

1.01 Background of the Study

Throughout various historical periods, working women have faced accusations of being immoral, unfeminine, and objects of pity. Some commentators even went so far as to label them as bad mothers. Furthermore, women employees often encountered dismissive attitudes from their employers, colleagues, and society at large (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Their family responsibilities made it challenging for women to pursue a career (Valdez & Gutek, 1987). In addition to their professional duties, societal expectations required women to fulfill the roles of wives and mothers. When women prioritized their career goals, some felt guilty or self-centered (Heins, Hendricks, & Martindale, 1982). The pressures of both work and family life significantly impacted women's careers, as noted by Valdez and Gutek.

According to Heins et al. (p. 455), the attainment of professional status might pose greater challenges for women compared to men. Despite their increasing presence in the workforce, women often found themselves in lower-paying jobs of lower status, with a concentration in a limited range of traditional occupations (Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, 2005). These traditional positions, such as office assistance, marketing, customer service, healthcare, education, social services and secretarial work were shaped by long-standing societal beliefs concerning gender-specific job responsibilities (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Sellers, Satcher, & Comas, 1999; Stephenson & Burge, 1997; Watson, Quatman, & Elder, 2002).

Due to these constrained professional choices, women's salaries remained behind those of men with similar education and expertise (Farmer, 1985; Stephenson & Burge). While it was observed that income grew with educational accomplishments and years of work (Day & Newburger, 2002), women generally earned approximately two-thirds of men's earnings, partly because of differences in the types of jobs traditionally associated with each gender. For instance, women were less frequently employed in male-dominated fields like science and engineering, and even when they were, their earnings were approximately 20% lower compared to their male counterparts (Graham & Smith, 2005). This gap was influenced by various factors, including societal and familial pressures, limited exposure to non-traditional career paths, unwelcoming environments in many male-dominated sectors, discriminatory practices in certain industries, high turnover rates for women, and comparatively lesser seniority in specific occupations.

Stephenson and Burge also highlighted that these factors collectively contributed to the observed income disparity between men and women.

The perception of women's roles in the workplace has undergone a profound transformation over time. Historically, society held the belief that a woman's primary place was within the confines of her home, where she would care for her husband and children, rather than in a professional career. There was a prevailing fear that women's entry into the workforce would lead to the erosion of valued feminine qualities like meekness and submissiveness (Astin, 1984; Nieva & Gutek, 1981).

The roots of women working outside the home can be traced back to the period before the Industrial Revolution, where women often assisted their husbands with family businesses or contributed to the workforce without receiving financial compensation. In cases where they did receive compensation, women earned less than their male counterparts (Nieva & Gutek).

As time progressed, women gradually entered the workforce in roles such as domestic work and clerical positions. This integration of women into the workforce was a lengthy process that often faced societal disapproval (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Although some women were beginning to engage in work, they were generally perceived as temporary employees, with their careers expected to take a back seat after marriage and childbirth (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Tinklin et al., 2005).

By the mid-nineteenth century, an increasing number of women were active in education, nursing, and clerical professions. These occupations were viewed as feminine and suitable for unmarried women (Nieva & Gutek).

In 1890, merely 3% of married women were engaged in employment outside their homes, but the workforce participation of women climbed to approximately 25% by 1900. This figure experienced a rapid surge, reaching about 7.5 million women employed by 1910, and it maintained stability until the onset of World War II (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). The wartime period saw a significant boost in women's involvement in the labour force as they took on skilled and union positions that were previously inaccessible to them, alongside their conventional roles (Nieva & Gutek).

After World War II, an increasing number of women joined the workforce regardless of their marital or parental status (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al., 2002). Women's participation in the labour market grew from 30% in 1950 to over 50% in

1980 (Astin, 1984; Farmer, 1985; Stephenson & Burge, 1997). By the late 1970s, almost half of married women and 40% of women aged 16 and above were employed (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). However, their employment was often secondary to their household duties (Tinklin et al., 2005). In 1990, approximately 57 million adult women aged 16 and above were employed (Rainey & Borders; Watson et al.), and despite a brief slowdown in the early 1990s, women's labour force participation rates started rising again by 1994 (Hayghe, 1997).

Around the mid-1990s, women made up about 46% of the U.S. workforce, challenging the prevailing notion of the stay-at-home wife and breadwinning husband, which characterized only about 7% of American households during that time. This significant increase in working women marked a departure from the traditional norm (Jalilvand, 2000; Stephenson & Burge; Tinklin et al., 2005).

By 2005, women's representation in the labour force had risen to approximately 48%, encompassing roughly 72 million individuals (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Stephenson & Burge; Tinklin et al.; Watson et al., 2002). Moreover, Fullerton, Jr. (1999) anticipated a continuous rise in women's participation in the workforce until 2015. The surge in women's employment rates was linked to more positive perceptions of working women, longer life expectancies, changing marriage trends, and progress in and acceptance of birth control methods, as emphasized by Nieva and Gutek (1981). The involvement of women in the workforce has now become an established reality, with working women no longer being considered exceptions but rather the norm (Rainey & Borders).

1.02 Importance and nature of Hospitality and Tourism industry

In India, the tourism and hospitality sector has emerged as a key driver of development within the service industry. This global industry, worth ₹ 7.6 trillion, encompasses 15 distinct yet interconnected sectors, including hotels, lodging facilities, restaurants, amusement parks, airlines, casinos, clubs, cruise lines, and more. In 2014, it contributed to the creation of 277 million jobs, accounting for one in every eleven jobs in the global economy (WTTC, 2015). Annually, the worldwide hospitality industry generates between ₹ 400 billion and ₹ 500 billion in revenue (Statista, 2013). It significantly contributes, with 6.23 percent, to India's national GDP and accounts for 8.78 percent of the nation's employment (Market Research, 2013). Tourism, in particular, generates numerous employment opportunities and serves as a

substantial source of foreign revenue for the country. In 2013, the travel and tourism sector added ₹ 2.17 trillion (US\$ 36 billion) to India's GDP, and projections suggest it will reach ₹ 4.35 trillion (US\$ 72.17 billion) by 2024 (Shine, 2014). Over the past few years, the Indian hospitality industry has grown at a 14 percent annual rate, contributing significantly to the country's foreign currency reserves. According to the World Economic Forum's 2013 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, India ranks 11th in the Asia Pacific region and 65th globally (Shine, 2014). As per India's Planning Commission, the hotel industry has the potential to generate more jobs per million rupees invested than any other industry. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) also states that India's travel and tourism industry could directly or indirectly employ nearly 50 lakh people by 2019, making it the world's second-largest employer (Shine, 2014). The WTTC predicts that global tourism will create 70 million new jobs over the next decade, with Asia contributing to 70% of these positions. With such robust growth prospects, particularly in Asia, the hospitality sector should take a more strategic approach to promoting gender diversity. Despite adopting numerous aspects of modern technology, the fundamental human aspect of service remains crucial for hotels. As Korczynski (2002) terms it, they rely on "customer sovereignty" to maintain a thriving and profitable operation.

According to data from the World Travel and Tourism Council, the hospitality industry is expected to employ 275 million people by 2019 (WTTC, 2015), with countries like Brazil, Russia, India, and China playing significant roles in this growth. These nations represent the present and future of the hospitality industry. India currently boasts approximately 90,000 hotel rooms, with ongoing construction projects set to increase this number to about 2.40 lakh, opening up numerous job opportunities for graduates with hotel management qualifications (HVS, 2014).

India houses approximately 140 accredited hotel management institutes, with about 10,000 students graduating annually with hotel management degrees or certifications (aspiringminds.in, 2014). However, even if all these new graduates possess the necessary skill sets and are employable, this figure falls far short of the yearly labour demand. Furthermore, perceptions of the hotel industry, including long working hours, comparatively low remuneration, and related challenges, contribute to the existing labour shortage (Kumar, et al., 2014).

1.03 Women in the Workforce

Gender issues have been central to the development discourse for the past four decades. As a response to these concerns, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 was enacted to address gender-based discrimination in recruitment, pay, job transfers, and promotions. During this period, notable advancements took place in the realm of women's employment in India. The Indian constitution guarantees equality of opportunity, with several articles, such as Article 14, Article 15 (1), Article 15 (3), Article 16, Article 42, and Article 15(A) (e), ensuring gender equality and granting specific privileges to women (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2010).

Prior to these developments, women's participation in formal employment was exceedingly limited, with the majority confined to traditional roles such as teaching, banking, and nursing. Only a small percentage of women managed to reach the upper echelons of the corporate hierarchy. It wasn't until the 1980s that women in India began making significant strides in managerial positions (Nath, 2000). Today, modern Indian women exhibit a strong interest in pursuing professional education, leveraging their skills, and seeking equal opportunities in fields like medicine, engineering, law enforcement, aviation, and defence services. To thrive in the professional realm, they have become assertive and capable of multitasking. This shift can be attributed to increased societal acceptance of working mothers and their pursuit of higher education.

The era of globalization and liberalization ushered in a new wave where more women not only enrolled in professional courses but also received training to excel in their respective fields. Parents began to recognize the importance of educating their daughters and supporting them in building successful careers, leading to a transformation of previously existing socio-cultural barriers into advantages. To strike a balance between work and family, mutual understanding and extended family support played a significant role, making it easier for women.

Moreover, there is a distinct trend among middle-income households that prioritize their daughters' education and are willing to make personal sacrifices to ensure their success. The progress of women in the workplace and in education has been facilitated by a growing awareness of personal needs, as well as greater equality and recognition both within and outside the home (Nath, 2000). Due to changing attitudes among women in major Asian countries, a growing number of women are postponing

marriage and childbirth, potentially paving the way for increased female representation in leadership roles in the future (The Flight from Marriage, 2011).

Today's women are capable of being leaders, top executives, and board members, confidently pursuing their ambitions. In spite of the recent rise in the involvement of women, their presence in India is still comparatively lower when compared to other Western or Asian countries. Moreover, women's access to senior management roles across different sectors continues to be insufficient. Female labour force participation in India was only 35.9% in 2012, the lowest among Southeast Asian countries (MasterCard Worldwide Index on Women's Advancement, 2014). Furthermore, the percentage decreased to 35.8% in 2015, instead of increasing. Women's representation in senior management roles has also seen a decline, with only 15% of top positions held by women. Additionally, women hold just 4.5% of chief executive positions in Fortune 1000 companies (Number of Women in Top-Level Management Tapers Severely, 2013).

In India, the influx of female graduates into the workforce is not lacking. However, India stands out due to its lower female literacy rates compared to countries like Australia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, where 57% of graduates are female. As per the 2011 Census, the literacy rate among women in India stands at 65.46%, whereas for men, it is 82.14%. impacting the number of women seeking advanced education. For instance, in 2009-10, only 15% of students entering the Indian Institute of Management were female (McKinsey, 2012). In China, women constitute more than half of professional entry-level positions, while in India, women are a minority both in university and at entry-level positions (McKinsey, 2012). The primary reasons for the high dropout rate among women are childcare and family responsibilities, especially the care of elderly family members. Women often feel compelled to prioritize familial obligations over their careers, a situation referred to as "daughterly shame" (Only 5% Women in Top Corporate Posts, 2014).

In India, progress toward gender parity has been relatively slow, particularly in terms of workforce participation and women's leadership in business. Despite the lack of improvement in workforce participation (59.8 F/M) and the completion of basic and advanced educational resources (85.7 F/M), Indian women maintain an optimistic outlook regarding their future prospects. According to the MasterCard Women's Well-

Being Index, Indian women's life satisfaction improved from 69.6 points in 2014 to 73.3 points in 2015, ranking second among the 16 markets analyzed.

Women in today's workforce are characterized by their intelligence and ambition. According to the MasterCard Global Index (MGI) report, 79% of women aspire to move into the next level of management, with 75% aiming to reach the c-suite. Nevertheless, "second-generation gender bias" continues to be a hurdle for women (People Matters, 2015). According to the same report, India has the largest gender gap in labour force participation, and bridging this gap by enabling women to participate in the labour market as men do could boost India's GDP by 60% by 2025 (Mending Gender Gap Could Add 60% to India's GDP by 2025: McKinsey Report, 2015).

1.04 Women's Role in Hospitality and Tourism

The Indian hospitality sector encounters a significant obstacle in the insufficient utilization of female expertise, particularly in higher-level roles. Although there are a few instances, for instance, Carlson Rezidor, Fairmont, Denihan, and Four Seasons, that presently have or have had women in authoritative positions (Walsh, 2014), this remains an exception rather than the norm. The global average female participation in the hospitality sector, as noted by Baum (2013), stands at 55.5 percent. Encouraging, retaining, and promoting women into managerial leadership positions is essential to meet the future skill and productivity demands of the industry (as cited in Clerk, 2014).

The representation of women at various levels, including managers, supervisors, and staff, is higher at five-star deluxe and five-star hotels. However, this percentage decreases at lower-category hotels, with an average of only two to three percent of women holding general manager positions across all hotel categories in India (Chaudhary & Gupta, 2010). Despite the male-female ratio at lower management tiers being around 5:1, there hasn't been a proportional rise in the count of women in higher management positions. Few women who do reach executive positions tend to occupy staff roles, predominantly in sales and marketing and human resources departments.

In India, the count of students enrolled in higher education is roughly 28.56 million, with boys constituting 15.87 million and girls making up 12.69 million, amounting to 44.5 percent of the overall enrollment (MHRD, 2012). Surprisingly, in professional fields like hospitality, men still outnumber women in the majority of hotel management courses in India (Kumar, et al., 2014). Only about a quarter of graduates

with hospitality management degrees who express a desire to work in the sector are women. For example, at a leading hotel management college in India, the male-female ratio among hotel management students has remained at 7:3 for the past 29 years (72.8 percent boys and 27.2 percent girls). During this period, none of the courses had female enrollment exceeding 38 percent. This pattern is consistent across most hotel management institutes in India, with women having lower enrollment rates, as reported by Aspiring Minds, a consultancy firm.

However, according to Aspiring Minds, female students are more employable (ranging from 8 percent to 32 percent) compared to their male counterparts (6 percent to 16 percent) across various profiles, based on a survey of over 3000 hotel management students from 120 hotel management universities across the country (Basu, 2012). This gender disparity in academic participation is a concern as it contributes to men having a higher presence in the hospitality industry while women have a lower presence. Consequently, while the entry-level workforce has a healthy proportion of women, it becomes significantly skewed toward men as it progresses into leadership roles. The insufficient presence of women in hospitality school programs and within the industry has not resulted in a corresponding growth in the count of women in higher-level managerial roles, thereby raising concerns about gender diversity in the sector (Zhong, 2011). The fundamental question here is whether the hotel industry provides an equal opportunity for aspiring female managers or if it perpetuates a male-dominated system of inequality. Despite the advancements made by women in securing managerial positions overall, the hotel industry has not achieved gender equality and has not experienced a proportional rise in the quantity of women in senior management roles. Throughout its history, there has been a pervasive belief in the industry that male applicants not only outperform female applicants but also have greater potential for long-term careers (Gregg, 1990). Recruiters sometimes make explicit statements such as "this year we have no positions available for female students, and the roles are exclusively open to male students" and "this year, we have more Food and Beverage jobs and we prefer to hire only males" during campus recruitment.

1.05 Nature of women's role in the Hospitality and Tourism industry

Today, the hospitality sector has positioned itself as the leading employer of women globally. It's evident that women have not only made their mark in the hospitality

sector in India but also globally. India's hospitality industry has traditionally offered opportunities for women across various positions. Being a people-oriented industry, women are considered invaluable assets in the sector. Looking at the present scenario, a significant majority of the workforce in this industry comprises women, highlighting the industry's efforts to bridge the gender gap. Hotel companies value their female workforce and offer competitive starting salaries, regular incentives, recognition, and various other attractive benefits. The qualities of patience, tolerance, sophistication, and empathy give women an advantage in the hotel industry and dispel the notion that it remains a male-dominated field. The industry is increasingly attracting women into diverse roles, though these roles often demand intensive commitment and time. Balancing work and family time can be challenging for individuals in the hospitality industry, regardless of gender. However, in recent years, the hospitality industry has evolved to provide a conducive work environment for confident female professionals, matching international standards with regard to working conditions, security, and employment benefits.

Gender equality remains a central global concern, and despite some progress, its effects persist in numerous practices, particularly in business settings (Abdul Rahman et al., 2019; Blayney and Blotnicky, 2017). Workplace gender discrimination has become a significant issue, impacting jobs at different skill levels (Abdul Rahman et al., 2019). The existence of the "glass ceiling" and its impact on women's career growth has been observed globally, irrespective of equal opportunity legal frameworks (Kumara, 2018). Recent studies emphasize the persistent segregation of women in economies (Hutchings et al., 2020). The hotel industry exhibits pronounced signs of gender inequality, affecting aspects such as the distribution of jobs held by women (Masadeh et al., 2019), women's roles within the industry (e.g., Blayney and Blotnicky, 2017), advancement opportunities for women (Masadeh, 2013b), and the prevalence of this issue (Timo and Davidson, 2005).

While gender roles within the organization should not exclude women from the hotel industry, previous research has indicated certain hotel companies demonstrating gender bias and discrimination (Masadeh, 2013c). Women often face a lower likelihood of being hired compared to men (Magablih, 2006), and the overall representation of women in the hotel industry remains limited (Masadeh et al., 2019; Blayney and Blotnicky, 2017). Despite being equally capable, talented, and skilled, it

is uncommon to see women working in predominantly male environments, especially in regions like Jordan (Masadeh, 2013).

Blayney and Blotnick's (2017) update of their 2012 study indicated that the representation of women in the hotel industry remains low. In some regions, such as the Middle East, discussing the role of women in the hotel industry remains challenging. Moreover, data on female workers in the hotel industry are scarce and nearly non-existent in countries like Jordan (Masadeh, 2010). Available literature suggests that women in the hotel industry often occupy semi-skilled or unskilled, low-paying, gender-biased, non-managerial positions (Davies, Taylor & Savery, 2001).

Cultural values and beliefs regarding the suitability of women for certain roles vary across societies. Some cultures consider it inappropriate for women to work in the hotel industry. Women are often deemed more suitable for customer interaction, particularly with male customers, and are therefore preferred in people-oriented roles like room division and marketing departments (Kattara, 2005). However, women are also sometimes stereotyped in seductive roles or even as objects of sexual desire in certain instances.

In terms of managerial positions, the hotel industry remains predominantly dominated by men (Timo & Davidson, 2005). Interestingly, the literature indicates variations in the representation of women in managerial roles among hotels of different star ratings. For instance, in 4- and 5-star international hotel chains, job roles are almost evenly split between men and women (Timo and Davidson, 2005).

While women have been found to be more productive and committed than their male counterparts in some cases (Alhammad, 2020), a key issue of gender inequality, as previously identified, is the lack of career advancement for women. Women tend to show a higher inclination toward entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality, focusing on cost-reduction rather than income-generation activities favored by their male counterparts, which tend to be more long-term oriented (Alhammad, 2020). Women can make a positive difference when provided with opportunities. Senior managers have begun to recognize that fully committed women often achieve better results than men (Maxwell, 1997). Additionally, female senior managers tend to be more determined and democratic in their management approach, enhancing staff commitment (Liu and Wilson, 2001). Recruiting women into key positions is

associated with long-term company success and provides a competitive edge by tapping into the unique skills that women bring to the workforce, fostering a culture of inclusion through a diverse workforce (Gupta, 2019). Some findings suggest that female employees tend to display higher levels of loyalty. According to Patwardhan et al. (2018), women in managerial positions may adjust their satisfaction levels to minimize conflict and maintain their commitment to their jobs.

1.06 Career Aspirations

Career aspirations pertain to the professional aims, objectives, and ambitions that an individual desires, often encompassing the specific career trajectory they aim to follow and the milestones they intend to accomplish over the course of their employment. These aspirations are indicative of a person's long-term vision for their career and often reflect their personal interests, values, and passions. Career aspirations can be multifaceted and may encompass various aspects, including job roles, industry preferences, skill development, and potential opportunities for advancement.

Individuals typically formulate their career aspirations based on their unique set of experiences, educational background, personal strengths, and desired lifestyle. These aspirations serve as guiding principles that help individuals navigate their career choices and make informed decisions about their professional development and growth. Moreover, career aspirations can evolve over time as individuals gain new experiences, skills, and insights, leading them to reevaluate and recalibrate their goals to align with their evolving priorities and interests.

Career aspirations play a crucial role in motivating individuals to strive for personal and professional development. They serve as a driving force that fuels ambition, perseverance, and dedication, encouraging individuals to set realistic and achievable targets for themselves and work towards realizing their full potential. As individuals progress in their careers, their aspirations may expand to include broader objectives such as leadership roles, professional recognition, and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact within their chosen field.

In the context of organizational settings, understanding employees' career aspirations is essential for fostering a conducive work environment that supports their growth and development. Employers can facilitate the achievement of employees' career

aspirations by providing opportunities for skill enhancement, training programs, mentorship, and a clear pathway for career advancement within the organization. By aligning employees' aspirations with the organizational goals and providing the necessary resources and support, employers can enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance.

A career is often described as a series of progressive roles that constitute an individual's lifelong work journey. Powell and Butterfield (2002) define career aspirations as an individual's ambitions for future employment. As mentioned earlier, aspirations represent strong desires that guide individuals toward their goals when they actively work toward achieving them. Career aspirations originate from an individual and, in turn, shape one's values, beliefs, and norms. Several factors influence an individual's aspirations, including family, education, social institutions, community environment, ethnicity, and age, among others. Baruch (2004) points out that aspirations are integral to intelligent career development and encompass elements such as attitude, ethics, motivation, internal needs, identity, and what drives people to select specific careers, jobs, and lifestyles. Hence, it is crucial to analyze career aspirations because they have a substantial impact on an individual's professional performance. Schein (1975) introduced the concept of career anchors and identified various career interests that guide people's career aspirations. Career aspiration encompasses self-perceptions, including needs, motives, talents, skills, and personal values, which reside within an individual's intrinsic self. It provides a rationale for making choices that align with one's self-image. Schein identified eight career preferences that influence people's career aspirations, encompassing technical and functional proficiency, managerial abilities, autonomy, job security, a sense of service, an appetite for pure challenge, lifestyle considerations, integration of work and personal life, and entrepreneurial skills.

In the context of theories related to career development, the significance of occupational ambitions for young people aiming for professions that resonate with their self-perceptions has been recognized (Patton & Creed, 2007). Super's vocational development theory introduced the idea of vocational self-concept, which is crucial in choosing careers that align with a person's self-identity and is influenced by the interplay between the individual and their surroundings. The social cognitive theory emphasizes the influence of environmental factors such as opportunities, resources,

barriers, financial support, parental behavior, and school influence on the formation of vocational self-concept. Vocational self-concept is linked to an individual's future career expectations (Holcomb-McCoy & Young, 2012) and is associated with the expression of career-related goals and choices. Early aspirations are predictive of later aspirations and, ultimately, the occupational choices individuals make (Rojewski, 2005). Research has demonstrated that adolescents' aspirations and expectations can predict their educational attainment as adults, underscoring the importance of understanding the factors influencing career aspirations (Beal & Crockett, 2010). Career development typically becomes a conscious consideration during adolescence, generally around the age of 14 or older (Gottfredson, 2005). Nevertheless, several teenagers find it challenging to articulate their distinct interests, capabilities, and objectives, in part due to the fact that many of the personal characteristics relevant to their vocational development are not fully formed at this stage. As a result, adolescents may make career choices before fully exploring available options, often due to a lack of awareness about their education and employment opportunities. In some cases, career decisions are more influenced by emotions than by a thorough assessment of career prospects (Holcomb-McCoy & Young, 2012).

Various factors, including social and economic background, academic achievement, parental job roles, parental educational attainment, and parental outlooks all influence career ambitions (Adragna, 2009; Berzin, 2010). These factors establish the criteria against which adolescents measure themselves and offer the context for their pursuit of aspirations. Disparities in career aspirations among male and female adolescents, or the absence thereof, are shaped by contextual elements (Massey, Gebhardt, & Garnefski, 2008). Cultural beliefs about gender significantly influence individuals' perceptions of their competence in various career-related tasks, regardless of their actual abilities. These perceptions, differentiated by gender, impact the career decisions individuals make, directing men and women toward different career trajectories (Correll, 2001). Studies indicate that, on the whole, women tend to harbor higher career aspirations than men (Nadeem & Khalid, 2018). Women also exhibit interest in a broader array of careers and demonstrate greater flexibility in terms of gender roles in their career goals compared to men (Mendez & Crawford, 2002). For instance, women are more inclined to aspire to and achieve high-status professions, even those traditionally dominated by men (Adragna, 2009). Preferences in academic

subjects also display gender distinctions, with females favoring subjects like biology, while males often gravitate toward physics and chemistry (Kang, Hense, Scheersoi, & Keinonen, 2019). A trend shows that males tend to prioritize prestige and external rewards, whereas females are more attracted to internal gratification (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Nevertheless, some researchers have discovered no significant contrasts between males and females in terms of career aspirations and expectations, which could be attributed to societal changes related to increased gender equality (Creed, Conlon, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007).

Furthermore, academic performance has been identified as a predictor of the educational ambitions of secondary school adolescents (Salami, 2008). Consequently, students who excel academically may hold higher career aspirations compared to their less academically successful peers (Adragna, 2009). Importantly, accomplished women exceed the career aspirations of both average-performing women and men and are comparable to the career aspirations of accomplished men (Watson, Quatman, & Edler, 2002). Conversely, adolescents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds with a track record of poorer academic performance are more prone to uncertainty in their career aspirations (Gutman & Schoon, 2012).

Furthermore, young individuals who have faith in their ability to achieve success and credit their achievements to hard work, rather than luck or destiny, tend to have higher aspirations compared to their peers (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Moreover, females who view themselves as hardworking and internally motivated are more inclined to aspire to careers traditionally dominated by men. In contrast, it seems that males' career aspirations are less associated with their self-perceived drive for accomplishment. This indicates that, for girls, having ambitious career goals is not necessarily the norm, and it is often the most diligent young women who are most likely to aspire to non-traditional careers typically pursued by men (Mendez & Crawford, 2002).

1.07 Challenges for women's career aspirations in Hospitality and Tourism industry

The Hospitality Industry stands as one of the leading sectors that provides numerous employment opportunities for women, contributing significantly to its growth and development. Women play a pivotal role in elevating the industry's status by showcasing their talents and skills. They hold diverse positions within the Hospitality

Industry, ranging from supervisory roles to top-level management, and in doing so, they confront various critical challenges. These challenges encompass aspects like managing family responsibilities, achieving work-life balance, and addressing specific hurdles to attain prestigious careers within the Hospitality Industry.

Roles of Women: Women are now actively involved in various management and key positions within the Hospitality industry, including roles such as Directors, General Managers, and Executives.

Women in the Hospitality Industry: Currently, women are undergoing notable changes and advancements in their roles within the sector. They are taking on more prominent positions in various establishments such as restaurants, hotels, catering companies, and resorts, assuming roles as Directors, General Managers, Executives, and more. Industry experts anticipate a continued increase in the demand for female professionals. As indicated by HR Managers, 50% of those with expertise in hotel management choose to work in upscale hotels, often in establishments rated five stars and above. This inclination is motivated by better career prospects, increased salaries, and enhanced professional reputation. While interviews with HR managers revealed that women in the hotel industry are primarily concentrated in front-office, back-office, and housekeeping roles, there is a positive shift expected in hiring women for traditionally male-dominated departments like food and beverages.

Women in the Tourism Industry: Tourism generates a wide array of opportunities for women through its intricate value chains within the destination economy. Unfortunately, the significant roles and contributions of women in tourism are often overlooked or taken for granted. It is important to acknowledge the significant economic input of women and guarantee their access to financial resources, training programs, educational initiatives, business prospects, support for establishing unions, organizations, and collaborative groups to strengthen their ability to negotiate collectively, and to cater to their safety, well-being, and social welfare needs.

Factors Leading to Underrepresentation of Female Employees in the Hospitality Industry: Several factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the Hospitality industry, including conflicting work-family priorities and a predominantly male-dominated corporate culture. Women who aim for top positions often find themselves balancing and occasionally compromising between their domestic responsibilities and professional pursuits. In particular, female newcomers to the

industry should be pragmatic about their career progression, dedicating time to learn and understand the industry's culture and operations comprehensively.

Traditional hiring practices in the hospitality industry often favor women with a strong career profile and substantial operational department experience. Acquiring such experience is deemed essential for career advancement and should be pursued early in one's career, ideally before marriage or assuming domestic commitments. A career in the hospitality industry demands substantial investment in terms of long working hours and irregular schedules, making strong family support a crucial component for women to succeed in this field. Such support allows female employees to invest early in their careers and amass a diverse range of experiences necessary for success.

Numerous factors may impede women's career progression and salaries in the Hospitality industry. While the industry has recently gained social acceptance as a viable career option for women, they still grapple with the challenge of balancing family responsibilities with work commitments. Entertaining and interacting with guests, which is a common requirement in this industry, can be stressful and demanding for many women. Furthermore, even after returning home from work, it can be challenging to completely disconnect from work matters, particularly for those in senior positions.

Challenges in Handling Employee Grievances As stated by Parkin in 2009, employee grievances within the hospitality industry are significantly influenced by a range of factors. These factors encompass issues related to wages, the continuity of employment, promotions, workplace facilities, compensation, penalties, disciplinary measures, leave policies, salary increments, job characteristics, medical and maternity benefits, safety equipment, duty recovery, supervision, retirement plans, working conditions, and employee transfers.

The process of managing grievances offers numerous advantages, contributing to the improvement of the organizational culture and overall work environment in the hospitality sector. It facilitates the open expression of grievances, enabling management to gain a better understanding of these issues and take the necessary steps to address them. Additionally, it serves as a proactive measure in preventing grievances by acknowledging the potential escalation of such concerns. The specific

types of grievances experienced by female employees within the hospitality industry are detailed below:

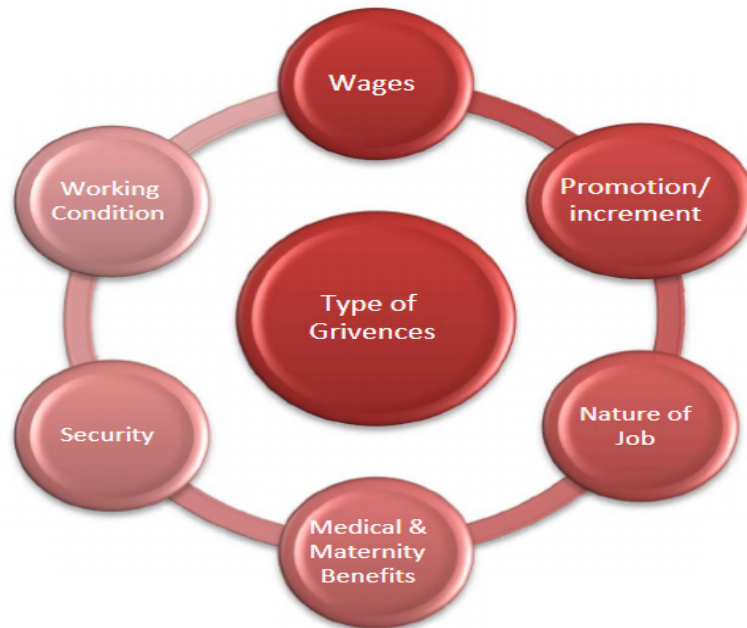


Fig. 1.1 : (Source: Suresh Gyan Vihar University International journal of Economics and management, Manish Shrivastava)

1.08 Importance of the Study

This focus group study is undertaken to assess women's career aspirations within the Hospitality and Tourism industry in the Mumbai (MMRDA) area. A primary concern for women is their ability to continue working after marriage or when starting a family. While some manage to balance their careers with domestic responsibilities, others face difficulties due to a lack of support. Certain women opt to leave the workforce entirely to attend to more pressing duties, such as childcare. Consequently, when they decide to return to work after their children have grown, they encounter challenges in reentering the job market, often resulting in a few years of career hiatus. Opportunities for women after such breaks are limited, and many end up restarting their professional journeys from where they left off or even at lower positions with reduced paychecks. It is essential to note that this issue is not confined to the hospitality industry; it affects various sectors.

Even while employed and putting in a full day's work at their offices, women face an additional set of responsibilities at home. Achieving a balance between work and personal life is crucial for enhancing workplace productivity, necessitating support from both family and the workplace itself.

Attracting and Retaining Talent: The India Skills Report of 2018 indicates that the Travel and Hospitality sector, along with the Banking and Financial sector, has the potential to improve gender diversity given the favorable work environment they offer. By realigning hiring objectives, focusing on overall gender diversity strategies, addressing wage disparities, improving work-life balance, and addressing other factors of equality, these sectors can achieve their gender diversity goals. Nevertheless, data suggests that women tend to leave the industry due to feelings of exclusion from informal communication networks and the perception of being overlooked in decisions related to career advancement. Although change is happening, the aim is to promote gender equity across organizations.

Nevertheless, the unique culture and history that characterizes the hospitality industry, where men predominantly occupy leadership roles, present challenges for change. While this pattern still holds in the hospitality sector, the past few decades have witnessed significant transformation and growth for women within the field. Presently, there is a substantial representation of women in the hospitality workforce, primarily at lower hierarchical levels, with limited female presence in leadership positions. It is crucial to focus on the establishment of role models and leaders through career development, succession planning, and mentorship.

1.09 Scope of the Study

This study is conducted in the MMRDA area of Mumbai, a metropolitan region with ample work opportunities for all, including women. However, women in the region have not achieved successful careers within the Hospitality and Tourism Industry. Despite their qualifications and employment, women do not tend to pursue long-lasting careers within the industry, and even if they do, they struggle to attain higher positions.

Despite possessing the necessary qualifications and entering the workforce, women often confront formidable barriers that prevent them from forging enduring and successful careers within the field of hospitality and tourism. These obstacles manifest in various ways, ultimately resulting in a significant disparity between the professional trajectories of men and women. Despite their entry into the industry, women frequently encounter difficulties in sustaining their career advancement, struggling to secure higher-ranking positions within their respective fields.

One of the key challenges women face is the difficulty in establishing long-term career paths. Despite possessing the requisite skills and educational backgrounds, many women find themselves either compelled to discontinue their careers prematurely or encountering formidable roadblocks preventing their upward mobility within the industry. This predicament often arises due to a combination of societal expectations, organizational biases, and structural impediments ingrained within the fabric of the industry.

Furthermore, the study highlights the prevalence of gender-based disparities in leadership and senior management positions within the Hospitality and Tourism sector in the MMRDA area. Despite the increasing presence of women in entry-level roles, the proportion of women in higher positions remains disproportionately low. This phenomenon underscores the existence of systemic challenges that hinder the professional growth and development of women, ultimately contributing to a gender gap in terms of career progression and leadership opportunities within the industry.

Moreover, the research underscores the significant struggles that women encounter in navigating the complexities of the workplace environment. These challenges can include limited access to mentorship, a lack of support networks, and the pervasive influence of traditional gender roles that can undermine women's ambitions and hinder their advancement within the industry.

Overall, the study underscores the pressing need for comprehensive interventions to address the underlying systemic issues that impede the successful career advancement of women within the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in the MMRDA area of Mumbai. By recognizing and addressing these barriers, it is possible to create a more inclusive and equitable environment that fosters the professional growth and development of women, enabling them to achieve their full potential within the industry.

1.10 Conceptual Model

A conceptual model serves as the blueprint for a research study, outlining the key concepts, variables, relationships, and hypotheses to guide the investigation. In the context of evaluating the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry in Mumbai MMRDA area, conceptual model provides a structured framework for understanding and analysing this complex issue. Here's a simplified conceptual model for this research topic:

1. **Independent Variables:**
 - a. **Socio-Demographic Factors:** - Age - Educational Background - Marital Status - Family Support
 - b. **Workplace Factors:** - Type of Employment (e.g., full-time, part-time, freelance) - Position and Hierarchical Level - Workplace Culture and Gender Diversity
2. **Mediating Variables:**
 - a. **Personal Aspirations and Goals:** - Career Goals - Work-Life Balance Aspirations
 - b. **Perceived Opportunities and Challenges:** - Perceived Career Opportunities - Perceived Gender-Related Challenges
3. **Dependent Variable:**
 - a. **Career Aspirations of Women within the hospitality and tourism sector in Mumbai MMRDA Area.**
4. **Hypotheses:**
 - a. H1: Socio-demographic factors significantly influence women's career aspirations in the hospitality and tourism industry in Mumbai MMRDA.
 - b. H2: Workplace factors have a significant impact on women's career aspirations in this industry.
 - c. H3: Personal aspirations and goals mediate the relationship between socio-demographic factors, workplace factors, and career aspirations.
 - d. H4: Perceived opportunities and challenges mediate the relationship between workplace factors and career aspirations.
5. **Research Methods:**
 - a. **Data Collection:** - Surveys/questionnaires to gather quantitative data on socio-demographic factors, workplace factors, personal aspirations, perceived opportunities, and challenges, and career aspirations.
 - b. **Data Analysis:** - Statistical techniques like regression analysis to test hypotheses and identify significant factors influencing career aspirations.
6. **Expected Outcomes:**
 - a. Identification of key socio-demographic factors that impact career aspirations.
 - b. Insights into the role of workplace factors in shaping aspirations.

- c. Understanding how personal goals and perceptions mediate these relationships.
 - d. A comprehensive view of the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry in Mumbai MMRDA.
7. **Policy Implications:**
- a. The results can guide the development of policies and programs designed to foster gender parity and bolster the advancement of women's careers in the industry.
 - b. Recommendations for nurturing a workplace culture of inclusivity and improving opportunities for women.
8. **Limitations and Future Research:**
- a. Acknowledgment of potential limitations, such as the sample size or data collection methods.
 - b. Suggestions for future research directions, including longitudinal studies or qualitative investigations for deeper insights.

This conceptual model provides a structured framework for studying the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry in the Mumbai MMRDA area. It outlines the variables, relationships, and hypotheses that will guide the research process, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of this important issue and informing policies and strategies to support women's career aspirations in this sector.

1.11 Objectives of the Study

The aims of the research are,

- To recognize or identify the key priorities and barriers in women's career aspirations in Hospitality and Tourism industry
- To gain consensus on key issues faced by women in Hospitality and Tourism industry
- To urge the industry leaders and HR heads to incorporate women friendly policies in their organisations. To identify the key drivers that motivates women to have successful careers in the hospitality and tourism industries.
- Make hospitality industry conducive to employment of women by way of women friendly policies.

- Ladies can have well planned and successful careers in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry.

1.12 Hypothesis of the Study

- Age and Career Aspirations
- Economic background and career aspirations
- Career aspirations and marital status of women
- Single women and married women
- Levels of education and career aspirations
- Achievement needs and Career aspirations
- Use career aspirations scale of Gregor and O Brian to measure Professional, Educational and Achievement aspirations

Hypotheses framed for the study based on the above:

Age and Career Aspirations Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between age and career aspirations among women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Age is significantly related to career aspirations among women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Economic Background and Career Aspirations Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): Economic background has no significant influence on the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Economic background significantly affects the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Career Aspirations and Marital Status Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): Marital status does not impact the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Marital status is a significant factor affecting the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Single Women and Married Women Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in career aspirations between single and married women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Career aspirations differ significantly between single and married women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Levels of Education and Career Aspirations Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): Levels of education do not have a significant impact on the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Levels of education significantly influence the career aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Achievement Needs and Career Aspirations Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between achievement needs and career aspirations among women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Achievement needs are significantly related to career aspirations among women in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Use of the Career Aspirations Scale by Gregor and O'Brian Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): The use of the career aspirations scale by Gregor and O'Brian does not accurately measure the professional, educational, and achievement aspirations of women in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The career aspirations scale by Gregor and O'Brian is a valid measure of professional, educational, and achievement aspirations among women in the hospitality and tourism industry.