

The New Work Order and Gender Implication

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Introduction

The focus of this paper is that gender affiliation and gender identities of individuals affect their working and living conditions. Gender has been understood both as something that is pre built into social structures and as something that is created, reproduced and changed in relationships between people.

Gender as a structural principle operates at several different levels at once. Societal gender structures find expression in norms and how women and men "are" or "ought to be", as manifested for instance through public discourse, politics and media. But gender structures are also at work in the organization of the labour markets and workplaces, as well in the way we behave in private relationships within families and with friends. Gender has a powerful impact on the development of a person's identity.

The understanding of the complex processes that lead to the consequences for the individual both in work life as well as life outside work is a difficult task. Although research in a gender perspective has made many important contributions to working life research in recent decades, most research within the sphere of working life has a gender-neutral perspective, in which gender as a social category has no significance. Thus explanatory models continue to be produced which continue to not satisfactorily address the problem.

Gender Processes in Development-Gender Segregation and Gender Marking

Gender Segregation , and the structure on which women's relatively subordinate position in the work force is based, keeps women working at lower level jobs, concentrating power in the hands of men. This subordination is most clearly seen at the overall level in two dimensions **lateral subordination**, where female - dominated sectors and occupations have a lower status than male

dominated sectors and occupations, and subordination in the vertical dimension, where women as a group are to be found at a lower level in the hierarchies than men. **Researchers have shown that women's chances of development are better in network organizations than in hierarchical organizations** (Gunnarsson and Ressner 1983; Ressner 1985). In one study, Kvande and Rasmussen, 1990 compared the hierarchical organization with the network organization. They summarised their findings as given below:

Hierarchy Organisations:

- Specialisation and strict division of labour
- Vertical communication
- Centralised decision-making systems
- Influence according to hierarchical position,

Network Organisations:

- Flexible and team-based work organization
- Transverse communication
- Decentralised decision-making systems
- Influence on basis of knowledge and experience

A comparison between hierarchy and network organizations shows that a hierarchical organization limits people's exposure to new challenges. On the other hand a network organisation offers considerable, in principle limitless, challenges. *Hierarchical organizations* are likely to make women invisible as bearers of knowledge, and isolate them, often at the bottom of the hierarchy. A hierarchical organisation promotes a gender order where men are given pride of place over women. Network organizations become more female-friendly, largely by virtue of their flexibility. *Network organizations* are more amenable to change, make women visible as working individuals and allow all employees to take on greater challenges. Network organizations are also more female-friendly because they better reflect women's attitude to work, women's values and their general way of being (Gunnarsson 1991; Kvande and Rasmussen 1990).

The structures in a work organization are often seen as gender neutral, as independent of whether the organization's members are women or men. However, one has to question how gender affects the processes and structures of the organizations. Organisational structures must be understood and analysed as gendered systems. Different forms of organization have different gender-political effects. The so-called gender power systems, i.e. underlying conceptions, standards and practices in modern companies, are constituent elements in the logic of organizations and in fact more or less make women's conditions "invisible". (Acker 1987; Baude et al. 1987; Gunnarsson et al. 1991; Kvande and Rasmussen 1990).

However, gender based power structures are not static since society, norms and values change over a period of time. Structures arise out of social relations and are therefore the result of actions by individuals and groups. Gender is thus viewed not as something that is being constructed, by ourselves and by others in constant interaction, within the framework of the structures that surround us.

Gender segregation is the process in which women and men end up in different types of occupation, so that two different types of labour market may be said to exist, female and male. Gender marking and gender segregation interact, and are determined by the social structure of gender.

So gender marking takes place by a process in which the qualifications and characteristics of an occupation become associated with gender. This gives us an idea of which gender a person should have for a particular job. Gender marking becomes apparent when occupations become female or male. In theory, gender segregation may be seen as a result of gender marking of qualifications, characteristics, occupations and work functions. However, there is interplay between the gender-segregated society in which we live and the gender-marking process, one result of which is that the conditions that lead to gender marking change over time.

In many situations, the thought process is that if only the number of women within an occupation, organization, company, board of directors or in the government etc. becomes more equal, then gender segregation will decline and society will become more equal. But research shows that the values and processes that result in occupations becoming gender-marked and gender-segregated do not change especially when more women enter what was previously a clearly male-dominated area. (Westberg, 2008) As Westberg suggests, gender segregation is not synonymous with gender marking – a process that renders an occupation typically female or male. If a society can deal with gender marking, gender segregation will fade away. *Notions and ideas about what is feminine and masculine legitimize the placement of women and men in different occupational categories or the same occupational categories, but with the content differently defined.* This leads to notions that “female” qualifications and qualities differ from “male”. The gender structure of the workplace is underpinned by the kind of generally shared perceptions of which requirements are posed by various jobs and by notions of which skills are possessed by women and men. Such qualities do not necessarily come from the individual; they may also be associated with what a particular job attributes to the individual, such as power, status and pay.

Women's Working World

The lack of freedom of choice, power and material resources, traditional gender roles and norms, stand in the way of development, as is evident in most parts of the world. Significantly, a large proportion of women in the world live in poverty and in fact efforts to reduce poverty are inseparable from the aspirations for greater equality. Research indicates that gender equality in the long run has led to reduction of poverty. ***In fact unequal power structures for women and men constitute an impediment to economic growth and democratic development***. Equal opportunities for women and men to own land and assets, to earn money and to participate in working life, are essential for sustainable and democratic development in the long run.

For a number of reasons it is important to impose a perspective of gender on women's and men's working life. One fundamental reason is that it is assumed that the conditions in working life are the same for women and men.

A number of studies, show that women are more often overqualified for their job than men. Other studies show that women have less influence over their work organisation and content than men. Women also generally have a greater degree of monotonous, repetitive motion in their work. Further, studies show that occupations where women predominate have a lower status than male dominated occupations, even if the occupations require equivalent education and training. In workplaces with as many women as men, in apparently the same occupation, the women often perform different tasks, which most of the time are classified differently in status and pay. The work

women almost always perform is valued lower.

A consistently large proportion of female workers in both the public and private sectors are employed part-time. The number of temporary and short-term contractual jobs is steadily increasing. This weakens common pay policies, starting a trend towards more local and individual pay agreements. Because employees in managerial position very rarely work part-time, the dualistic model causes immense problems for highly educated women as far as work is concerned. Budget cutbacks in the public sector, which already has undervalued jobs (as compared to the private sector) in care occupations, worsen conditions for the majority of working women. The current emphasis on giving preference to market solutions has also aggravated these cutbacks.

When building families, men are usually learning their trade or occupation, and establishing their position in the labour market. Women still have responsibility for care, both at home and in the public sector. She therefore plans a larger part of her life around the combination of gainful employment and her responsibilities in the home and for the family. She does this by using different strategies for both caring for the family and maintaining her employment. Only by fitting together different working hours, part-time work, and temporary jobs, and relying extensively on public services, can she meet these varying demands

Consequences of the New Labour Market

As a consequence of the new conditions in the labour market, there is a strong tendency to demand a work force which is available only when needed. These changes to the labour market affect the unemployed, those with temporary employment, and even permanent employees.

The recent changes in the work and jobs environment places higher demands especially on women for greater flexibility and adaptability (the economic meltdown of the latter half of 2008, 24x7 jobs). This means that women will have greater difficulty in planning and combining work and family life. However, women feel greater anxiety than men about the changes to the labour market that will affect them. A look at the type of employment for women indicates they have a more insecure situation on the labour market. Women have temporary jobs to a greater degree than men. And to a much greater extent, they feel they must adapt their working life to their family.

What is Work?

For the framing of development policies, national level statistics is the principal data input, but this is largely impaired by the undercounting of women, both as workers and those available for work. The first barrier is off course the definition of work vis a vis women's work. We continue to relate work only to remunerative aspects of work as work. The ideology that all women are primarily 'housewives' and whatever work they do is marginal and secondary to that of men pervades the data system from the formulation of the schedule design to actual data collection and reporting. Conceptually, the multiple roles played by women at different levels of economic life are not perceived because of the definition of work as 'for pay or profit'.

The total share of employment by women world-wide is around 40% (2006); this makes them indispensable contributors to the national economies. But still the women's proportion of the world's poor and working poor continues to increase. Estimates suggest that more than 60% of the world's working poor comprise women, and given the inequalities in the labour market women will find it more difficult to escape poverty.

As mentioned earlier women and men commonly perform divergent tasks, work in different sectors and in different positions. The majority of women work in the informal economy in domestic work and street vending and from their homes.

Globally, women suffer more from job insecurity, limited possibilities for training and promotion, and low or no social benefits (e.g. insurance, sick leave).

Women all over the world have generally retained the main responsibility of unpaid work associated with household, childcare & other unpaid duties, such as taking care of sick & elderly relatives. This may continue to be a greater total workload & reduce women's opportunities for rest and restitution outside work. We today are looking at the total workload (paid and unpaid work) of women & men who have chosen to combine an occupational career with family responsibilities.

Indian women are engaged in two kinds of work; one that produces an income and other that does not. The former in turn has home-based work and work outside the home. Even within the latter, there are many components that are not 'pure' domestic work like cooking, cleaning, child care but encompass post-harvest processing, livestock maintenance, gathering of fuel, fodder, water and forest produce, unpaid family labour in the family farm or family enterprise and so on.

Even where women are doing work which is market-oriented, the special characteristics of women's work make such work 'invisible', as for example, home-based piece rate workers. The Census concept of 'work' overemphasize production for exchange and although it does include some non-market production for own consumption such as cultivation where men are also involved, it excludes by a strange logic other types of production for own consumption such as livestock maintenance (done mostly by women) and hence these figures do not correspond with the non-market output in the national accounts. According to the 1981 Census only a little over 13 percent women are shown as workers, whereas the Report of the National Commission on Self-employed Women, Shram Shakti (1988), states that 89 per cent of women workers are in the 'unorganized sector'

In India, the organized sector accounts for a very small proportion of total employment in the country. At present, the organized sector employs about 8% of workers as almost 92% employment is provided by the unorganized sector.

The unorganized or informal sector consists of production or business units that employ less than 10 persons. This sector is the main source of employment. About 92% of country's population is employed in the unorganized sector within this sector; agriculture contributes the largest share of employment. It accounts for nearly 55% of total employment in the country. Trade, transport, tourism, roadside restaurants etc; that are run on a small -scale are also sources of informal employment.

Feminization of Work

The phrase feminization of work in the sense it is being used now was probably first employed systematically by Guy Standing of the ILO (Standing 1989). The article included data from various countries at different stages of development; it showed that, since about the mid-sixties, there has been a widespread trend towards a higher share of women workers in the labour force of both developed and developing countries.

Without getting into the question regarding Standings viewpoint the question is: if feminization of the workforce were to take place, would it necessarily be empowering for women? Of the two current views on this issue, that of Standing and his friends is that feminization does little to reduce

women's subordination and may even enhance it. The other point of view has been put forward, among others by Sen (1990), and claims that wage work increases the bargaining power of women in the household and the economy and is therefore empowering. This though is more complex and more research needs to continue.

As Banerjee (2008) suggests the problem is, in most cases that the initial position of the woman at the entry to the labour market is such that her expected income from the work is poor and uncertain; it is by no means sufficient for her to live singly. Added to that are the problems associated with the society's reaction to women who seek divorce or try to find a living on their own. Therefore, at least in South Asian countries, women are rarely able or willing to walk out of the marital home. In that case, wage work outside the house increases her sharing her housework. Perhaps the jobs in the export factories, however exploitative they might be, at least give women an opportunity to find a way of living with other women and to draw strength from them in her deals with the family. So, unlike what Sen has claimed, Banerjee does not think that work by itself would always give women the necessary bargaining strength; but factory work, especially when it brings women into close contact with others in a similar situation, may well do so.

Health- How Women & Men Conceptualize Health

It is a well known fact that women report more health problems than men (Bildt.), almost regardless of the type of complaint; at the same time there is no consensus on the reason for this phenomenon. But what is interesting in the context of gender differences in health complaints is how women and men conceptualize health. Blaxter (1990) found that women showed a stronger tendency to express multi-dimensional concepts of health and were much more likely than men to identify psychological factors, family structure and social relationships as being important influence on health.

In addition Walters (1993) found in study that stress became central theme among women they asked to identify three main health problems. This is true both for developed and developing countries and raises the question of whether women experience more unhealthy or stressful psycho-social conditions than men. A condition that might contribute to this possibility is if women in paid jobs assume the main responsibility for home and family to a much higher degree than men.

The point at which work related problems will be accepted by the legislators and other concerned persons/organizations depends on the current social climate and is related to historical and cultural factors in a society including attitudes toward men and women. Societal values and preconceptions are being constantly altered, by new knowledge, which contains both apparent and obscure messages that affect society sub-consciously. This is important for understanding working conditions for men and women and their relationship to health in different countries, different classes and social group a look at the official statistics for the distribution of the labour force by area of work in any country always shows a more or less skewed distribution.

New technology is being developed and used in both new and old industries. Demand for outdated skills therefore shrinks, while workers with training in the newer techniques are in high demand. "Flexible specialization" production has been developed, resulting in quick changes to the products made. New forms of training are developed within the company rather than in colleges and universities. At the same time, new forms of production and working are being used. These include systems such as flexible tasking, distance work, "just-in-time" employment, short-term employment, and "consultant" hiring. The public debate is focused largely on the conflict between the goals of a profit oriented economy and the goals of public well-being aimed at meeting certain societal needs.

The new conditions also affect employee attitudes towards employers. The worsened conditions at

the workplace and in working life may result in decreased confidence in employers. Ill-health caused when patterns of reliance between employees and employers break down as a result of the insecure labour market. Loss of confidence in employers can be seen as the cause of a type of ill-health. Because women have a more insecure position in this market, they are more likely to experience symptoms related to this ill-health syndrome than men.

Occupational Safety and Health of men and women

Michael Quinlin in the Australian Journal: *Labour History* (No: 37, 1997), suggested that occupational safety and health has been neglected by historians in most countries, despite an increasing interest in social history and labour history since 1960's. Problems concerning working conditions and work safety have not been acknowledged as an independent field of research. The issues of occupational safety & health remain largely ignored because of the nature of women's work itself which continues to be largely invisible, unpaid & home-based. The individual's outlook on the future employment situation, considering both the possibilities and risks, can be related to such problems as fatigue, listlessness, indigestion, insomnia, and more--- among both women and men there are problems which are work related but have not yet been acknowledged as such.

Women's visible presence in paid employment, formal as well as informal, has initiated research on one hand on how their health should be protected, and on the other on how gender affects their health related to work

Differences in ill-health are referred to two main categories; the biological that stress the body and the socio-cultural that stress health related behaviour and life-conditions. It is important to note that both modes of explanations simultaneously are necessary to understand the concept. Hence; the concept of health should be understood in this wider perspective. Access and regulations in work life regarding health resources, economic and social factors and power-structures in work-life have a crucial importance in relation to where the line is drawn between health and ill-health.

The integration of a gender perspective in occupational health should be made to ensure that work is safe and healthy for both men and women, taking into account their social specificities. When consideration of women's family roles is integrated, it may also be necessary to make a different definition of a risky paid work schedule, in order to include those that make it particularly difficult to combine work and family.

When considering women in health and safety work questions, relevant questions to men will be considered at the same time. For example in the case of weight and size differences among persons of one sex are much greater than those between men and women. Therefore if you make work and work-tools better adapted to women it means that you also make them more accessible to all.

Adjusting statistically for gender instead of analyzing data separately for women and men limits information on the entire population... In fact less information loss will be the result if you analyse data separately for men and women that means to use data in a gender-sensitive way. (Westberg,) As mentioned before women and men are often found in different occupations but also when they are supposed to have the same occupation their job-tasks often differ. One result of the separated labour-market is that in many occupations there are significant differences between the tasks women and men perform and this naturally leads to their experiencing different problems related to the work environment.

As gender inequality both in and outside the workplace can have an impact on women's occupational safety and health, it should be included or 'mainstreamed' into equality agendas. The risk of ignoring gender or taking a gender 'neutral' approach has in fact led to:

- gender differences being obscured or overlooked
- Less attention being paid to some research areas more related to women
- the extent of risks to women being underestimated

But on the other hand when gender has been taken into account the focus has been on women as child bearers, which has led to other reproductive hazards faced, such as menstruation, menopause. Relationships within the family have also changed over time, not least with the introduction of dual-earner model.

Negotiations and practical compromises in daily life mean that women and men spend a lot of time , commitment and energy piecing together the 'jigsaw' of daily life. However, women still assume a relatively large share of the responsibility for ensuring that the balance between work and family life functions they interrupt their careers when the children are born and then in order to cope with everyday family business, often work part while the children are small.

Usually it is the women who make adjustments in their lives to help aged parents or other close relatives in need of care. Responsibility for the family's social connections with friends and relatives as well as the task of keeping track of school outings, doctors appointments or parent meetings, are further areas of responsibility that often fall to women's lot. A gender based division of labour is thus noticeable, despite progress towards greater equality.

The strategy in present day development policy and planning should be to a) follow a policy of gender mainstreaming and b) Focus areas. Gender mainstreaming means that a gender equality perspective is to be incorporated at all levels and in all stages in the decision- making processes. Focus areas are representation, that is, equal access to positions of power and influence and equal work for equal pay.

Women Work and Health Congresses

A very successful initiative to improve the situation for women's occupational safety and health took place in Spain 1993. This initiative has had a great importance for the interchange and stimulation of research, knowledge and actions in the field of women, work and health. The Centre for Analysis and Sanitary Programs (CAPS) in Barcelona organized an International Workshop Women, Health and Work, in 1993. At this workshop the participants decided to launch the International Congress on Women, Health and Work with the intention to gather research and knowledge about the differences between disease in women and men.

The 1st "Women, Work & Health" Congress took place in Barcelona, Spain 1996. The congress decided to continue working as a network so as to preserve the information gathered from the research done by the different groups. Another important outcome from the Congress was the intention to make special efforts to introduce gender issues and point out differences in disease for women and men at universities and at all teaching levels in Health Sciences.

The second Congress was held in Rio, Brazil 1999 and the outcome was a wide variety of approaches, experiences and proposals. From the scientific point of view important subjects were looked into and new issues added about the relationship between gender, work and health.

The third Congress was held in Stockholm, Sweden in 2002 with the intention of having an international and interdisciplinary Congress to bring together scholars, activists, representatives of civil society organizations and trade unions, of government agencies and persons involved in

practical work from all parts of the world for critical discussions on questions related to women's working conditions, their living conditions and gender-specific issues related to health/ill health. The intention was to continue the intense debate that started in Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro and to leave a legacy in practice. Therefore sessions were organized to discuss how best to disseminate information related to women, work and health and how to develop change in practice.

One of the main outcomes of the congress was the creation of different working networks (the most important was an African network) on women's health and work.

The fourth Congress was held in New Delhi, India 2005 and was centered on the three main themes Gender, paid and unpaid work, the changing world of work and scientific health practiced in development. The reason why the organizers of the Congress chose these themes was a result from preparatory country-wide regional workshops where researchers, non-governmental organizations, unions and persons involved in practical work gathered and discussed Gender, work and health issues.

In India, as in other developing countries, women have always worked in informal sectors, and their work is not acknowledged as such. The work of women is still ignored in the agendas of developing countries, as well as their security and health, including their reproductive health. An initiative called "Woman, Work and Health Initiative Asia" was created for the advancement of the research findings linked to the reality experienced by women, so as to have a positive impact in their lives and work conditions.

The mission of this Initiative is to:

- Recognize women's work in its entirety in the organized, unorganized sectors and the domestic sphere.
- Create awareness on women's issues e.g. gender discrimination, decent work, violence at work and home, knowledge dissemination, life style related health issues, adult literacy and sustainable development.

The **fifth** Congress was held in Zacatecas in Mexico 2008 with the general objective to give continuity to the four previous events, in respect to the discussion and creation of an agenda focused on women's work and health issues, as well as organizational issues. The following specific objectives were the focus:

- To continue the discussions on the main subjects related to women's work and health issues at the local, national, Latin American and international levels.
- To make progress in the organization of women for the improvement of paid and unpaid work conditions at the local and global levels.
- To network / promote the coordination of efforts amongst all actors, whose mission is a commitment towards women, focused on work and health issues?

The Congress laid emphasis on the themes of Situation of the Work Market, Non-remunerated Work, Work Organization; Work Conditions and Work Environment, Public and Private Policies, Rights and Justice, Methodologies (training, action, human resources education and research).

The series of Women Work and Health Congresses have played an important role as they have opened up for an interchange of knowledge between developed and developing countries and between researchers, different organizations, unions, persons involved in practical work with the

focus on issues that are central above all for women and their conditions of work and health.

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