
Are women in the Hospitality industry cared for?

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Keywords:

Hospitality industry, career progression, women friendly policies, flexible timings, workplace.

Abstract

Hospitality industry is a large and fast-growing service sector that accounts for a significant portion of the global economy. Pune has been experiencing a four fold growth in the Hospitality industry since last two decades. There are nearly 50 five and four star hotels of various national and International chains currently, employing women employees comprising of about 12-15% of the total employees on an average. Women representation in the Hospitality industry is also growing at a steady pace. However, women are still underrepresented at the senior level positions. The major reason behind this is they are unable to manage both work and family front.

This research paper aims at identifying the existing women friendly policies provided to the women employees by the management, analyzing the women's perception on the facilities offered to them and lastly suggesting the management few strategies that the management could adopt to assist women in their career progression.

This study reviews previous literature related to women friendly policies practiced in the hospitality industry that assists them in their career progression. The study uses a descriptive approach to explore and identify the information. The sample size was 268 women respondents and working in various five, four and three star hotels in Pune. A quota sampling was used to select the sample. The findings suggest that the women employees in Pune hotels are not provided with the facilities like crèche, flexible timings, pick up and drop facility, maternity leaves as per the government rules, special childcare leave etc. Certain women friendly policies like flexible timings, part time work options, crèche facility at work place, grievance redressal cell, counseling cell for women, training programmes, succession planning programmes, Provision of Role models and mentors, pick up and drop facility and incentives and perks are few of the suggestions that can be provided to them to assist them and encourage them to make the workplace a better environment.

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Introduction

Hospitality industry is a large and fast-growing service sector, that accounts for a significant portion of the global economy. Pune has been experiencing a fourfold growth in the Hospitality industry since last two decades. There are nearly 50 five and four star hotels of various national and International chains currently, employing women employees comprising of about 12-15% of the total employees on an average.

Women representation in the Hospitality industry is also growing at a steady pace. However, women are still underrepresented at the senior level positions. They are quitting the Hospitality jobs due to the special characteristics of the industry which is operating 365 days a year and 24 hours a day with long working hours and work includes weekends and holidays, depends heavily on shift work, striving continuously for guest satisfaction. The major reason behind this is the women employees are unable to manage both work and family front. Li and Leug (2001) in their study entitled "Female manager in Asian Hotel" states that the Hospitality industry is realizing the potential of a women employee and the benefits that the organization can seek with their presence. Behavior research has also concluded that the fair sex was better in socializing and interacting effectively and efficiently with people. Women were found to have more commitment in their career. Organizations also feel that women are more transparent and trust worthy and as a result establish a good rapport with the guests. The organizations feel that hiring women is much more profitable than men.

The hotel industry has realized the need to rise to the issue of retention of women employee. The hotels will have to develop various program and initiate policies to retain women employee. The most advantage of this is cost reduction. It is a tedious task to keep on training new entrants for an employee that has left the organization because of work life balance issue.

A 1993 study by US department of labour on high performance work practices revealed that involving employee in the decision making goals and direction of an organization through participation in teams will help job satisfaction and reduce turn over. (Mon Carz 2008).

This research paper aims at identifying the existing women friendly policies provided to the women employees by the management, analyzing the women's perception on the facilities offered to them and lastly suggesting the management few strategies that the management could adopt to assist women in their career progression. The study reviews previous literature related to women friendly policies practiced in the hospitality industry that assists them in their career progression. Current facilities that are provided to the women employees are assessed and the suggestion are proposed to address the need for a more approachable and flexible work environment thus, assisting the women employees in increasing their quality of life and achieving family and work balance.

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The study uses a descriptive approach to explore and identify the information. The sample size was 268 women respondents and working in various five, four and three star hotels in Pune. A quota sampling was used to select the sample. The findings suggest that the women employees in Pune hotels are not provided with the facilities like flexible timings, pick up and drop facility, maternity leaves as per the government rules, comeback after a career break, counselling cell, special childcare leave etc. Certain women friendly policies like flexible timings, part time work options, crèche facility at work place, grievance redressal cell, counseling cell for women, training programmes, succession planning programmes, Provision of Role models and mentors, pick up and drop facility and incentives and perks are few of the suggestions that can be provided to them to assist them and encourage them to make the workplace a better environment.

It is observed that if these suggested strategies are adopted by the management, the Hospitality organizations will be able to retain this big pool of talented women which would enable them to increase the women representation.

Review of Literature:

The study of few of the literature on women friendly policies carried out seems to be same as family friendly working policies, which reassures that organizations do provide certain benefits to the women employees who in turn will help them to balance their family and work life (Bardoel et al., 1999). These policies mainly cover issues like long working hours, flexible work timings, part-time work, contract based jobs or work from home concept. (Bryson et al., 1998). Apart from this it also considers provision of leaves, maternity benefits, paternity leave and provision of crèche facility, assistance with childcare or providing own childcare options (Scheibl and Dex, 1998, Bryson et al., 1998). Few other literatures include assisting women with their career progression by offering various trainings and development programmes to assist in attaining the topmost positions.

Women friendly policies though seems to be a lucrative investment by Human resources, Blau et al. (2002) there are still reasons why these policies are, however, being introduced at a very slow pace. There is a tendency that more the flexibility given to the employees, harder it is to monitor such policies. Thus, the work has to be rescheduled at times which may incur additional cost for Human resource to reorganize the work schedules. The literature review on the other hand reveals that it's rather profitable for firms to invest in such women friendly policies to retain the women talent.

The organization success depends majorly on the quality of employees it has and how efficiently their potential and talent is utilized to achieve its objectives (Nankervis & Debrah 1995). Therefore, the organization primarily should develop efficient HRM practices and policies that would enable them to recruit, select and retain talented employees which in turn would contribute to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives.

The literature review brought in light the importance of women friendly policies adopted by HR department and the performance of women employees in the industry. The most advantage of this is cost reduction. It is a tedious task to keep on training new entrants for an employee that has left the organization because of work life balance issue. Abbot et al (1998) projected that the cost of employee turnover linked with work-life balance is approximately as high as \$75, 000 per employee.

Chiu and Ng (2001) have surveyed to gauge the organizations in Hong Kong how women-friendly they were and their Human resource managers viewed the effect of women-friendly HRM policies

and practices on employees quality of work life. It was found that only half of the women friendly policies were practiced in less than 10 percent of the organizations.

Freundlich, (2004), Equal Opportunities Commission, 2004) in his study has stated that such women friendly policies reduces the cost of absenteeism by 20 percent caused due to stress related sickness or emergency leave for childcare.

Megha Gupta (2015) ,in her study opines that because of insensitive work environment and lack of women friendly policies in the Hospitality industry, the parents of the female spirants discourage them to join Hospitality industry.

The implementations of these policies are a good instrument for employee retention, for provision of skilled employees and recruiting well trained and qualified workforce. (Women and Equality Unit, 2003, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2004). It also assists in boosting the staff morale, commitment and loyalty (Women and Equality Unit, 2003).

Sparrowe and Popielarz, (1995) Kuepper, (2005) observed that despite women being holding essential academic qualifications, 35 percent of women employees attributed the reason of their slow career progression to their own lack of relevant training and skill. Planned development and training were viewed as evidence of being valued intelligence and communication skills.

Dr Kathleen Farrell,(2015) opined that that the organisation benefits were not associated with numerical flexibility, but are associated with functional flexibility and work-life balance initiatives. It was observed that educational reasons and time for leisure were significant factors of work-life balance issues. Thus, the study concludes that hotels need to adopt and develop more organisational supports such as work assistance and care supports for employees to achieve a better balance between work and life.

Anumeha Chaturvedi &Varuni Khosla (2015) in their article published in The Economic Times revealed various women friendly practices followed by various International chains of Hotels as follows:

- Starwood Hotels & Resorts is of the outlook of providing more part time work plans for women employees. It operates hotels in India under management or franchised arrangements under the umbrella of brands such as, Sheraton Luxury Collection, Westin, Le Meridien, Four Points by Sheraton, St Regis and Aloft. Thus, this part-time option will enable to progress gender diversity.
- Hyatt hotels provide 6 days off in a month and complimentary room nights 7 days in a year in any properties all over world as an incentive to the employees. They believe that taking good care of employees will help them serve guests in a better way. Similarly, Marriott India's employees have a 40-hour work a week and hour long lunch breaks. It's a six-day week but the managers are required to make sure that staff does not exceed their shift timings.
- Accor group of hotels has created association called as WAAG, which has 2,500 men and women member worldwide, notably promotes a mentoring program, dialogue with roles models, career progress and the forging of ties with other networks.
- Sunjae Sharma, General Manager, Grand Hyatt Mumbai, and Area Director, West India revealed the policies adopted by the Grand Hyatt in Mumbai which provides a staff

recreation area and has relaxed grooming standards for women employees. It has also empowered service associates to take quick decisions without requiring a manager's approval to improve the guest experience. These initiatives help the organization in encouraging people to be able to make a difference in their own special way in the industry and achieving their personal goals as well.

With the introduction of women friendly HR policies in the hospitality industry more women could be attracted, wherein their talent and potential could be utilized benefitting the organization. Such policies are effective, since a research conducted at the fourth World Women Work Congress in Berlin revealed that many managers discovered that employing more percentage of women is economically essential. It further stated that women being a part of organization uplift the status of the organization, including good team work, emotional intelligence and communication skills (Kuepper, 2005).

Research Methodology:

A sample of 268 women employees of various five, four and three star hotels in Pune city was selected for the study.

The primary data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:

1. Personal Interviews: The researcher conducted personal interviews with few women employees from five four and three star Hotels in Pune, to explore various women friendly policies that were provided to them.
2. Questionnaire: A questionnaire bearing straight forward and relevant questions were drafted and handed over to the sample to obtain their responses. The questionnaire was designed to identify various women friendly policies that were provided to the women employees to assist them in their career progression.

The secondary data was collected from Academic journals (print and online versions), books, periodicals, internet investigations (websites), thesis references, government reports, magazines, hospitality newsletters, newspapers and any other published reports.

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version software (Version 16.0) and the findings were presented graphically

Objectives of the study:

1. To study and explore various women friendly policies provided by the management to the women employees that assist them in their career progression.
2. To analyze the women employees perception about provision of these women friendly policies provided to them by management.
3. To suggest strategies to the management to recruit, retain, and provide career progression opportunities to the women employees for better participation in the workforce.

Scope & Limitations of the study:

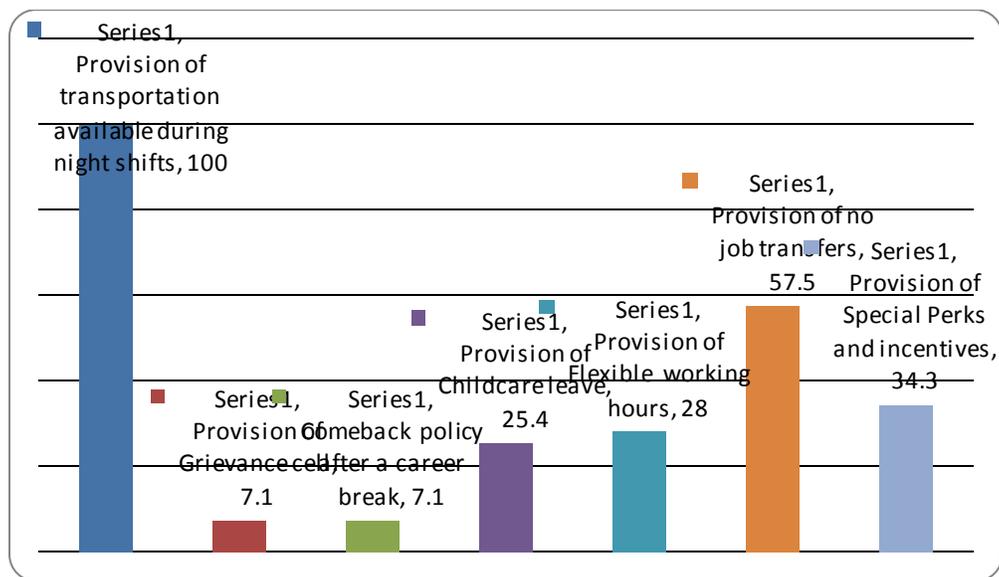
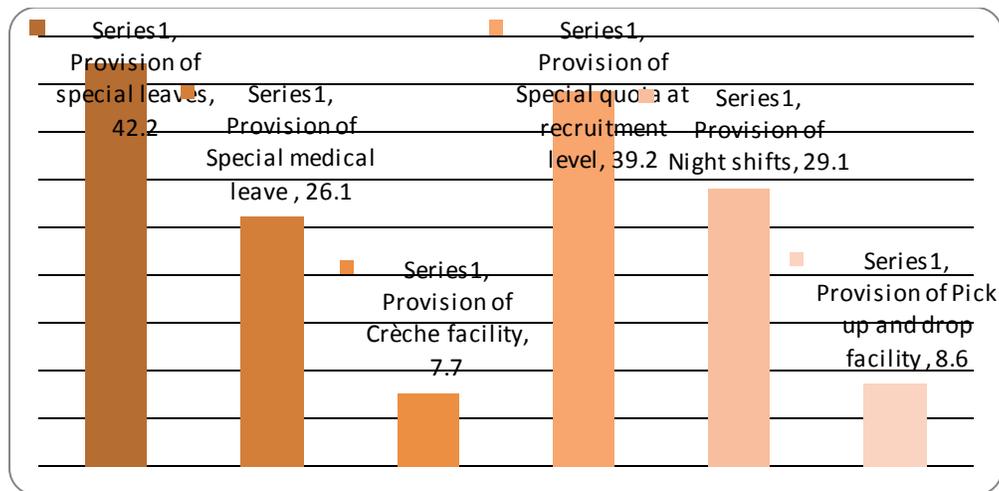
1. This study will be helpful for the Management of the various five, four and three star hotels to formulate various women friendly policies that would assist them in their career progression.

2. The study would also help the management to develop plans to increase the percentage of women in the Hospitality industry.
3. The study gives insight of the various facilities provided by the management for the women employees that assist them in their career progression.
4. This study is purely based on the information given by the women employees in various five, four and three star Hotels in Pune city.
5. The study is conducted in the current situation and the opinions, perception and expectations of the respondents may differ with time and place.

Data Analysis

The table below depicts the women perception on the women friendly policies provided by the management to assist them in their career progression.

Women friendly policies provided to the women employees in the Hospitality industry



Findings:

- i. **Special leaves/ Medical leaves:** Majority of women (60 %) have disagreed to the provision of special leaves like childcare or caring for old parents. Also around 75 % women have disagreed with the provision of Special medical leaves.
- ii. **Male /Female ratio:** Most of the hotels (60 %) did not have any policy/guidelines maintained with regards to the male and female ratio No special quota had been assigned for women at recruitment level by majority of the hotels.
- iii. **Pick up and drop facility:** Majority of women (92 %) are not provided with pick up and drop facility which at times creates problems in commuting as most of the hotels are situated at outskirts of the city.
- iv. **Flexible hours:** Majority of the hotels (72 %) did not provide any flexible working hours which affects the work life balance of women employees that in turns affects the career progression
- v. **Crèche facility:** Most of the hotels (92 %) did not provide any crèche facility which is a major challenge women faced with regards to child care responsibility that makes them homebound and at times leave their jobs too.
- vi. **Maternity leave benefits:** Only 11 % hotels provided maternity leave benefits of 6 months with pay as per the government norms which is quiet low. This facility is only extended to the permanent employees whose percentage is quiet low.
- vii. **Age limit:** Majority hotels (65 %) had no age limit for the women employees at the time of recruitment as they required to balance the gender diversity.
- viii. **Marital status:** Majority of the hotel (92 %) prefer both married as well as unmarried women at the time of recruitment.
- ix. **Night shifts:** Most of the hotels (88 %) did not allocate night shifts as a part of safety and security of the women employees except few exceptions in some departments
- x. **Grievance redressal cell:** Most of the hotels(92 %) did not provide any grievance redressal cell for women employees to register and resolve their grievances arising at workplace due to various reasons.
- xi. **Come back policy after career break:** Majority hotels (92 %) did not provide any comeback policy to the women employees after their career break due to various reasons like maternity, spouse transfer, childcare responsibility etc. Thus, hotels in turn loose talented pool of women employees.
- xii. **Counselling cell:** Most of the hotels (73 %) did not provide any counseling cell fro women employees where they could be counseled for their career planning, work life balance issues or any other issues they face.
- xiii. **Incentives and perks:** Majority of the women(66 %) had disagreed to provision of any perks and incentives by the hotels that actually would motivate them to work more efficiently in the male dominated environment.

xiv. **Special Quota at recruitment level:** Majority women disagreed to the fact that there exists any special quota for them at the recruitment level.

xv. **Transportation in night shift:** All the women agreed upon the fact of provision of transportation facility in the night shift for women employees.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The following suggestions and recommendations have been stated as the outcome of the study:

- i. **Flexible timings:** Long working hours creates immense stress and the work life imbalance issue. Provide flexible timings for women employees to avoid work life imbalance. Provision of part time work plans is also a good option
- ii. **Training programmes:** Provide cross training to women employees across all the departments and ensure they have experience of operation departments too. Empower the women employees to take apt decisions without requiring a manager's permission to improve the guest interactions, thus improving their decision making abilities.
- iii. **Incentives and perks:** Offer incentives and leaves to rejuvenate and rest, thus, one can work with fresh minds to improve the guest interaction. Taking good care of employees will help the women serve guests in a better way.
- iv. **Gender discrimination:** No gender bias or discrimination at the time of recruitment should be practiced and women should be preferred and given jobs in all departments. Set targets to increase the percentage of women at various levels to enable the organization provide various initiatives that will support women for future leadership roles.
- v. **Succession planning programmes:** Establish targets for recruiting women employees at various levels and assess their performance against the targets made. Promote them by providing right kind of training and growth opportunities to retain their talent. Thus, plan a succession programme for them
- vi. **Mentors and Role models:** Train and create more mentors for the women employees to motivate and empower them in their career progression. It is important to develop role models within organizations to, discuss their issues and challenges and give guidance in their career progression in hospitality industry.
- vii. **Crèche facility:** Provision of crèche for children in the organization. This will enable women employees to work carefree in the organization, thus balancing work life issues.
- viii. **Come back policy:** Introduce provision of comeback policy after a career break which may be because of various reasons like transfer of spouse, maternity leave, childcare leave etc.

Conclusion:

Despite of recognizing the importance of women employees in hospitality, the study suggest that the industry has made a little progress in creating and developing these potentially talented pool of people. The fact of women's participation and contribution in the workforce in India has increased

yet their representation in higher management is quiet low as compared to their counterparts, which is not recognized.

Women contribute up to 9.1% of the total workforce in the Hotel and restaurant industry and men 90.9% thus merely having 0.9% share (indiastat.com).

Women representation at the senior level is also proportionately very low compared to men. There is an existence of glass ceiling observed that resists women's upward mobility. This suggests that there needs to be a policy designed to bring in gender diversity in the organization thus encouraging capable women to overcome the challenges they face in their career progression.

The challenges related to the work life balance indeed are critical due to the customary belief that women needs to carry out her primary role as a mother, housewife and also as a co partner in the earnings. Conflict between work and family is a real juggling act for women which may at times lead her to make a choice between career and home. To summarize, family-friendly policies are a win-win situation to both the women employees as well as a Management in the long run satisfying both. In the Indian context, certain additional facilities and leaves for the women employees are certainly worth adopting that would go a long way in retaining talent, improving gender diversity and creating a right balance in the work and family life.

The hospitality industry has to take cognizance about this scenario and adopt in practice various women friendly policies that would assist them to progress in their career.

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