

The Impact of Women on the Workforce

In the traditional workforce in the English speaking Caribbean, men were known to out strip women as the dominant group. This would have given credence to the school of thought that Caribbean women are more likely than men to be unemployed. Based on the current trend where there is seemingly an upsurge in the number of women entering the workforce, this presents a challenge to the claim.

Using Barbados as a reference point, the statistical evidence derived from the Continuous Household Labour Force Survey 2015, shows that of the 128,200 persons employed in the workforce, 63,900 are males as opposed to 64,300 females. The report reflected that the total number of unemployed persons stood at 16,400. This was comprised of 9,000 males and 7,400 females. The information presented would tend to suggest that there is no basis for a case to be made that there is the practice of discrimination against the employment of women in Barbados. It might however be incorrect to arrive at this conclusion without first completing research to identify the types of jobs and employment sectors in which most women are engaged. It can be argued that there is room for a connection to be made between the types of jobs and the quality jobs in which women are primarily recruited.

Looking at the global trends in the employment of women from a global perspective, the status is outlined in the United Nations World's Women 2015 publication on Trends and Statistics. It reports that "Only 50 per cent of women of working age are in the labour force, compared to 77 per cent of men. The gender gap in labour force participation remains especially large in Northern Africa, Western Asia and Southern Asia. The point was also advanced that, "Older women aged 25 to 54 increased their labour force participation in most regions, while that of men in the same age group stagnated or declined slightly across regions. The proportion of women aged 55 to 64 in the labour force has risen in most regions, reflecting changes in the statutory retirement age and pension reforms."

The overall impact of the growing levels of women employed in the workforce is summarized in United Nations the World's Women edition (2015). The point was advanced that "When more women work, economies grow. An increase in female labour force participation/or a reduction in the gap between women's and men's labour force participation/results in faster economic evidence from a range of countries shows that increasing the share of household income controlled by women."

Based on the global trends, it would appear that women are being absorbed into the force, but there remains tangible evidence that there are yet pockets where marginalization and discrimination are practiced. Men in today's world may tend to feel challenged as women may inroad into the traditional areas of employment that were once thought to be the preserve of men. Their entry into male dominated professions, vocations and in industry has created a stir. This development has had the impact of removing many of the inequalities that were known to exist. The large scale entry of women into the workforce has brought with it some consequential benefits to men. For example, the granting of maternity leave for women has helped to lay the platform for the lobby and negotiation of paternity leave for men.

It is a fact that women are now a permanent part of the waged workforce and the union movement. They hold key positions in the leadership and management of workplaces and organizations. Many females are now occupying positions as chief executive officers, human resources managers and accountants. Within the Commonwealth and the Western world, the equality of opportunities to education and training, has help women to rise above being oppressed and exploited. Their entry into the workforce in a dynamic way has triggered more attention to gender equality issues and sexual harassment, amongst others.

The ever increasing number of women into the workforce has lead to a shift from employment in the manufacturing sector to the service sector. This may be one of the fall-out that the large scale entry of women has impacted on one of the key productive sector. Nonetheless, the economic independence and empowerment of women may be seen as a more positive development.