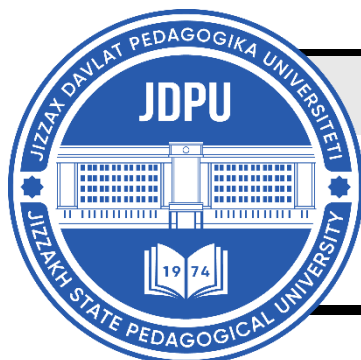




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WHAT ARE THE FEMALE CHALLENGES IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN: WOMAN WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The present paper aims to examine the major challenges and issues that female workers of hospitality industry face during their carrier ladder and work time in Uzbekistan. A number of studies has been done about this problem, however all of them are from the perspective of general managers or they differentiate the performance of men and women by their ability, communication skills and dedication. The primary purpose of this undertaken study is to find out the opinion of female staff towards problems related to their job. To analyze the equity of female workers in lodging industry demographic data was gathered and a sample was selected from different position owners of the industry in order to conduct a questionnaire. Twenty women were interviewed face-to-face and the records' transcript were made to evaluate the problems.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of answers of respondents were the basic issues related to their gender such as stereotyping, sexual harassment, family issues and work pressure although most linked the problem with religious views, mentality, economic situation and tourist behavior towards female workers. It was investigated that married women

come up with more challenges than single and divorced women according to the questionnaire.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COMMON CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY

In recent years, women have been involved in professional occupations and work-force. However, hotel industry is still struggling with this issue, where inequality, harassment and gender discrimination against women can be seen. (UNWTO, 2015; National Center for Social Research, 2018). According to Brownell and Walsh (2008), women tend to experience more challenges due to the environment of the industry. Less experienced women face the most vulnerable work, poor working conditions, inequality of chances, sexual harassment, violence and exploitation in hotels, highlighted The International Labor Office. Shrestha (2016) stated that not only external factors such as cultural barriers, gender stereotype, dual role, visibility factor, glass ceiling, lack of models, family problems, lack of school facilities and employment barricade the career progress of women but also internal factors like own motivation, skills. Additionally, as women are considered as caretaker of their families, they react differently than men when work-family imbalance occurs. Women's social sustainability and work-life balance are influenced by cultural perspective and expectations (Mushfiqur et al., 2018). Insufficiency of organizational support makes it harder for women to balance the work and personal life. Companies can provide more free time for female staff to stabilize their job and life says Wong and Ko (2009). Greenhouse and Allen (2011) divides influences of work-job conflict into 3 types: job-related (e.g., work time commitment, role overload, job flexibility), family-related (e.g., number of children, life-cycle stage, child care arrangements), and personal factors (e.g., gender role orientation, perfectionism).

GENDER ISSUES IN UZBEKISTAN

Lack of data and statistics prevents to conduct research concerning female issues and gender stereotyping is considered main problem of that. Despite "Gender

Blind Policy” of the government, gender inequality index (GIT) is 0,287 (2005) writes Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2019). Uzbekistan still lacks a law on domestic violence, and legislation on gender equality is yet to appear says Darina Solod. J. Bobonazarova (2020) investigates gender disparities in men’s and women’s opportunities and occasionally discrimination in employment and staff reduction. Women are prone to interruptions in the work because of the birth and upbringing of children. As a result, women are leaving hospitality industry rather than their male counterparts (Brownell, 1991).

METHODOLOGY

It was used quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data applying both questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with sample group. Personal information of staff was gathered by anonymous questionnaires while live interview was made to obtain their viewpoint about obstacles. Surveys include info such as age: below 17; 18-22; 23-30; 30-40; or above 40 and marital status: single; married; divorced; facts about their family: one child; 2-3 children; more than 3 children; education: elementary school; vocational college; university; experience in hospitality sector: 1-5 year; 5-10 year; 10-20 year; or more than 20 years.

The interview covered the quests related to problems, obstacles and views they had come up with while working and beside work hours. As English is not their native language the survey and interview was conducted in their own language and afterwards translated into English. It is considered all factors that stop them to allow being interviewed or to tell the truth assuring the data will only be used for scientific purposes. Face-to-face conversation composed various issues as sub-topic of the study including common harassment and problems that arises for women, at the and they were asked for personal experience and examples of that. The sample group were chosen randomly from the women who work for hospitality industry, precisely, at hotels, airports, restaurants, tour agencies, freelancers, tour guides; from variety of position to create general evidence for all hospitality sector female staff in Uzbekistan.

FINDINGS

Table 1

Age	Below 17	6 %
	18-22	21 %
	23-30	41 %
	30-40	26 %
	Above 40	7 %
Marital status	Single	25 %
	Married	56 %
	Divorced	19 %
Children (if there is)	1 child	38 %
	2-4 children	43 %
	More than 4 children	19 %
Experience in hospitality sector	1-5 years	37 %
	5-10 years	29 %
	10-20 years	18 %
	More than 20 years	16 %
Education	Elementary school	27 %
	Vocational college	36 %
	University or institute	37 %
Position in the company	High	13 %
	Medium	25 %
	Low	62 %
Satisfaction with salary	Not satisfied	41 %
	Satisfied	36 %
	Very satisfied	23 %
Satisfaction with treatment in the organization	Not satisfied	43 %
	Satisfied	38 %

	Very satisfied	19 %
Experienced gender inequality	Not experienced	15 %
	Experienced 1-5 times	32 %
	Experienced many times	53 %
Experienced any kind of harassment, abuse, discrimination	Not experienced	13 %
	Experienced 1-5 times	38 %
	Experienced many times	49 %

It easily can be seen from the Table 1, mostly women work hotel industry in their middle ages-23-30, and proportion of married women (56%) and with 2-4 children are more which can create work-family challenges for the industry. The figure of experience in hospitality industry is 37% for short period of 1-5 years, and 18 % for longer period of 10-20 years that makes clear in Uzbekistan women work in this sector temporarily perhaps due to the factors stated above. University graduates (37%) and vocational college graduates (36%) have more portion among hotel workers though non-specialized staff which is 27% can be prone to various harassment and abuse as they have little understanding of such issues. Following trend proves that the more women work in lower position the more they suffer from difficulties. Financial satisfaction is low as more female workers have lower position. 43% of women are not satisfied with treatment and only 19% are satisfied, and more than 50 % experienced gender inequality, harassment, discrimination many times, 32-38% experienced 1 to 5 times.

INTERVIEWS

Interviewees were asked 10-15 questions after completing the questionnaires. The respondents share their own experience related to challenges in the work in hotels. One of them said that they were never told about these issues when they study at university or during internship period. It made difficult for her when she faces after

she started working. Another respondent states that she has four children and extended family, although her children can take care of themselves it is hard to cope with all pressure she has. "That would be better if we live separately from our parents, she said, it is compulsory for one child to live and be responsible for their parents according to our tradition". Another interviewee says:" My relatives and husband were not happy when I told them that I want to work at a hotel. Women are thought to work part-time and do household chores, care children in our country. Consequently, we have little opportunity to pursue our dream job". Linking her concern to seasonality of the hospitality, a respondent says:

After high season, I used to think about looking for another job because hotels cut the number of employees when the flow of tourist decrease or they pay less amount of money that we cannot make living. It is not easy to find a temporary work and change it over time.

The lady who works managerial position says:" I don't feel comfortable whenever I have to command men workers or when I have to punish or scold them for their mistakes. It contingent on the way we were brought up. Our religious beliefs lead us to obey men and never disrespect them. During peak season workers have to stay longer than their usual work hours, thus it creates disagreement of female employees' family if they work overnight.

Almost all members of sample group highlight about work and family balance. One says:" I have 4 children and I took four times holiday to take care newborn babies. After returning the work it is tough to catch up with the process and latest trends of the industry. Despite the gender blind policy, there is still gender discrimination during recruitment and promotion process, says another employee. Barely any woman wanted to talk about sexual harassment experiences of theirs although all support that this unpleasant situation can be discarded by warning tourists about severe consequences of their such behavior.

Newly graduated girl wishes they had classes about handling female issues at universities, they would be prepared somehow when they come up with so called

problems. She also added:” We lack role models of hospitality industry in Uzbekistan, a lot of girls don’t see it as prosperous place to make their career.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analyzing data collected we can conclude that Uzbek women in lodging industry have common challenges such as stereotyping, gender discrimination, work and family balance as well as specific ones that related to their religious views and culture. The best solution to these barriers can be training workers, it might be ongoing training or outsourcing female employees to gain better understanding of defending their rights. Another key is conducting special courses at universities and internship programs.

Organizations should take family issues of women into consideration and compensate for child-caring, and set less hours of work for women than men, saving equal payment.

We should educate people about stereotypes and bias letting women realize their career potential. Eliminating gender gap and female challenges in hospitality sector is an action that requires collaboration of government, organizations and families of women staff.

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