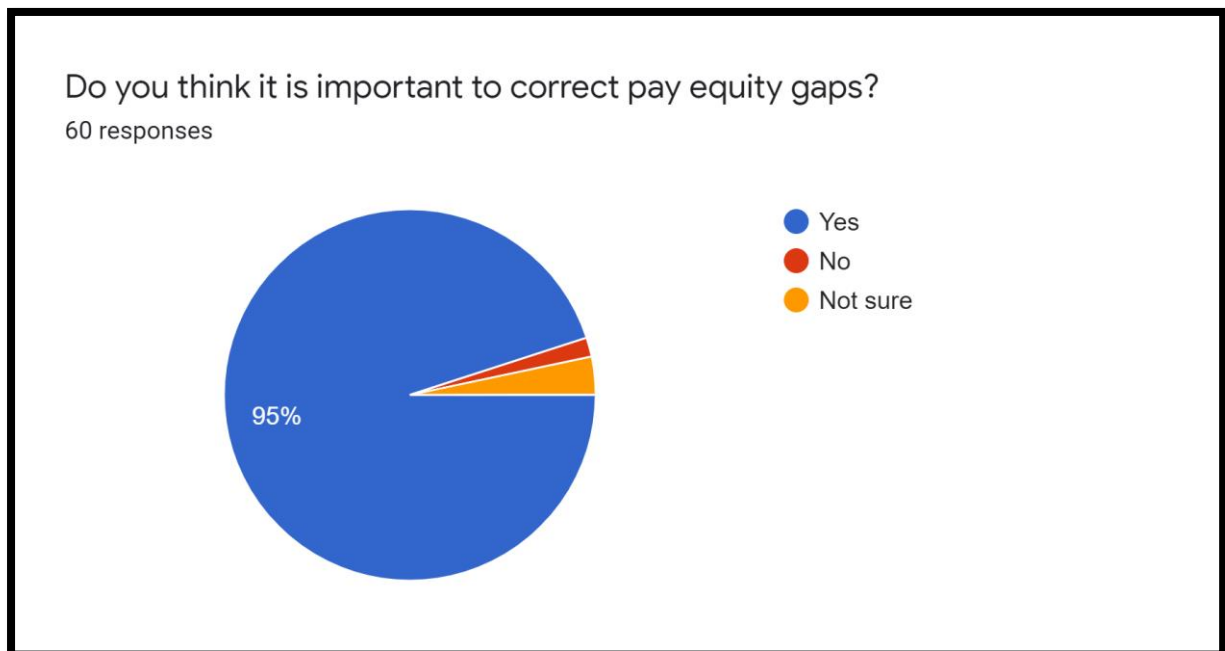


56.7% of the responding working women had one or two dependants. Next 26.7% has no dependant in their family. Rest 16.7% of the respondents had 3 dependants and above.

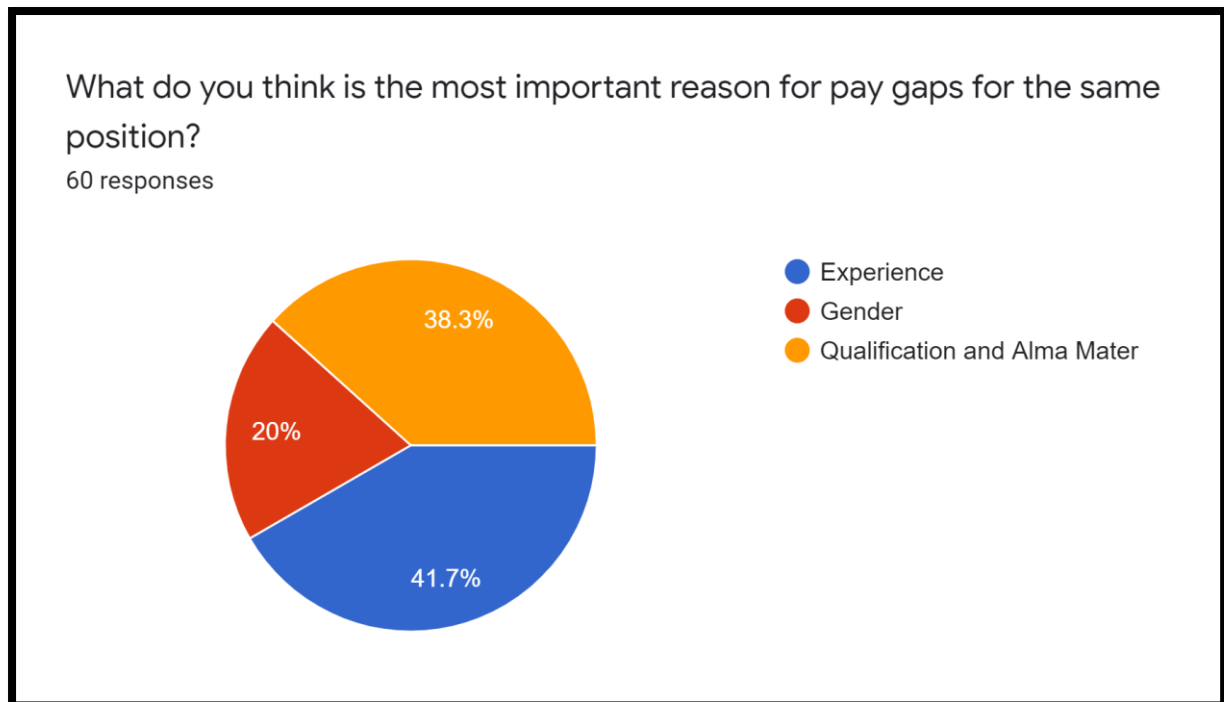


73.3% of the respondents belonged to nuclear family with other 25% living in joint family. 1 respondent which constituted 1.7% of the total stayed alone.

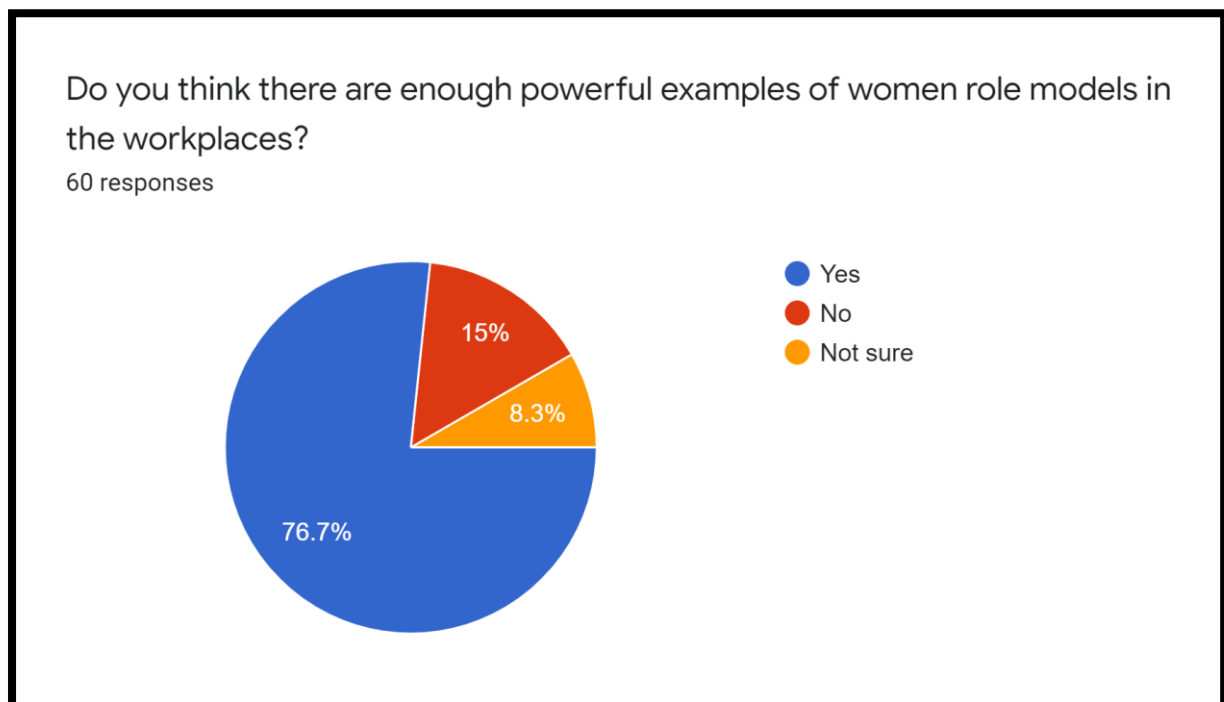
Pay scale and Monetary Situation



57 respondents or 95% thought it is important to correct pay equity gaps. 2 respondents or 3.3% didn't think that way with 1 left woman who was not sure if it is important to correct equity gaps or not.

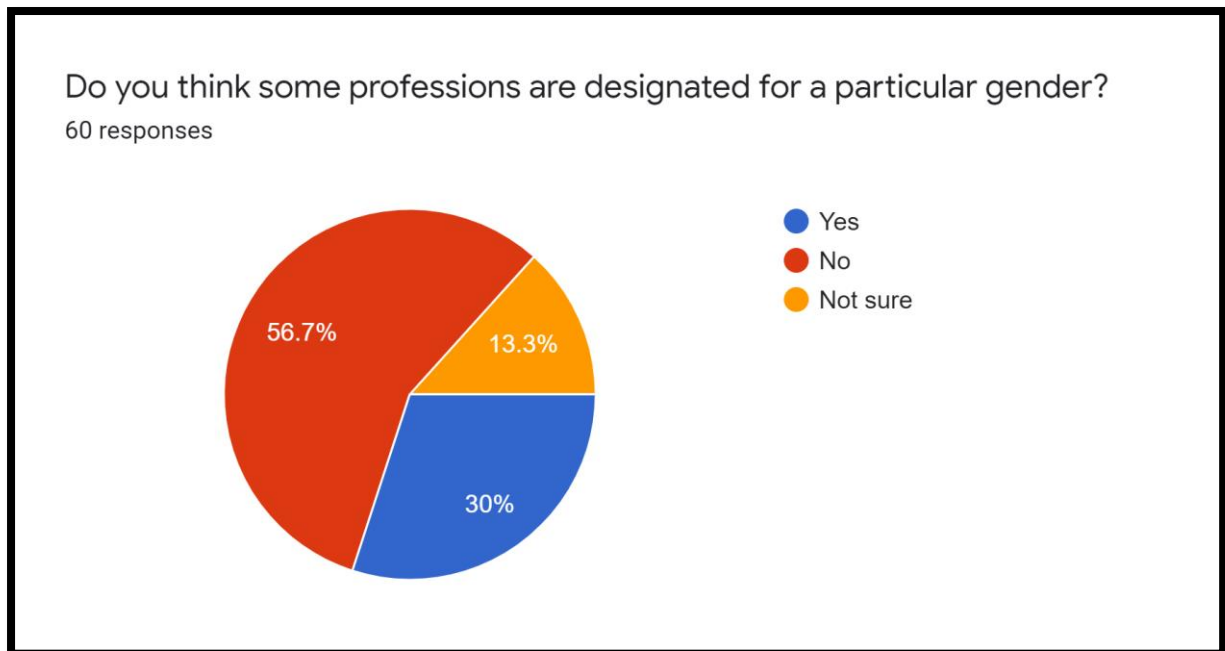


25 or 41.7% feel experience is most important reason for pay gaps for people holding same position in workplace. However, 38.3% or 23 working women think qualification and alma mater have most important role in that regard. Considerable 20% or 12 working women also think gender is most decisive factor behind pay gaps in same position at workplace.

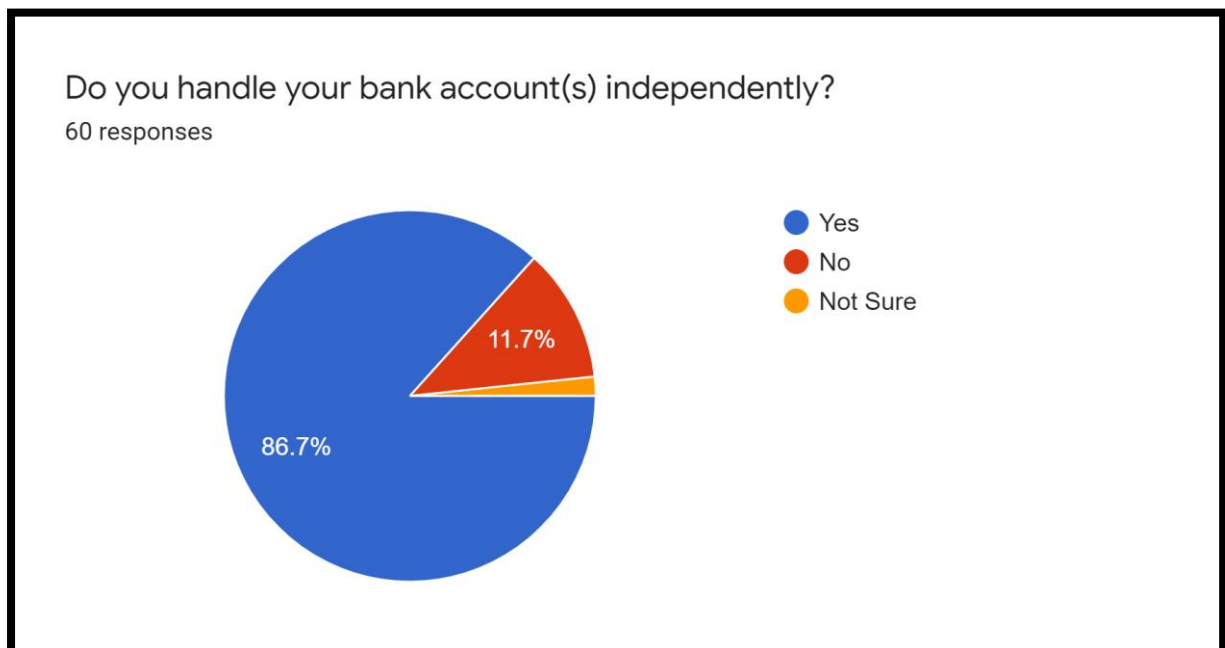


76.7% or 46 working women think there are enough women role models in the workplaces. 15% or 9 women disagree regarding it. However, 5 respondents which constitute 8.3% are not

sure if there are enough powerful women role models in workplaces.

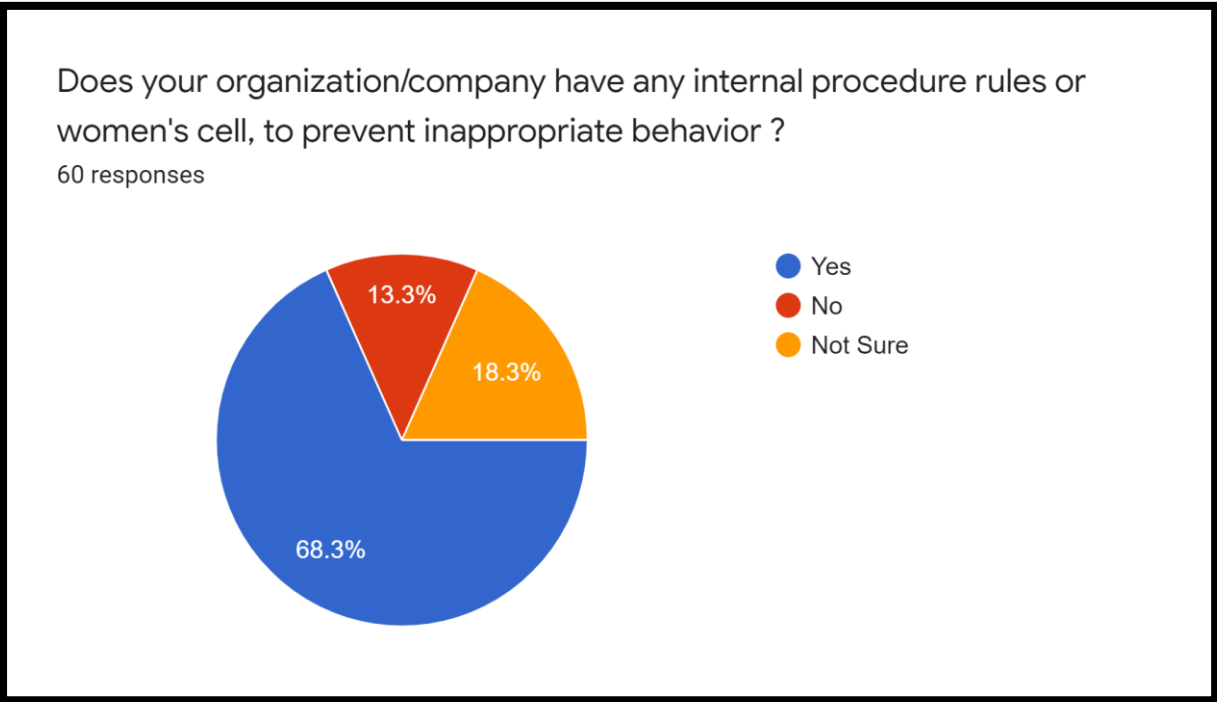


55.7% or 34 responding working women do not think some professions are designated for a particular gender. However, 30% or 18 respondents thought some professions were designated for specific gender with other 13.3% or 8 working women who were not sure about it.

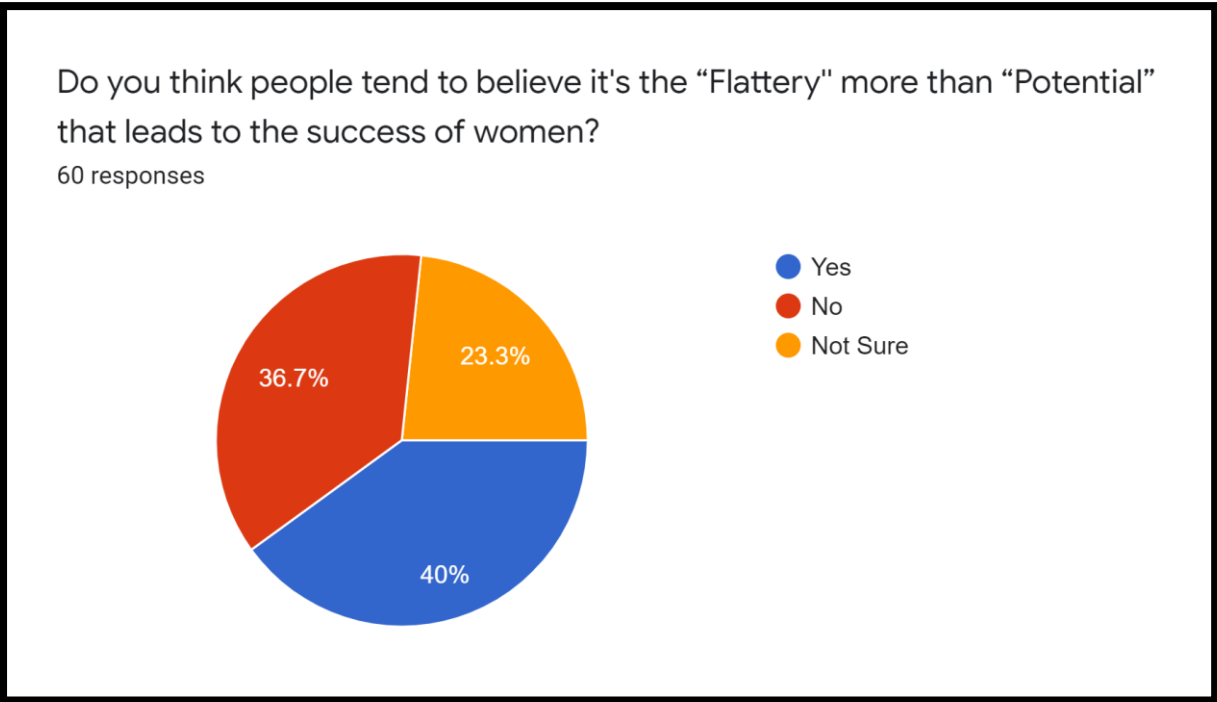


86.7% or 52 respondents independently handle their bank accounts. Rest 7 women do not handle the accounts themselves with other 1 being unsure.

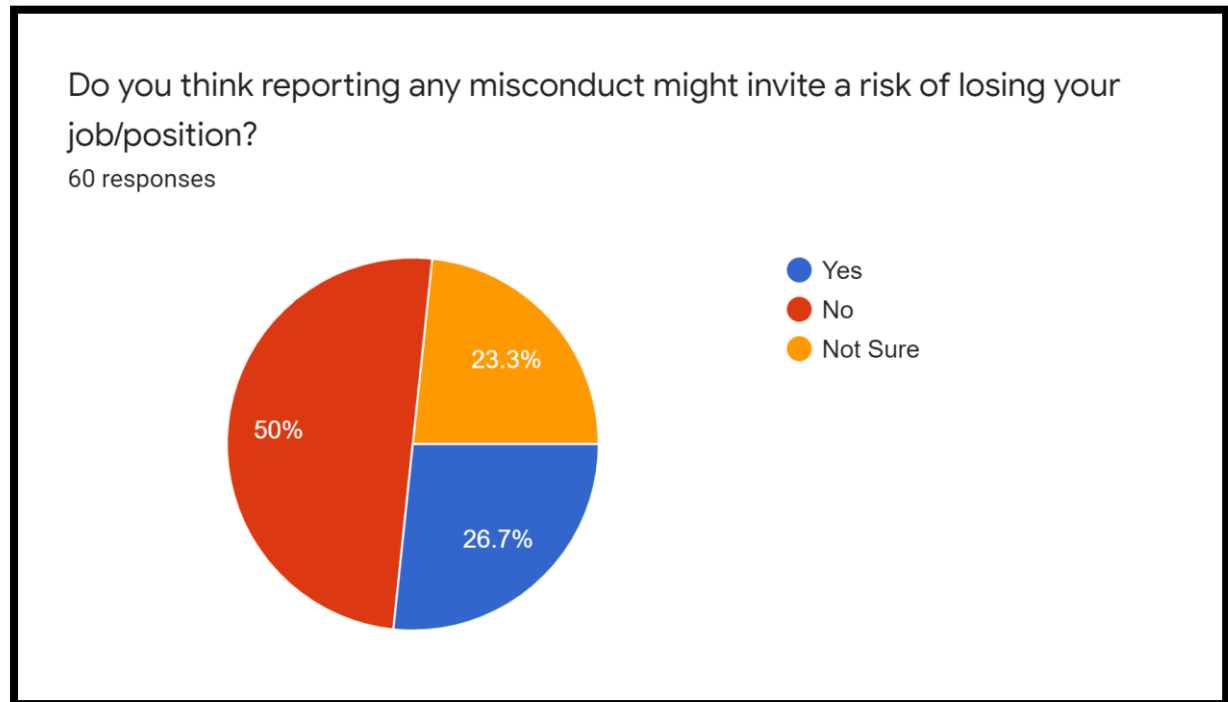
Harassment at Workplace



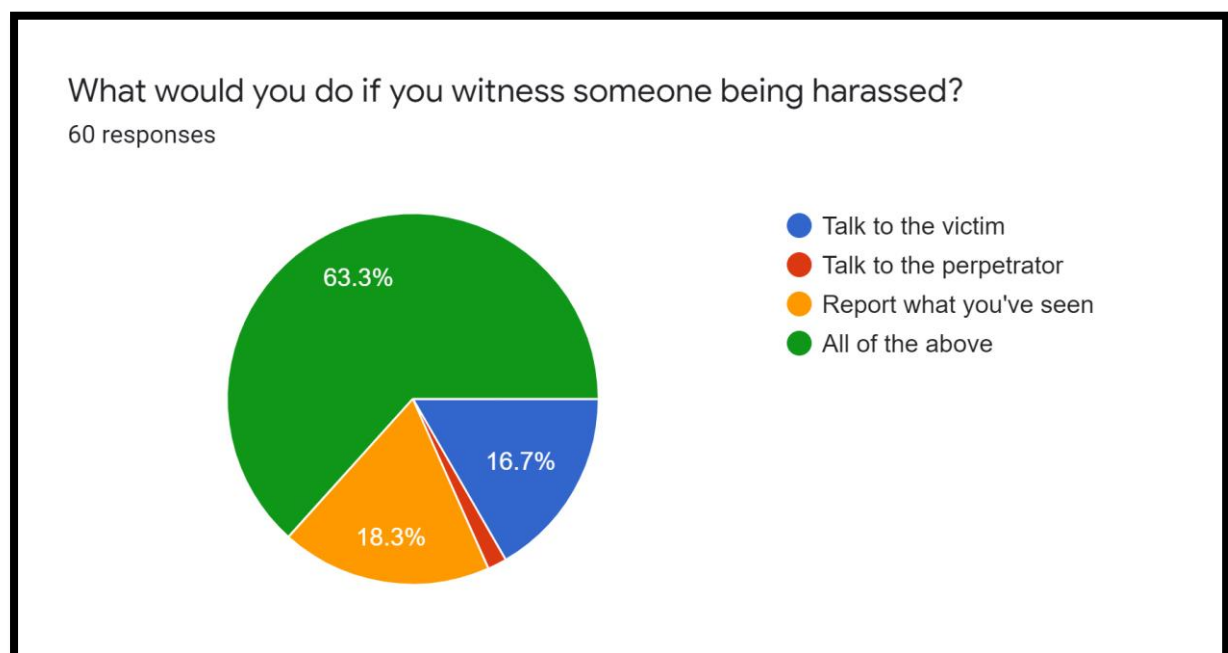
41 women who constitute 68.3% admit that their company/organization have internal procedure rules or women’s cell to address grievances and prevent inappropriate behavior. However, other 11 constituting 18.3% are not sure with regard to it. Other 8 respondents constituting 13.3% do not have such facilities in their organizations and companies.



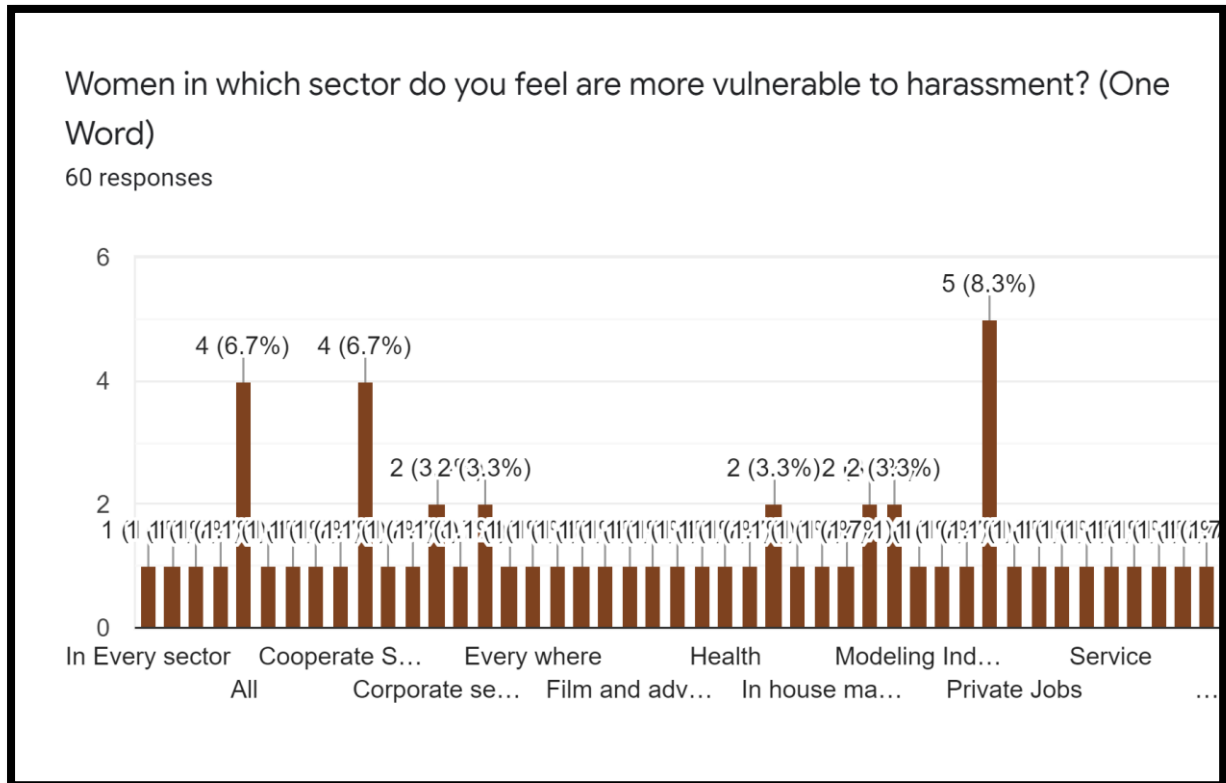
24 working women or 40% believe flattery is more important than potential. Other set of 36.7% or 22 respondents think just the opposite in relation to successful working woman in current scenario. Other 14 women constituting 23.3% of the total are not sure about any such relation or preferences.



50% or 30 women do not think that they would risk their job or position by reporting any misconduct. Considerable 26.7% of the respondents which are 16 think such reporting would invite risking position or job. Rest 23.3% or 14 working women are not sure regarding it.

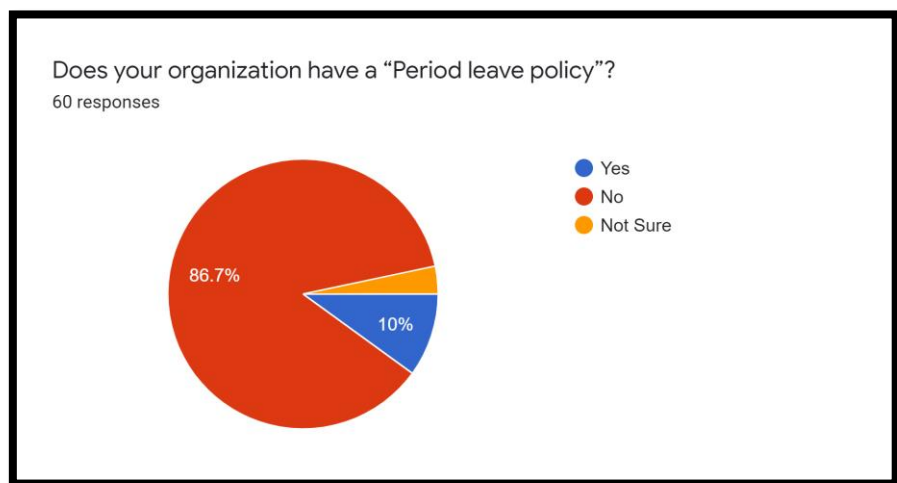


18.3% or 11 people would choose to only talk to the victim if they witness someone being harassed. Another set of 16.7% or 10 women would just report whatever they have seen. 1 working woman constituting 1.7% chose to only talk to or confront the perpetrator. Major proportion of 38 working women or 63.3% would talk to victim as well as perpetrator along with reporting whatever they had witnessed.

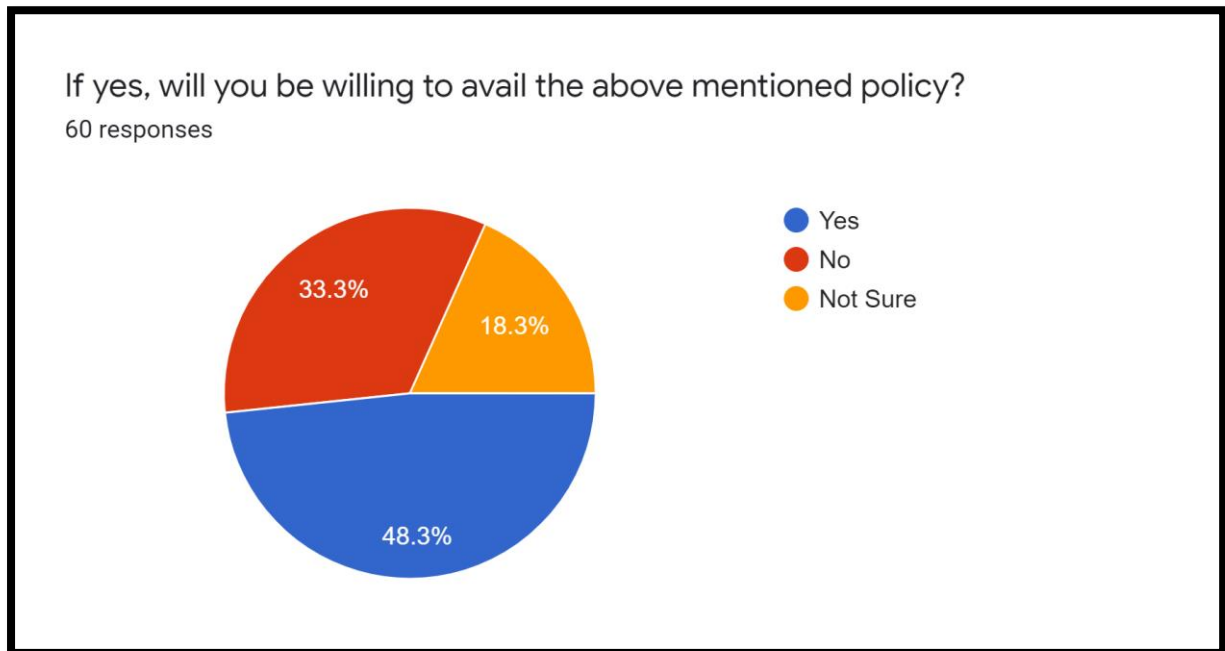


There is mixed response from the surveyed working women where most of them either think corporate sector, service sector or modeling etc. is more vulnerable to harassment or every sector is threatened by it.

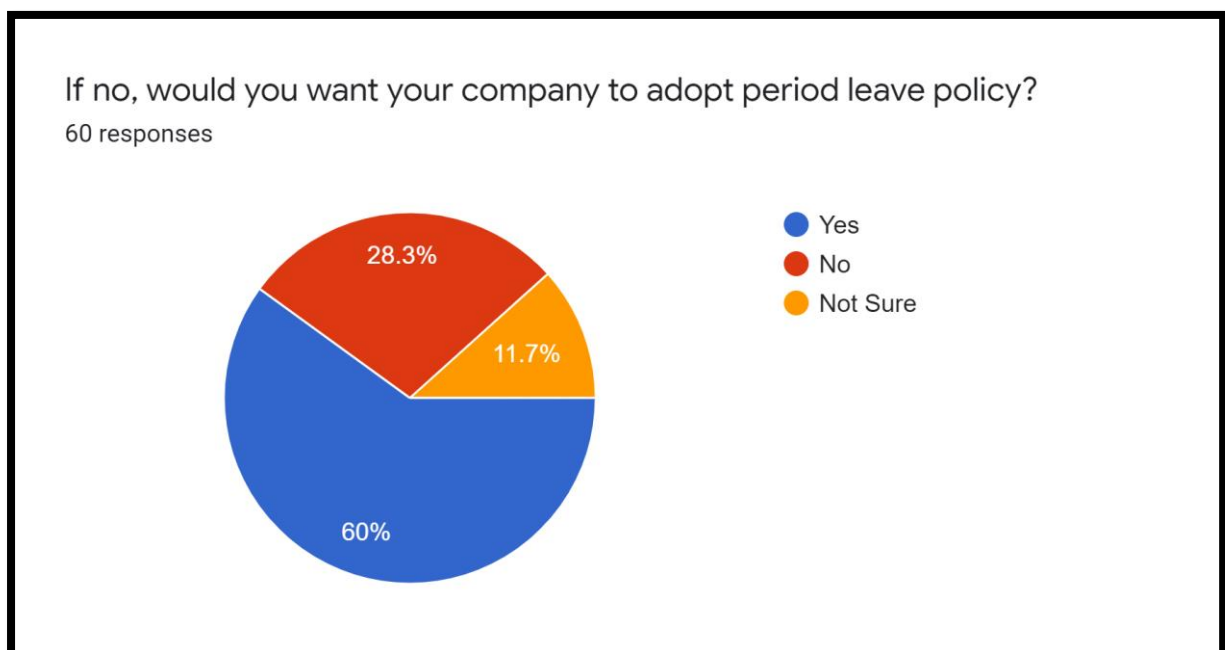
Menstrual and Maternity leave Policies



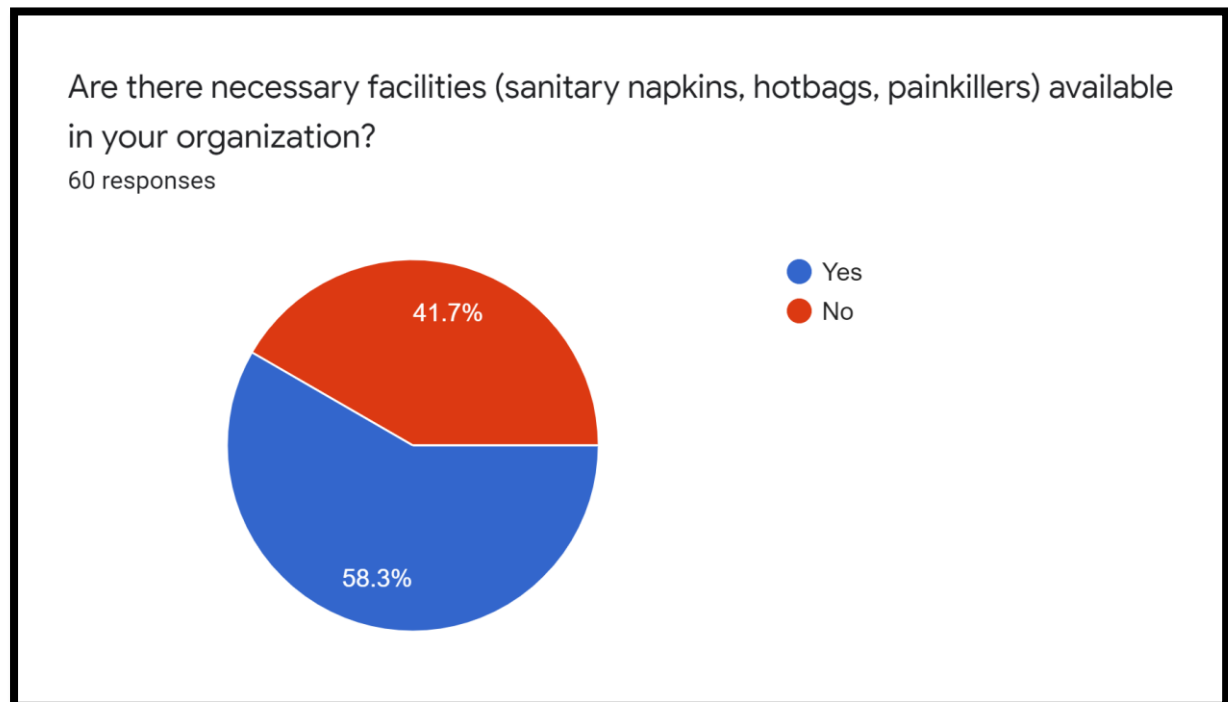
52 respondents or 86.7% do not have 'period leave policy' at workplace. 10% or 6 working women have 'period leave policy' while other 2 or 3.3% are not aware or sure of such policy.



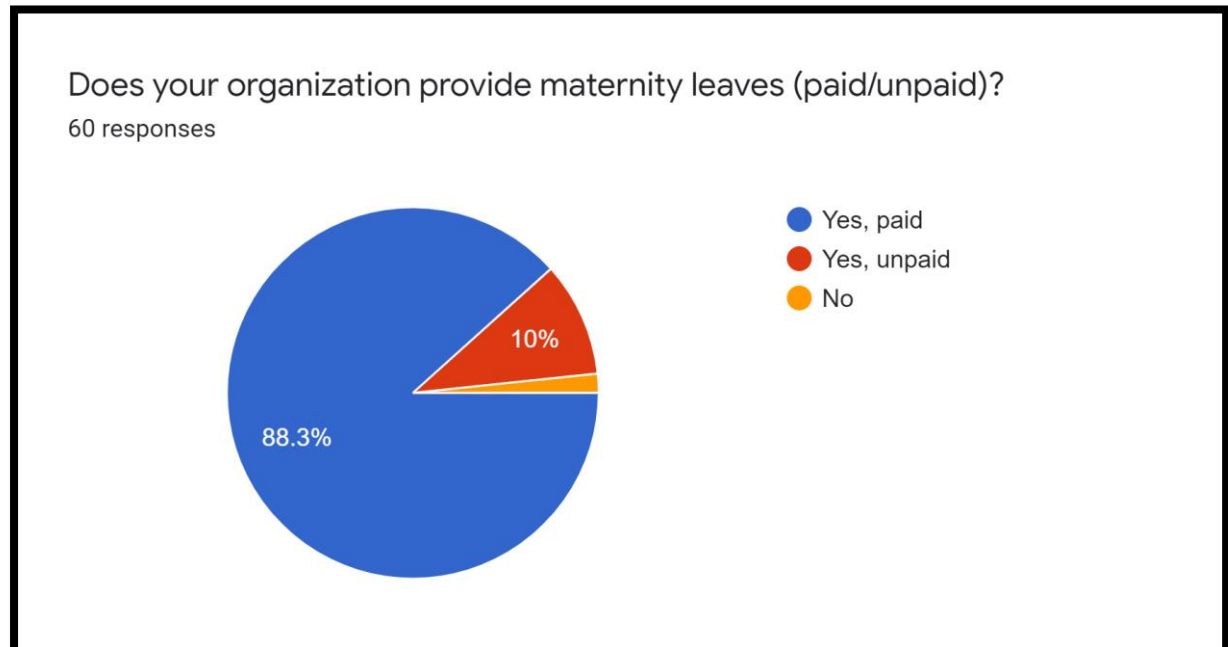
29 women or 48.3% were willing to avail period leave policy if made available but other 33.3% or 20 respondents weren't willing to avail it. Rest 11 working women constituting 18.3% were not sure regarding their likelihood.



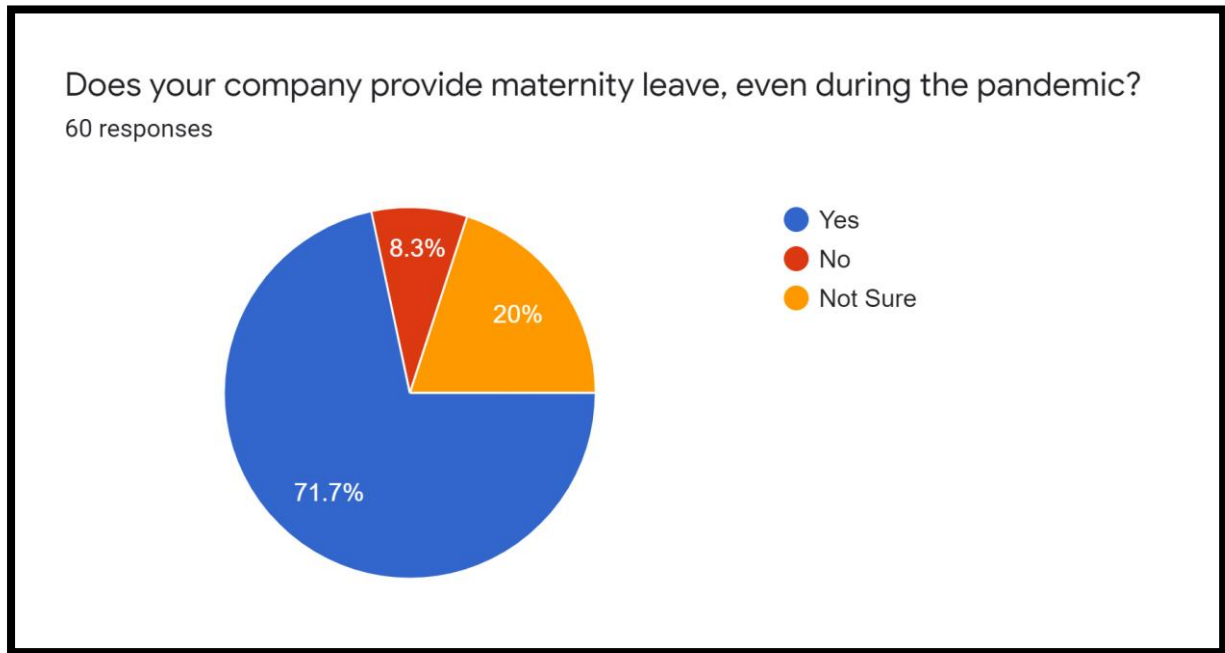
36 respondents or 60% wanted their companies to adopt this policy. 28.3% or 17 working women did not want this period leave policy to be adopted. 11.7% or 7 responding working women were not sure about it.



58.3% or 35 respondents felt necessary facilities for women are available in their organization. 25 working women or 41.7% do not have sanitary napkins, painkillers, hotbags and other facilities in organization.

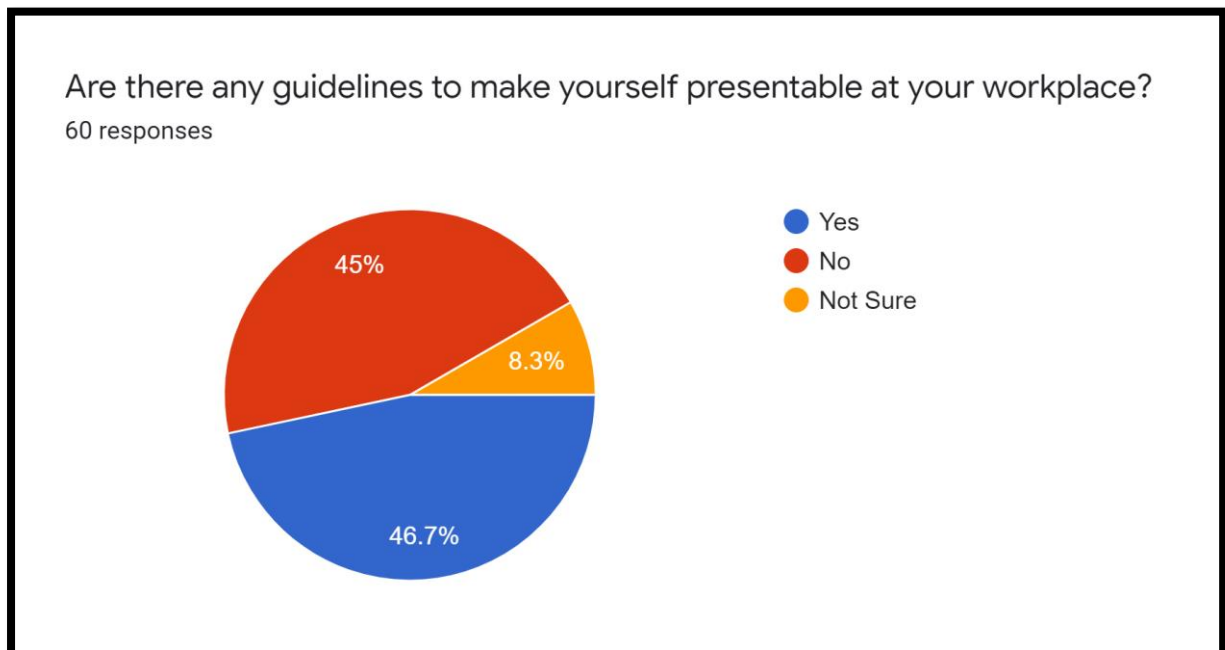


53 women constituting 88.3% have paid maternity leave provisions at workplace. 10% or 6 respondents are provided with unpaid maternity leaves in their organization. 1 respondent or 1.7% does not have maternity leave provision at her organization.

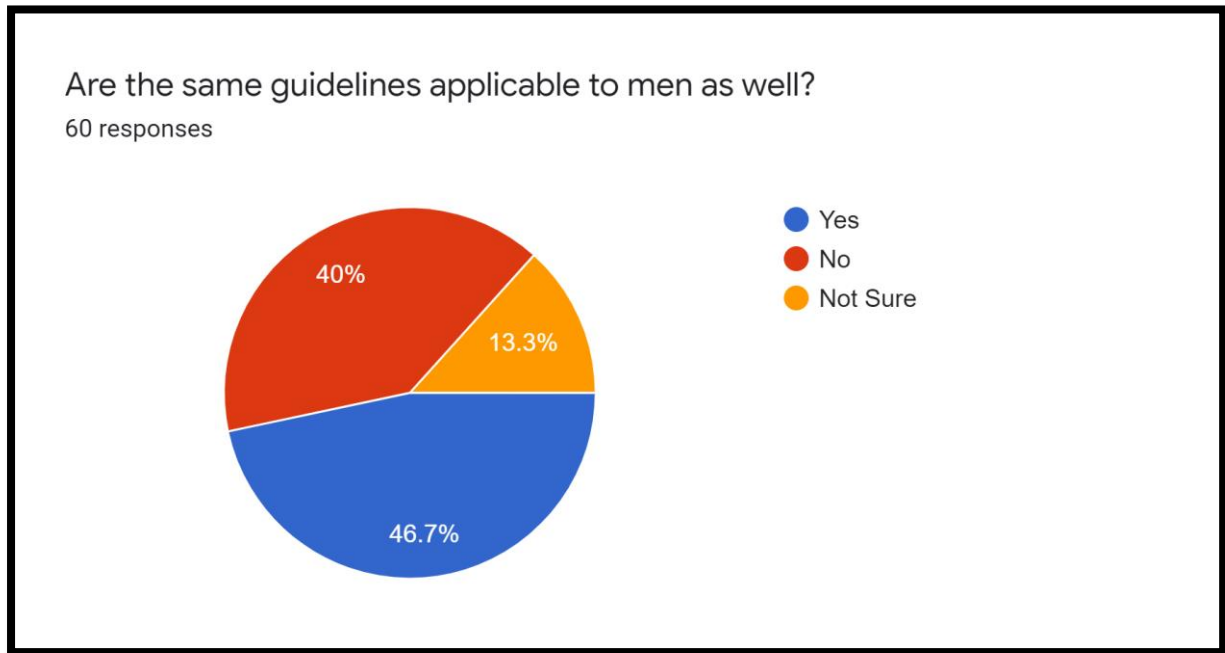


71.7% or 43 working women had maternity leave provision even in pandemic. 12 respondents or 20% were not sure about it. However, 5 women constituting 8.3% did not have maternity leave provision available in their company during the pandemic.

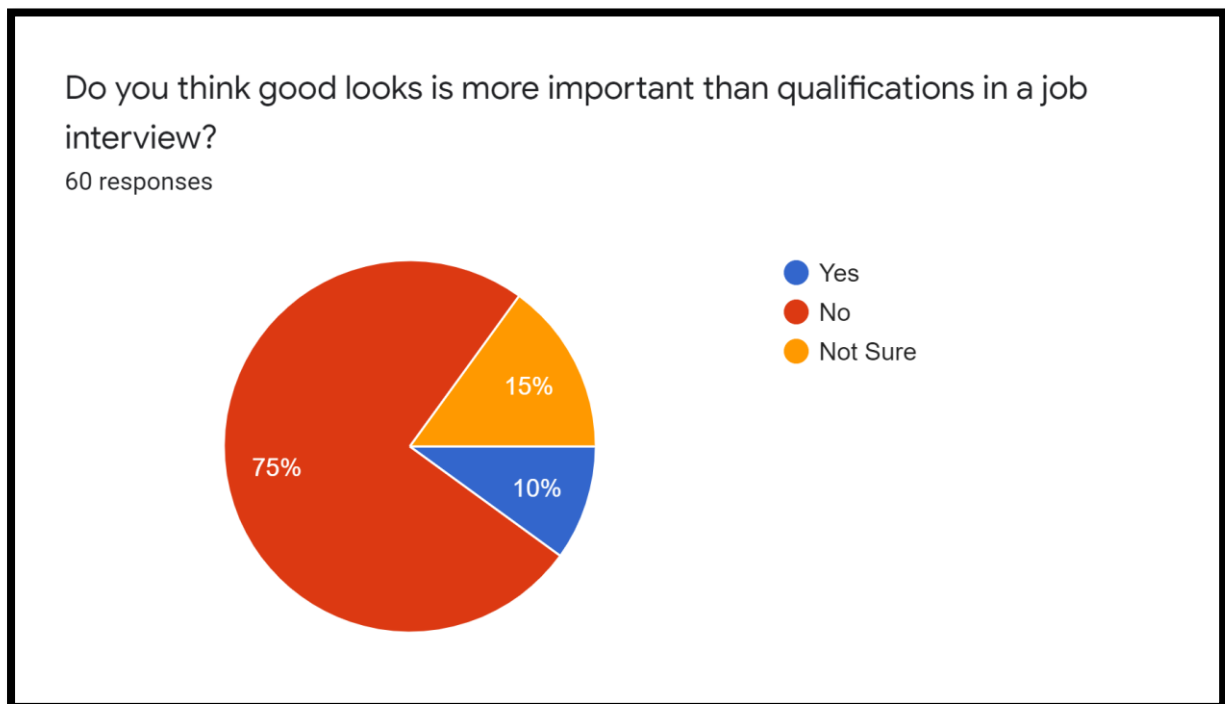
Appearance and Beauty Standards



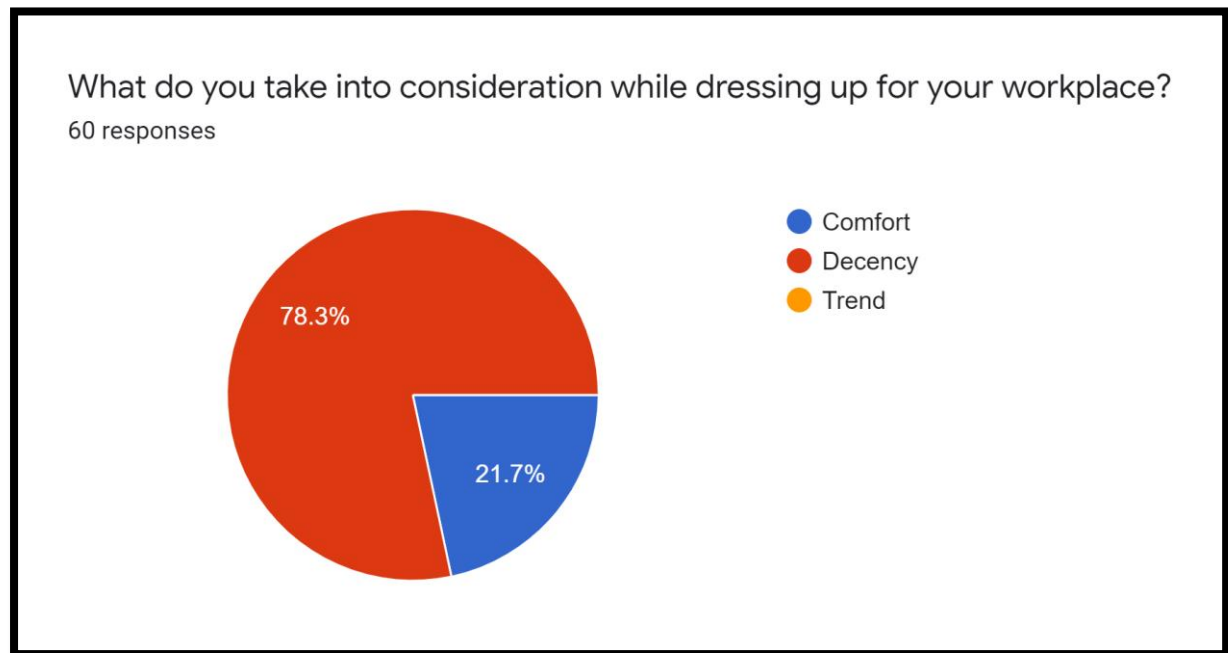
28 working women constituting 46.7% have guidelines to make them presentable at workplace. A comparable 45% percentage or 27 women did not have any such guidelines. Rest 8.3% or 5 respondents were not sure regarding it.



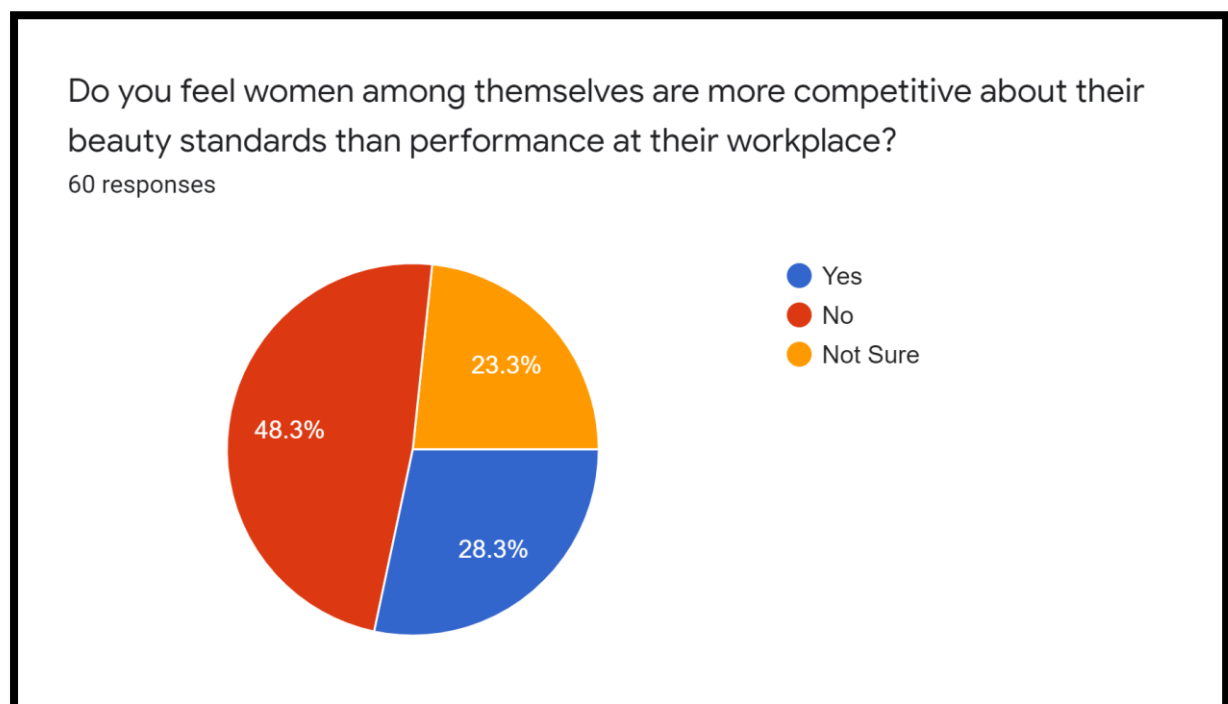
28 respondents or 46.7% admitted to have same guideline of being presentable for men at their workplace. However, other 24 working women or 40% denied that same is applicable to men. Rest 8 respondents constituting 13.3% were not sure regarding it.



45 respondents or 75% do not think that good looks are more important than qualification in a job interview. However, 15% or 9 working women were unsure with rest 6 or 10% respondents who thought good looks are given more importance than qualification in a job interview.



47 respondents or 78.3% take decency into consideration while dressing up for their workplace. With rest 21.7% or 13 working women consider comfort while dressing up for office.

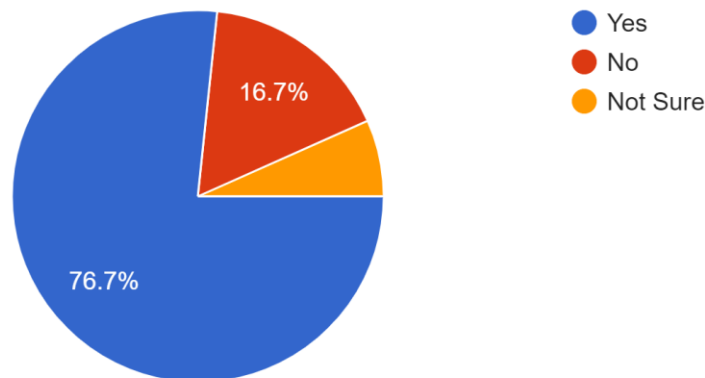


29 respondents or 48.3% do not feel women are competitive among themselves about beauty standards than performance. 28.3% or 17 respondents felt women are more competitive about beauty standards. Rest 14 working women or 23.3% were unsure.

Family Support

Do you think a lot of women are restricted from continuing their work after marriage or having children?

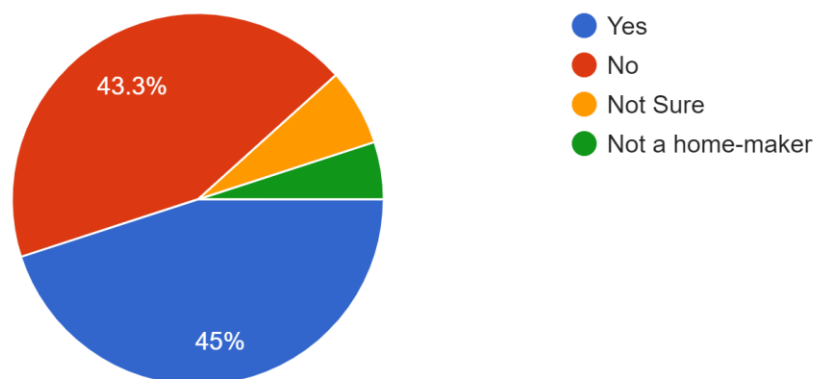
60 responses



46 or 76.7% respondents thought women are restricted from continuing work after marriage or having children. 16.7% or 10 working women do not think it is the case. Rest 6.7% or 4 respondents were unsure in this aspect.

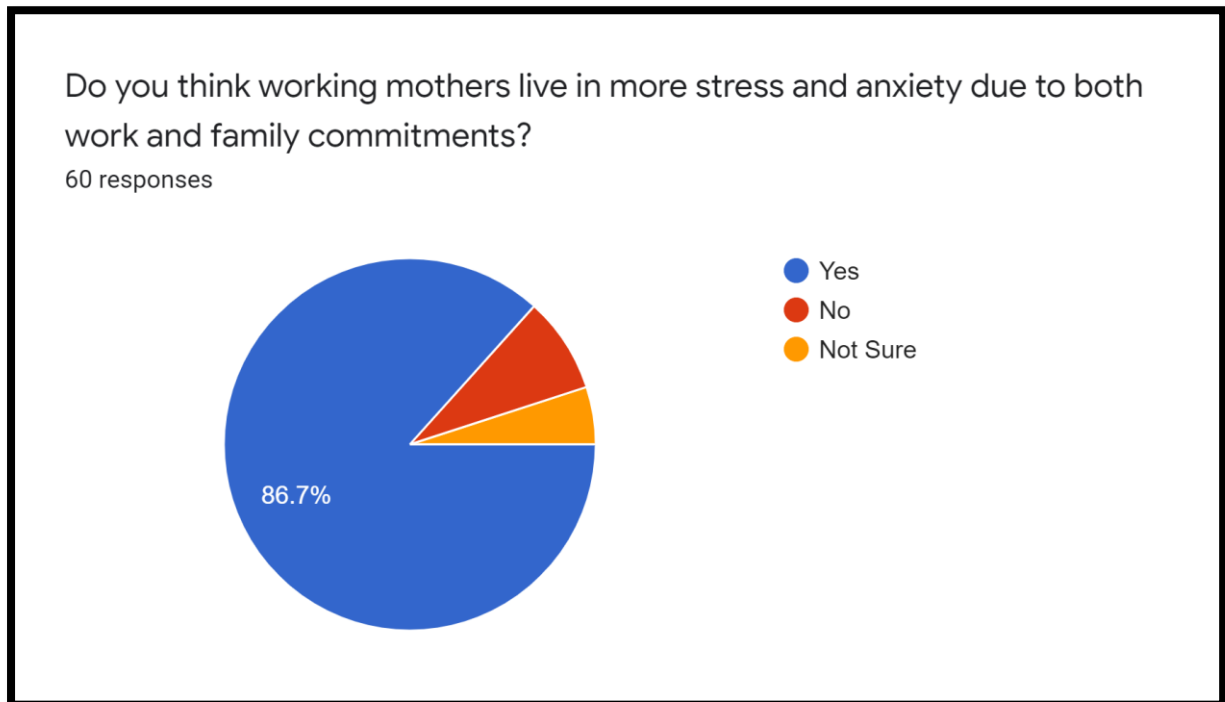
Do you face a role conflict while playing the role of a working woman and a home-maker?

60 responses

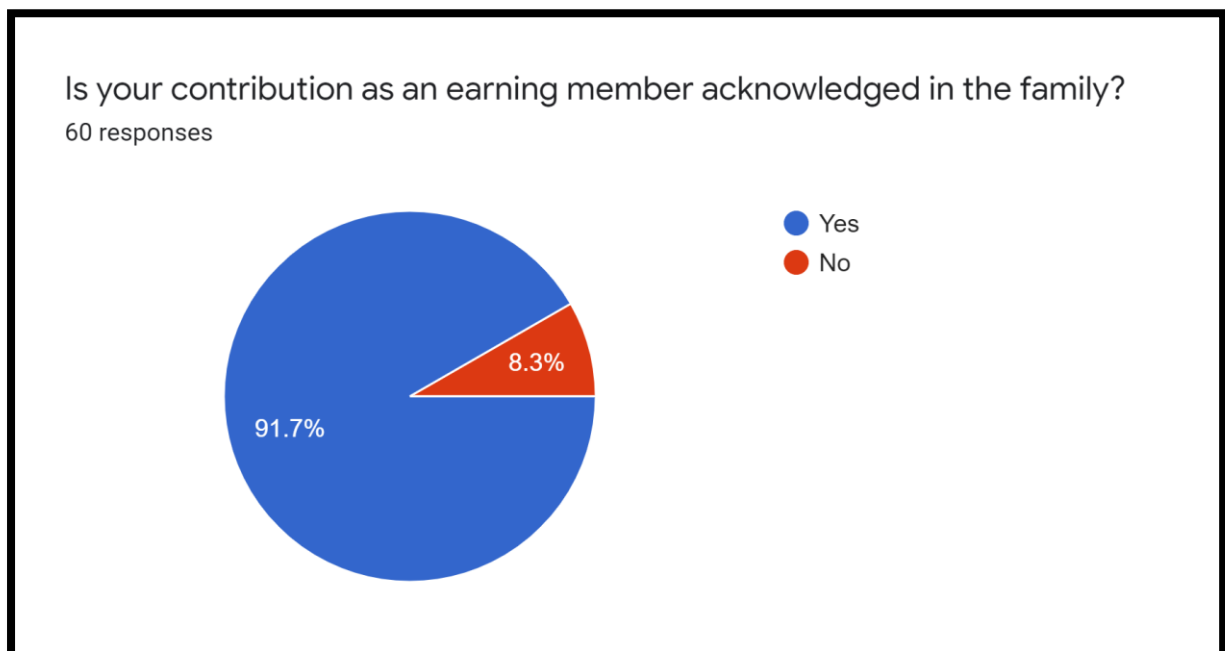


Out of all the respondents, 3 of them forming 5% identified that they were not homemakers.

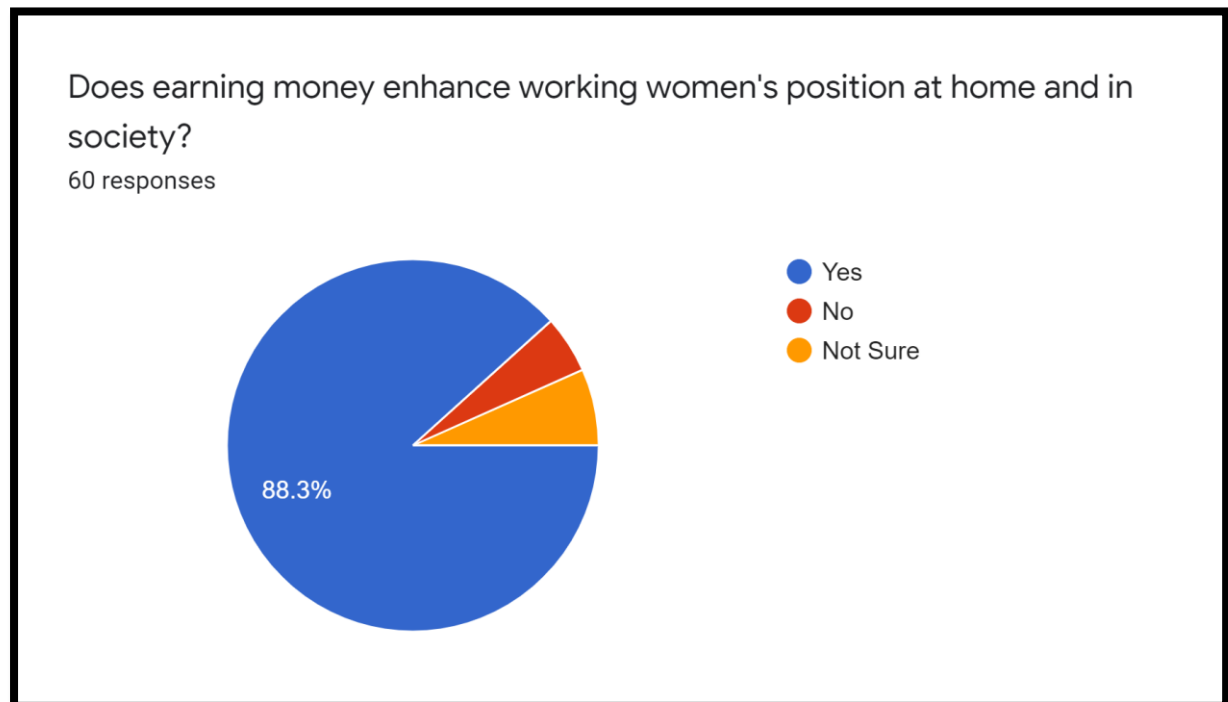
Of the rest, 45% or 27 working women admitted to have faced role conflict while playing these roles. However, 6.7% or 4 working mothers were not sure about it.



52 working women or 86.7% of the total respondents think working mothers live in more stress and anxiety due to work and family commitments. 8.3% or 5 respondents do not think working mothers live in more anxiety and stress. Rest 3 working women or 5% are unsure regarding it.



55 women forming 91.7% are acknowledged for their contribution as earning member in family. Rest 8.3% comprising of 5 respondents are not acknowledged in this regard.



88.3% or 53 women think earning money enhances women's position at home and in society. However, 4 respondents or 6.7% are unsure about it with other 3 forming 5% who do not think earning money has any such influence.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

PAY SCALE AND MONETARY SITUATION

- Working women think it is necessary to solve the issue of pay equity gaps. This is indicative of two facts that this problem is plaguing at workplaces and it is found discriminatory by the female employees.
- Most of the respondents identified experience as the main reason for pay gaps whereas a similar number also think alma mater and qualifications are the main reason behind it. It shows a positive trend of difference based on merit, however, a considerable proportion of 20% think gender inequality influence wage gap. This is devoid of merit and violates the provisions in the Constitution of India.
- About three-fourth of the responding working women think there are women role models for workplace which also indicates their awareness, sensitization and inspiration that guides them.
- Unlike the traditional concept of patriarchy that supports the views of division of labor in strict terms, response of more than half of the working women to the contrary indicates women are breaking the glass ceiling. However, the earlier notion is not done

away with because rest 43.3% of the respondents are either unsure or think some professions are designated for particular gender.

- The ideal response for bank accounts being handled independently was 100% but the actual figures reveal 11.7% working women still do not control on their accounts. Though less number is appreciable but its persistence indicates financial abuse is prevalent.

HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

- Almost 70% of the respondents have women cell or internal procedural rules to prevent inappropriate behavior at workplace but for the rest, no such rules or cell make working women more vulnerable to harassment. Non-compliance is against CEDAW as well as Vishaka guidelines.
- Whether flattery is more important than potential in the success of a woman shows a mixed bag of responses. Approximately equal 40% of women respond 'yes' and other set as 'no' with rest 20% almost who are not sure. This shows discretionary or arbitrary practices which may at times depend on flattery.
- 50% of the respondents do not think reporting any misconduct would risk their position or job but the rest half are either risking job or are not sure. The figures differ from response of women cell at workplace which indicates even when there are procedural rules to prevent harassment, women employees do not always rely on it.
- Most of the respondents chose to report the harassment if they witness one along with talking to victim as well as perpetrator. This finding of the survey is a welcome step towards vocalizing against harassment at workplace.
- The results also suggest that almost every sector is vulnerable to harassment as the opinion of respondents varied broadly between different sectors like the corporate world, service or even specific occupations like modeling. Large number of working women have even responded that vulnerability is in all sectors which seems correct though shaped by individual's experience, perceptions and subjectivity.

MENSTRUAL AND MATERNITY LEAVE POLICIES

- Swarming percentage of working women admit that their companies or organization do not have period leave policy. In the recent years, feminism emphasizes that treating differences equally and similarities unequally is unjust. It is evident from the results.

- About half of the respondents are willing to avail period leave policy with other half who are either not sure or do want to use it. There are two possibilities for those who don't like to avail it, either it is completely personal preference or institutional concerns and discomfort in asking for it is a problem.
- 60% working women would like their organizations to adopt period leave policy which is appreciable.
- Almost 60% of the workplaces of responding working women have necessary facilities for menstruating women but rest organizations do not have. It is the need of the hour especially in unorganized sectors to increase productivity and realize the reasonable requirements.
- Paid maternity leaves are provided in the organizations of almost all the respondents. Unlike menstrual leaves, availability of maternity leave provision facilitate supportive and conducive environment for working women that is a positive change.
- This provision of maternity leave was even provided by workplaces in the pandemic when working women were working from home. To provide the policy even when relieves the stress and workload of pregnant working ladies.

APPEARANCE AND BEAUTY STANDARDS

- For almost half of the respondents there are guidelines to make them presentable at workplace but for other considerable segment no such guidelines are there. This is probably because a few sectors have higher demands of beauty standards being maintained.
- Exact number of respondents who admitted that there are guidelines to be presentable that their workplaces also acknowledge the same is the case with other men colleagues at their institutions which shows there is no gender inequality exhibited as far as this aspect is concerned.
- Three-fourth of the total respondents negate that good looks is more important than qualifications in a job interview. The discrimination of women based on appearance is not supported from this finding. However, the left responses of working women also indicate the problem has significantly decreased but not eliminated.
- Decency is the most popular choice of working women while dressing up for workplace which is also followed by comfort. The finding shows trend is no consideration for any.

- Almost half of the working women do not think women are more competitive about beauty standards than performance at workplace. However, almost one-fourth of the respondents do think it is the case. The notion that standards and appearance determine future of working women has declined but not got over with.

FAMILY SUPPORT

- The indication loud and clear from the responses is that women are restricted from continuing work after marriage or having children. As the radical feminists argue that domestic sphere is the main controller of patriarchal society and male supremacy dictating the traditional division of labor continues.
- Of the homemakers surveyed, almost half agree to face role conflict as a working lady and home maker indicating psychological distress and work overloads but for the rest it was not the case.
- Unanimous response if working mothers live in increased anxiety and stress due to family and work commitments was affirmative. The discussed caretaking and emotional support aspect is still handled by mothers.
- Though previous responses have indicated financial abuse, however, almost all working women agree that their contribution as earning member is acknowledged in their families.
- Similarly, finding suggests earning money enhances position of working women at home and society at large. This hides within it the concept of subordination and perception of low status still prevalent in the lives of simple homemakers.

IV. CONCLUSION

In today's competitive world of equal opportunity and fair play, this research is one of the many works that suggest gender inequality is still prevalent at workplace. A woman struggles both mentally and often in the manifest world as well to get her chance of working beyond the four walls of the house. Enough courage is required to convince families with patriarchal bias to let their daughters and daughter-in-laws pursue a career. Further, women bravely fight body pain and associated problems because of menstruation. The Constitution of India recognizes the strength of working women and allows 'positive discrimination' so that they are better represented in the society. However, unequal pay scales, promoting men over working women, etc. defeat the struggle of every lady at workplace seeking equality among her colleagues. This comes with unfavorable menstrual leave policies. Research has further indicated maternity

leave provisions is fair share of the wage of working women deprived of them. They also face problems of bad touch, ugly stares, assault, battery and aggravated forms of harassment at workplace even after codification of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. These multitasking women, in addition, do not independent control on bank accounts or a support of family in domestic chores in quite cases. Our research shows an overall decrease in gender inequality but with no sign of change in 'division of labor' traditional patriarchal concept. The vicious circle of inequality at workplace seems never-ending. The issues can only be resolved when the laws are properly implemented by proper reporting. In big firms and workplace, the women cell should consist of woman employee of women organization who can take up the problem complained impartially. The confidentiality should not be compromised by omen cell. Periodic feedbacks on several aspects where women are exploited should become mandatory by the amendments in legislation with a body to resolve the issues effectively. With regard to harassment, a zero tolerance policy should be adopted by these working women. As highlighted, the struggle of women from domestic chores to workplace is commendable. Another constant struggle not to be suppressed to subservience with a bold voice against any inequality would help in complete 'elimination' of the age-old bias. It is hard to be a women, it is harder to stop a perseverant woman determined to rise.

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