

A Study on the Inclusion of Women in the Legal Profession in the District Courts of New Delhi, India

Dr. Jagannath B. Patil¹, Yatin Shelte², Prathmesh Bhillare³

I/C Principal¹, 3rd Year LLB², Professor³

Nalanda Law College, Gorai, Borivali (W), Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Abstract: *The Legal Profession is an essential component for the judicial system. Since its beginning, the profession has been acknowledged and asserted as a club exclusively for gentlemen. In recent years, there has been a notable transformation within the legal profession, characterized by a substantial increase in the participation and pursuit of legal education by women. However, despite a notable increase in the representation of women in law colleges, there remains a dishearteningly low representation of women in law courts. Hence, it is crucial to comprehend the various components that contribute to this particular situation. Hence, this study aims to comprehend the challenges faced by women in the Indian Courts. Moreover, this study aims to examine the obstacles and hardships encountered by women in the field of litigation. The study focuses on the Courts in Delhi, which is considered to be a favorable working environment for women due to its status as a metropolitan metropolis and reasonably equitable socio-economic conditions. In order to facilitate a comprehensive examination of the grassroots level, the researcher has specifically focused on the District Courts inside the city.*

Keywords: District Courts

I. INTRODUCTION

The bar has consistently served as a vital component in the administration of justice. The Courts would be unable to efficiently administer and give justice without the Profession of Law. India possesses one of the largest populations engaged in the profession of litigation globally. The inclusion and increasing presence of women in the legal profession has been a highly significant development, often referred to as "revolutionary," within the previous 150 years. However, it is regrettable that Women in the Profession continue to be inadequately represented in both the Bar and the Bench. Despite the virtually equal number of male and female law school graduates, the imbalance between men and women in the courts remains alarming. The underrepresentation of women professionals in legal matters, resulting in poor remuneration, is a concerning phenomenon. Furthermore, marriage and family raising sometimes pose significant challenges for women legal practitioners. While a considerable proportion of women first pursue a career in the Legal Profession, a significant number of them ultimately decide to leave the field prematurely. The fact that just a small number of women are able to persist beyond the age of forty is quite astonishing. This stage represents the culmination of experience and achievement for Legal Practitioners.

According to Abe (2011), In India, women were compelled to engage in a persistent struggle in order to achieve liberation from long-standing societal constraints. During the mid-19th century, the legal profession witnessed intense rivalry among the most skilled individuals, particularly due to the limited representation of Indians in the Bar. Although the number of educated women in India was limited, they did claim their right to equality in the field of forensics, allowing them to compete with males. However, the existing legal framework did not grant women the opportunity to enter the profession of law. The target of the attack was the highly secure legal profession, particularly Regina Guha, a woman of Jewish Bengali descent. Guha, who had obtained her Master of Arts degree in 1913 and a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1916 from Calcutta University, applied to become a lawyer in the Court of the District Judge of Alipore. The newspaper's description of Guha's application as the 'latest attempt' may have been a reference to the ongoing global movements of women seeking equal opportunities to enter the male-dominated public sphere as professional citizens.

Concurrently, the emergence of contemporary occupations had a significant impact on the legal field. These measures encompassed revisions in legal education, creation of novel professional associations, and broadening of the concept of legal labor. The conditions were favorable for the rise of women attorneys as professional members of society. In the context of India, the narrative surrounding this emergence is characterized by the complex predicament faced by these women as they simultaneously confront imperialism and advocate for gender equality. The legal profession was inevitably accessible to the public and governed by the 'gentleman's club,' which shown significant reluctance in allowing women to enter. The hesitancy was evident in a sequence of well-known 'person cases' where judges determined that women were not considered 'persons' eligible to enter the legal profession, despite the fact that the relevant legislation in question would employ a gender-neutral 'person' instead of a gender-specific 'he' or 'him.' The Regina Guha case stands as India's inaugural 'persons case.' Following this, The Legal Practitioners (Women) Act was ultimately enacted in 1923, eliminating the disqualification and affirming that "no woman shall be disqualified solely based on her sex from being admitted or registered as a legal practitioner or from practicing as such." Consequently, granting women the legal entitlement to engage in the practice of law. Following the attainment of independence, the Constitution of India unequivocally establishes the principle of equality of individuals before the law. Since 1923, numerous women have entered the profession, although just a minority have received the appropriate acknowledgment they merit.

According to the records of the Supreme Court, the current count of women appointed as Senior Counsel stands at a mere 12. The issue of gender discrimination encountered by female Legal Practitioners in the workplace is a matter of significant concern. The Profession of Law, which seeks to ensure justice for all individuals, is not exempt from instances of prejudice and mistreatment, particularly of a sexual nature, directed towards its female community. The decision to include women in the legal profession, encompassing both the Bar and the Bench, is supported by various justifications beyond the provisions of equality. For instance, the presence of women judges would contribute to a distinct perspective. Women possess a greater capacity to comprehend a wide range of emotional and social intricacies compared to men, resulting in a significant enhancement and feminization of the legal system. The underrepresentation of women judges in the courts, particularly in the Supreme Court, highlights the need for increased female representation in order to bring about change in a predominantly male-dominated culture.

It is imperative to foster a collaborative endeavor aimed at reforming and enhancing the status of female lawyers within the legal profession. Global presence. The establishment of a gender diverse bar has the potential to enhance social justice standards and serve as a standard for other professions. In this study, the researcher aims to examine the present state of women in the field of Litigation. The objective of the researcher is to assess the extent to which our nation has implemented sufficient measures to defend the rights and interests of Women Lawyers. The study additionally seeks to ascertain the reasons behind the persistent presence of gender-based bias and barriers encountered by women within the legal field, despite the passage of several years since achieving independence and the establishment of an independent constitution that guarantees equality and fundamental freedom to engage in legal professions. Moreover, the researcher has chosen Delhi's National Capital Territory as the location for conducting the study. In order to ensure a comprehensive examination of the local level, the study has specifically focused on the district courts inside the city. Delhi, as a metropolitan metropolis, is widely regarded as a favorable setting for women's employment, characterized by reasonably equitable socio-economic conditions. Nevertheless, the findings of the study have shown to be highly alarming and unforeseen.

Findings from various studies on this domain were simultaneously unsettling and optimistic. As anticipated, our findings indicate that a significant proportion of women in the legal profession encountered a range of obstacles over their career, including insufficient assistance from senior male colleagues, disparaging comments, and inadequate infrastructure inside the court complex. The findings from the remaining research provide a sense of optimism, since the female cohort within the profession has a strong desire and enthusiasm to actively contribute to the advancement of their field, provided that the obstacles they encounter are significantly alleviated.

The research findings indicate that while a significant number of women receive encouragement from their families to pursue a career in litigation, they experience dissatisfaction inside the field due to a range of causes.

The primary factor contributing to the widespread unhappiness is the insufficient availability of infrastructural amenities within the court premises. Despite the presence of separate restroom facilities for male and female advocates

in most court complexes, they are in a highly unsanitary condition, which is a highly disheartening observation. This is concerning due to its adverse health effects. It is imperative to adhere to appropriate hygiene and sanitation protocols in restroom facilities, not only for female advocates but also for the general public, given the high volume of visitors to court complexes on a regular basis. In addition, the majority of female advocates surveyed emphasize that court premises lack provisions for day care or crèche services. Married advocates have a significant challenge when they reach a stage in their lives where their biological clock necessitates childbearing, and they must decide between pursuing a family-oriented path or pursuing a career in the "chair". Upon her departure on the "Family way", upon her return, the equations would undergo a transformation, necessitating a complete restart. Hence, achieving the optimal equilibrium between work and family life poses a difficulty for the majority of women. This can be effectively addressed by the provision of day care facilities, crèches, and other amenities within court premises, which serve to foster a harmonious work-life balance.

While a considerable proportion of the female legal practitioners questioned expressed agreement regarding the adequacy of Bar Rooms in the Court Premises, it is worth noting that a notable percentage of women legal practitioners had a contrasting perspective. The significance of the negative answer underscores the existence of district courts that provide sufficient amenities, as well as others that lack such amenities.

In addition to the absence of adequate infrastructure, another factor that contributes to the discontent among females in the litigation profession is the pervasive gender bias within the field. Women are not unfamiliar with instances of gender-based prejudice. During the semi-structured interview, a female practitioner divulged that the office staff had a condescending demeanor towards women, while simultaneously displaying a bias towards male lawyers. Another female attorney has affirmed that during her professional trajectory, she, along with several other female lawyers, had instances of sexual harassment. While the results indicate that a significant proportion of female legal professionals have not encountered any instances of gender-based bias, it is important to note that a considerable number of individuals have indeed experienced such bias, and this disparity is not negligible. The presence of prejudice in a setting where justice is expected is a matter of significant concern. Furthermore, a significant proportion of women have encountered difficulties in their chosen occupation.

Another crucial determinant is the clients' disposition towards the female advocates. This issue can be attributed to the societal tendency to adopt stereotypical attitudes towards girls. Women are frequently perceived as inferior in comparison to their male counterparts. Clients frequently presume that a female solicitor may lack the necessary assertiveness to handle a forceful negotiation or an intricate dispute. The findings of the study pertaining to the attitudes of judges and senior counsels towards pregnant women do not provide a definitive depiction, as a significant proportion of the surveyed women exhibited a lack of awareness regarding this matter. However, the available evidence indicates that the judges and senior counsels exhibit a typical approach towards pregnant women, displaying a lack of sensitivity towards their needs. During the process of data collecting, it was noted that a considerable proportion of Female Advocates lacked access to Chamber services.

II. CONCLUSION

It is imperative to confront and resolve the persistent obstacles and disparities that women encounter in the legal field. An effective solution to address the issue is to mitigate the barriers encountered by women in the legal profession, which hinder their productivity and dissuade them from pursuing careers in litigation. This can be achieved by ensuring that they have access to the essential infrastructure, thereby enhancing the comfort and convenience of their workplace. The significance of the Indian Bar Council in cultivating a favorable working environment is crucial in tackling the aforementioned issue. According to Section 7 of the Advocates Act of 1961, it is the responsibility of the Indian Bar Council to ensure the protection of lawyers' rights, privileges, and interests. In addition, it is anticipated that the State Bar Councils will protect the interests of advocates on their roster and organize seminars. Hence, it is incumbent upon the Bar Council to assume the principal and paramount responsibility of furnishing the women's society with fundamental infrastructure amenities, encompassing the provision of sanitary and hygienic restroom facilities, bar areas, and similar amenities. It is imperative for the Bar Councils to establish regulations pertaining to the allocation of chambers inside the court complex. This is particularly crucial given that a significant number of Female Advocates lack a single chamber, whilst their male counterparts often own two or more rooms. Therefore, the provision of

chambers for women would create a favorable working atmosphere, thereby resulting in a good influence on their productivity.

In contrast to women lawyers employed in organized sectors such as corporations, who are entitled to specific maternity benefits, women involved in litigation are not afforded the same benefits. Consequently, they are required to commence their employment at an earlier stage in order to satisfy their financial obligations. In this particular scenario, the presence of a day care or crèche facility becomes essential. Therefore, the provision of a crèche facility that is accessible to all individuals within the court precincts would significantly enhance the suitability of the profession for women by promoting a harmonious work-life balance. Without such a facility, women would be compelled to take extended breaks from their legal proceedings, thereby impeding their professional development. Moreover, the assistance provided by their elders throughout this specific phase of their existence would alleviate the difficulties encountered by them.

In order to facilitate the effective functioning of Female Advocates, it is imperative to have supplementary amenities, such as baby changing rooms and a designated area for women to breastfeed their children. It is recommended that the Bar Councils organize seminars aimed at addressing the prevalent concerns of gender inequality and biases within the legal profession. It is imperative to promote a compassionate approach within the male class of the profession towards advocates for pregnant women, while simultaneously ensuring that young female advocates are afforded sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their legal expertise. Senior Advocate Pinky Anand has proposed that the Bar Council of India should provide assistance to aspiring female attorneys during the early stages of their professional journeys by promoting the inclusion of women in diverse professional associations. In order to advance their legal mission, it is imperative for the Bar Council of India and State Bar Councils to implement measures aimed at facilitating the inclusion and advancement of women in the field of litigation. There is a need for more female representation in the District, State, and All India Bar Councils in order to facilitate their ability to express their perspectives and effectively address the problems of female advocates. Sexual harassment constitutes a significant factor contributing to women's voluntary departure from the field, either independently or as a result of familial pressures. Therefore, the establishment of Sexual Harassment Committees inside the judicial system will greatly facilitate the resolution of this issue. The rigorous enforcement of the anti-harassment regulations will contribute to creating a more favorable environment for women in the profession. The study emphasizes that women in Delhi continue to face uneven treatment as partners in the legal field. If this situation occurs in the nation's capital, one might envision the challenges faced by women in other metropolitan and rural regions of the country. The assertion that socio-economic factors, such as literacy and urbanization, are causally linked to the rise in women's involvement in the legal profession is erroneous. Only a limited number of women have achieved fame or found satisfaction in this sector. Alan Kay famously stated that the most effective way to anticipate the future is by creating it. Therefore, based on this optimistic statement, one can anticipate that the future will bring improved circumstances and less biased treatment for female litigants through the combined endeavors of society as a whole, and the professionals involved in the field.

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