

Retail Sector: A Progressive for Women

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20221139>

ABSTRACT

The retail sector hires more females than males which is a ratio of 60:40 and it is noted that more women than men start their careers in retail. It is also observed that most females simply stop at middle management position once they have children. However, there are also a number of them who serve on the retail operating boards. But the difficulties women face, determined to be senior executives are higher than those faced by men, both at personal and professional front.

Retail wages for females in relatively junior positions are another problem which is quite low. Therefore, often they are not worth returning to work after having a baby. Thus there is a drain of new talent. Further a gap in career also for women makes it very hard to even get back to a ladder. Often laddies are married to well settled working men who are well networked. These networking opportunities provide a useful chance to help create connections. Nevertheless, the wives of so many men in top positions do not work so that they are free to look after kids. Woman are questioned about their dedication to her kids.

The other side of the many stories is for many women average parental leave of around six to nine months is not a choice particularly for women who would like to stay in their leadership positions. To these women many questions to ask (whether effort is worth it). Therefore, women are in dilemma whether to pursue career or opt for staying at home to manage kids.

Keywords: *perception, ladies' touch, plans in retaining female employees, Retailing*

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that Indian women are making huge strides in the workplace, whether they are preparing meals, negotiating deals, or baking bread to earn a living. All research point out that India's daughters are increasingly joining their brothers, fathers, and husbands in the workforce to bring home the money, assist the family in and out of the kitchen, and contribute to the family's well-being. It was last year that a gender inclusivity study was conducted by NASSCOM and Mercer India. The rapid expansion of the IT-BPO industry, one of the most important sources of skilled workers in recent years, has resulted in a significant increase in the number of women working in urban India, according to a study conducted jointly by more than 45 of the world's leading technology companies. However, despite the fact that this industry has been a leader in promoting diversity and gender equality, few companies have evaluated the results of their efforts to date and what their plans are for the future. A NASSCOM executive says that women are an important economic force in the country and that they should be given the opportunity to use their skills to benefit the economy.

In retail, it's exactly the same. The retail sector employs 25 million people and generates \$350 billion annually. Women make up 60% of the workforce in this industry around the world. If labour laws are

changed and more women are employed in modern retail, the industry believes that the percentage in India will rise from 35 percent to 50 percent. According to CEO and Retailers Association of India president Kumar Rajagopalan, "they will be the best assets because they are naturally endowed with abilities to assist the service sector." Similarly, Bhatnagar agrees: "The laws should be designed to ensure equal opportunity for men and women." Even in countries where women's education is still lagging, archaic labour laws need to be updated for part-time workers (Khaled et al., 2019).

Women's advancement in retail has come a long way. In the organised retail sector, women make up between 25 and 30 percent of the workforce. No wonder, according to Shoppers' Stop CEO "No wonder, retail is one of the few sectors where the ratio of female employees is highest in India.". When it comes to customer service and reading the mood of the customer, women in the workplace are considered to be far superior. When it comes to dealing with higher attrition rates, some of the biggest players in the organised retail turf look to the fairer sex. To achieve a more gender-balanced workforce, companies like Reliance Retail, Future Group, Shoppers' Stop, and RPG Retail are experimenting with a variety of hiring models. Employees' spouses are being encouraged by Mukesh Ambani's Reliance to work in its retail venture. Thus, wives of employees at Reliance Retail outlets are being trained to work full-time, part-time, or on call at the company's stores. The Future Group intends to open stores where the only employees will be female. Flexi-work opportunities for women will be offered under this model, with a maximum of four hours of work per day required.

Problem in Retail

At retail companies, women still do not receive the attention they deserve. Some of the issues relating to female employees need to be addressed by retailers:

- Equal pay for equal work

- A worthwhile training course.
- Opportunities for growth
- Adaptable start and end times (to manage their family responsibilities)
- Two or more employees who work less than full-time share a single job
- Taking care of children

There are more women in retail than men, and more women than men begin their careers in retail. Often they begin their career when they are college graduates. Many women work in retail operating boards. There are many who stay in middle management positions after starting families. However, women who are determined to become CEOs face more difficulties than men, both on a professional and a personal level. Sara Weller, managing director of Argos, says that many women would prefer to avoid the reputation that comes with being a female leader. Making difficult decisions requires courage, strength, and a clear head on one's shoulders. Trying to do so without being branded "hard and unfeminine" is a challenge, she admits. For a man it is accepted to be perceived as a tough person. But this does not apply to woman.

It all comes down to personal preference. Many women do not want to be a CEOs because they do not want to deal with the intense media attention that comes with being a figurehead and dealing with the intense media attention that comes with it. It is not uncommon for women with young families to prefer to avoid the media spotlight. As a general rule, it is easier for women to step away from the race to become CEO. There is no doubt that the prospect of a leadership lifestyle appeals to a successful female director, and no one would argue with her about that. However, if a talented and successful male director said the same, his commitment and drive would not be questioned.

Retain Women Employee

An employee is a priceless asset to any business. It takes a lot of time, effort, and money to locate and develop this resource. In return, the company expects a high level

of performance, loyalty, honesty, and compliance with policies. Despite this, a company may have to let go of an employee rather easily when the employee is a woman. Organizations cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to female employees (D. Khaled et al., 2020).

Perhaps the manager of the company thinks that they can be easily replace. However, this may not be the case for female candidates. Every new hire comes with a price: lost project time, lost business contacts, and the associated risk. In addition, there has already been some investment in the exiting employee's training and development; therefore it is a smart move if a company is able to retain an employee also a woman employee.

Surprisingly little is done to keep even the most talented female employees. It is necessary to help the woman employee in adjusting to new stages of life and offer support when they need it most. Child birth and family responsibilities are tough times for women. Organization should provide support to employee through woman friendly policies like flies time work arrangement in order to retail her.

Perceptions about women

Many people believe that the lack of female CEOs is due to the fact that those who have been promoted are the most qualified. Many women are not even shortlisted because the people who make hiring decisions are almost always men and often do not recruit women perceiving them to be not committed.

Convention does come into it," says Weller. They tend to be more conservative and a little older," he says. It is a perception that being CEO is a man's game and should remain so. Even in retail industry with perception exist. "Retail is an old industry and these things take time to change," says Fortnum & Mason CEO Beverly Aspinall.

Men are seen as a better leader. They are believed to have leadership qualities. Men are more likely than women to be strong, determined, and able to take calculated

risks. Men, by definition therefore fit the job profiles. Women are good at soft skills.

Women are not often recruited, some men are more likely to avoid an overconfident female candidate during the hiring process than someone who is not sure of her own abilities. In other words, women do not occupy to position. Therefore unless there is an increase in the number of female directors on the major boards, recruitment decisions will continue to favour men and not select women

Women say that working in a predominantly male environment is not always pleasant. And often an environment is created when the women leave organization as they are made to feel sincom (Alshaketheep et al., 2020).

Men perceived women to be domesticated. They believe they lack interest in high-level positions. They believe they are more involved in work and interested in performance and lack ambition in becoming CEO. Many women lack self-confidence as well. There are some women who are "a little too self-effacing," according to Barbara Snoad, managing director of Theo Fennell. Due to lack of self-confidence, they are not given top managerial positions.

Women created problem:

The tendency to be self-deprecating, according to managing director of Exley Harvey Executive Search Lesley Exley, is problematic at the shortlisted interview stage women try to be modest and this aits as a hindrance. Men tend to focus on their strengths and minimise their weaknesses on the other hand women tend to focus on their weaknesses and often do the mistake of exaggerate them. "When it comes down to the nitty-gritty, men sometimes win because they project themselves with more confidence. Almgari et al. (2022).

Women often they believe they lack the quality to take top position when it comes to the glass ceiling, women tend to create their own because they do not believe they can do it. Once they get a ceiling they often find it difficult to promote themselves; whereas men promote their qualities and strength

openly. Often women so not voice their own strength so openly. (Khaled., 2018)

Touch of females – Initiative by organizations:

- Tesco is taken step to help its female senior manager’s grow in their careers. It create “The Women's” Network which is an internal website. It was launched in September. Through this and other themed events held on a monthly basis, they hope to build a support system that will help them better utilise their employees' skillsets and attract and retain new ones.
- Women are often subconsciously discouraged from pursuing high-level positions. It would be a lack of self-confidence or a fear of losing a healthy work/life balance. This needs to be addressed. Therefore organization should take this issue seriously.
- It is also true that most women enjoy shopping, and in some businesses, it may be a good idea to capitalise on this at the top of the organisation. When discussing retail, "women know far more than men," says Ann Summers CEO Jacqueline Gold. When trying to sell to women, it makes perfect sense to have women in charge of the boardroom and many organizations are enraging it.
- When it comes to company leadership, women bring a unique perspective to the table, just as they do on the operating

board. The idea that women are better at empathising and multitasking and a leader must have these qualities. Further women tend to be less egotistical and more adept at sharing their success with others. Organization should in still of enthusiasm in woman and place confidence on them to take leadership role detrimental.

- In the future, female employees may wonder if they are willing to put in the same amount of effort as today's successful female retailers.

Hard Decisions have to be made

- For women who want to keep their jobs after having a child, taking a standard six- to nine-month maternity leave is not an option. This raises the question of whether the sacrifice is worthwhile and after become of expend work load at home office women decide to quit.
- Having a family is one of the most obvious reasons why there are so few female employees in the workplace and a women have to choose between career and family. Often they quit after having a baby.
- Another problem is the low pay for women in lower-level positions when they return to work after having a child, which leads to a loss of young talent. In addition, a career break makes it extremely difficult to re-enter the workforce.

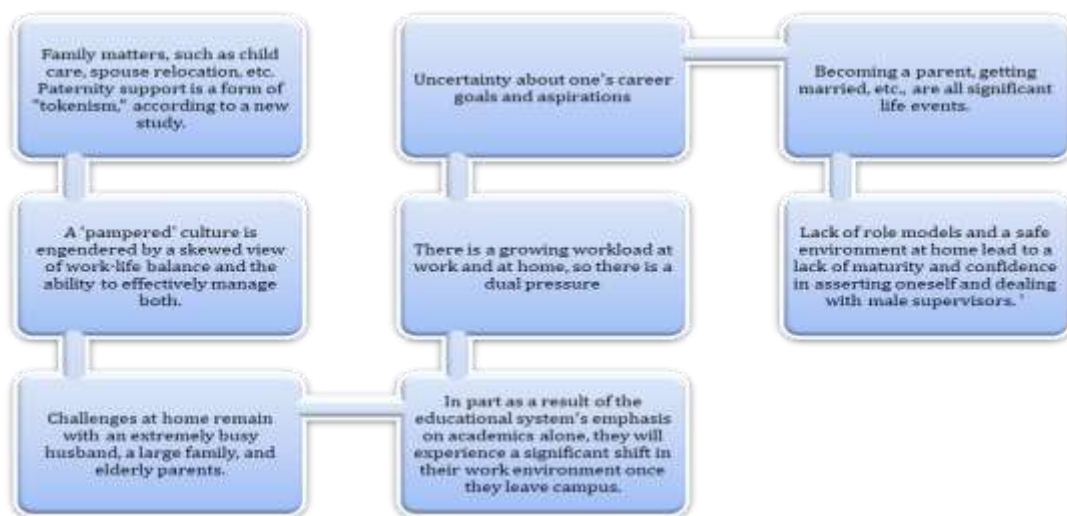


Figure 1: Challenges and issues of women retention

BEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT ARE INNOVATIVE

During these roundtables, it was revealed that various organizations have successfully implemented some innovative practices to reduce the loss of female talent.

Junior level:

- At the time of confirmation, make an effort to connect with the families (like parents visit)
- Possibilities for free or low-cost higher education.

Middle Level:

- a) Organizations should offer leadership development programmes to women who see it as an investment from the company.
- b) Planned policy and programme on flexible options for new mothers.
- c) As a general rule, women who have recently returned from maternity leave should be assigned to the "day shift."

High level

- Mentoring programmes specifically tailored to the needs of senior women who are struggling in their professional and personal lives.
- Leadership team KRAs linked to gender diversity ensure that the organization's goal of diversity receives personal attention.

Organization Initiatives

Organization should create a work environment for women to stay back despite hindrance in office and responsibilities at home (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021).

These should be more creative with policies that address work-life balance, including flexible work arrangements, often gives them an advantage over larger companies in creating a positive work environment that encourages employees to stay. Also it could give its your employees low-cost perks that they'll appreciate greatly.



Figure 2: Retaining Women strategies

Recognition for a Job Well Done

Employee retention can be improved by rewarding female employees for their hard work. Openly applauding an employee's performance, initiative and good work increases morale and encourages them to work more productively, even if monetary compensation is used as a motivator. An employee's sense of worth and purpose in the company is bolstered when they are shown appreciation for their efforts. As a

result, the level of employee engagement and productivity rises.

Personal Growth Opportunities

Additionally, employers are increasingly going to place importance on providing high-quality learning and extensive professional development opportunities, which is a popular perk for employees.

Focus on Team Building

Promoting team culture encourages all women employees to actively participate in the organization's goals and overall success. The promotion of team building instils in employees a sense of belonging to the organization's larger goals and objectives. For an organisation to be successful, it needs to have an advantage over its competitors by fostering a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among its employees. When working in a group, it is possible to lessen workplace conflict by focusing on team building activities. Building team spirit, unity and reducing stress can be achieved by organising team-building activities such as team building games and seminars. It helps women adjust better and helps men accept women as equal partner.

Motivation

Employee retention can be improved by providing women with better opportunities for career advancement. Rewards, recognitions, promotions, and appreciation can help employees be more productive and committed to the company they are a part of. They have a strong sense that their efforts are recognised and appreciated at work. Incentives, such as pay raises, bonuses, and other perks, can also be used to motivate workers. Retaining employees is easier when they feel appreciated for their efforts and have a sense of purpose in their work.

Enhance Female Employment

In order to ensure that women employees are satisfied with their work, take pride in their work, report on time, feel responsible for their job, feel valued for their contributions, and have a high level of job satisfaction, an effective employee retention programme by increasing employee engagement must be implemented. The productivity of the company and a number of associated areas improves as a result of the active focus on work by female employees. When women are actively

involved in their work, they are better able to understand their roles and responsibilities within the company. Increasing female employees' emotional connection and enthusiasm helps foster teamwork and a healthy workplace environment.

CONCLUSION

Organizations are said to benefit from employing women. Most companies today report that keeping their workers is a difficult task. A significant part of management's job is to find, attract, develop, and retain the best people. Once this goal is achieved, the real work begins: keeping the best people on board. Several factors influence employees and cause them to change jobs. When it comes to retaining employees, the organizations need to use a variety of novel approaches, both internal and external factors. Retailers who want to improve the situation have a number of options at their disposal, but they'll have to put in the work. There's no doubt that a long-term effort is needed to achieve this goal. At the lower rungs of a career ladder, women should be mentored and encouraged to apply for promotions. Good maternity packages are also a necessity. In order to attract the best candidates, any company's corporate culture must be made more appealing to women. The internet has made it easier for retailers to accommodate the needs of busy parents, but not all businesses are able to do so. "It's shortsighted to lose women because of a rigid mentality. Employers must exercise caution not to place undue stress on working parents, and female employees must exercise caution when selecting a company for which they will work. It's easy to work remotely in retail, but complaining about long hours is pointless if someone else is willing to work around the clock to meet the needs of the business. It is essential to cultivate women's leadership abilities and self-esteem.

Conflict of Interest: None

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How to cite this article: Abdullah Mohammed Mahdi Ahmed, Amgad S. D. Khaled, Salma Ahmad et.al. Retail sector: a progressive for women. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2022; 9(11): 294-301.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20221139>
