Gender Equality in Northern Province Hospitality Sector in Sri Lanka

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The term “gender equality” describes the equal valuing of the different characters assumed by male and female. At present in Northern part of Sri Lanka, there is huge improvement in the field of hospitality. Nowadays, gender equality is very important in every workforce especially in the hospitality sector. Many countries are accepting the gender equality. After the ethnic war in Northern Province Tamil people without any discrimination, male and female are taking part in the field of hospitality. The main reasons for this change are economical breakdown and the interest of people towards hospitality field. There are more than 10 women staffs working in the hotel industry in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. The hospitality industry helps the women staffs to balance their families. Because Northern Province has many women leadership families. Most of the female workers (Captain of the families) are working as cleaning staff, front office assistance, assistance managers, managers, and training instructors in the Northern Province hotel sector. According to the authors’ field visit, Northern Province hospitality sectors provide some security service for the female staffs such as hostel arrangements, no night shift works, and high security inside the hotel. The Northern Province hospitality outlet not only hotels but also catering service, self-employments such as sweets delivery for the functions and food cooking for the parties, house works are done by both genders because after the war, many families are affected by the economic poverty. According to the authors’ data collection, more than 200 families are doing the self-employment jobs such as catering service for the parties, food issuing for the university students, sweets issuing for the functions. Female staffs are able to work with the good mentality as they come to the working field. Though there are educated people in Northern part of Sri Lanka, only a few are qualified in this particular field. Nevertheless, at present many Northern Province female students are studying hospitality degree at University College of Jaffna. They come from different districts, mostly from Northern Province. The women hoteliers are not only capable in front office but they are also able to work in human resource department, account department, kitchen department, housekeeping department and security service department. At last, it is noted that hospitality is the key factor in the long-lasting sustainability of the economic system of the Northern part of Sri Lanka. In the future, the Northern part of Sri Lanka hospitality sector will improve a lot without any gender discrimination, because at present, the students are studying hospitality degree for their great future. It is a sustainable activity for the Northern Province hospitality sector without gender discrimination.

Keywords: gender equality, northern province, hospitality sector, rules of female staff, economic poverty, sustainable focus of hospitality sector, self-employment

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Gender refers to the social differences and relations between men and women which are learned, vary widely among societies and cultures, and change over time. The term gender does not replace the term sex, which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. For example, statistical data are broken down by sex. The term gender is used to analyze the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of women and men in all areas in any given social context. Gender roles are learned behaviors in a given society, community or other social groups. Gender roles are affected not only by age, class, race, ethnicity and religion, but also by the geographical, economic and political environment.

The term “gender equality” describes the equal valuing of the different characters assumed by male and female. The themes struggle to get over stereotype barriers and wrong thoughts, so both male and female are capable of getting good benefits and contributing towards social, economic development, cultural and job market within the society. When men and women enjoy equality, the family straight outcome is moment and stable growth in the family economy. The educated and healthy women in a society can create the good families and good nations (Lorber, 2005).

Although men and women are dissimilar physically, it is the economic, political, social and legal interpretation of such differences that ultimately leads to creating inequality among them. In social inequality, men and women typically have different responsibilities and roles in their daily lives as well as work. The men do the work for their families and build their life strongly for their sustainable future but women do some difficult work for their families and society as they care about their children, maintain the family and some females go to work due to economic poverty.

Gender equality signifies a society in which men and women enjoy similar opportunities, outcomes, obligations and rights in every sphere of life. Equality between women and men exists only when both sexes are capable of sharing mutually in the distribution of influence and power; have equal opportunities for monetary freedom through formation of businesses or work; enjoy equal and easy access to education and the prospects to develop own personal goals.

The gender equality has been accepted and acknowledged as human rights’ principles since the adoption of charter of the United Nations in 1945. Most of the international agreements such as “the Millennium Development Goals (2000)”, “the Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 Explain about the Gender Equality” and “the World Conference on Human Rights (1993)” have highlighted and stressed the grave need for nations to take appropriate actions against such discriminatory practices (example research paper Gender Equality).

In the Northern part of Sri Lanka social inequality, male and female take typically different responsibilities and roles in their daily lives as well as work. There are many changes in the culture after the war. Because before the war, people followed some rules and regulations in the society, one good example is that before the war, it was the male member who took responsibility of the family in all fields but after the war, the scenario has changed and now both male and female work together without any discrimination.
Role of Women in the Northern Province Hospitality Sector

Securing decent work is crucial for women and men, making it possible for them to build more promising futures for themselves, their families and their communities. Sustainable development is achieved through the contributions of both women and men. Socially constructed gender roles, the biological differences between men and women, and how these interact in the world of work are therefore at the core of decent work. In Northern part of Sri Lanka social inequality, gender issues at the national, regional and global levels are major challenges facing countries, employers and workers in harnessing the capacity of women to contribute more in economic, political and social terms. This study seeks to inform gender roles and gender equality issues within the specific context of the Northern Province hospitality sector and to assess evidence with respect to the various roles that women currently have and potentially can play in the hospitality sector of the Northern Province economy.

The women are playing important role in the Northern Province hotel sector. Because at present, females are mostly needed and are considered people to the Northern Province hospitality sector as hotel sectors most expect the soft skills from the society. It is scientifically proved that females are having soft skills more than males. Because as a hotelier, each staff has to improve his/her soft skills. Northern Province has five districts but Jaffna has hotels more than the other districts, because after the war, Northern Province hospitality sector has gained its importance due to the arrivals of many tourists and visitors from different parts of the world. Northern Province hospitality sector is a developing sector because before the war, Northern Province does not have this much of growth in the hospitality sector. Eight years ago, local government understood the needs and wants of the tourists, and they have started their capital for the construction of new hotels to the tourist. Females are not only capable in front office department, housekeeping department and kitchen department, at present they are also able to work in accounts department, human resource department and maintenance department. They are very keen to do all the work inside the hotels. Especially, Northern Province people have a negative image on the hospitality sector. They think that hotel sector job is disrespect job which is not suitable for the females. Because seen in the hotel field, there is gender inequality in Northern Province hospitality sector.

The Popularity of the Hospitality Sector Among the Female Population

After the war, Northern Province faced lots of problems, such as economic poverty, women leadership families, lack of job opportunities, resource poverty. Thereafter people have to do any job for their daily lives because most of the families are like women leadership families who understood that jobs related to hospitality sector are very profitable and they joined the work for running their family needs and wants.

At present, students are being taught the Hospitality Management in government institutions in Northern Province, such as University College of Jaffna and Advanced Technical Institute. The Sri Lankan government tries to implement the sustainable activity in the Northern Province hospitality sector, that is, the government has provided two government institutions for the hospitality study. The female students are very keen to study hospitality management, e.g., University College of Jaffna has 35 male students and 38 female students (see Figure 1).
Hospitality management is a new subject to the Northern Province people. That is the reason why educated and uneducated people have not deeper experience about that field. This is the major reason why many females do not like to take jobs in this field. If females choose to study this subject, their families will try to stop them because Northern Province people think that hospitality field is a disrespectful field and unsecure job that is the reason why most of the Tamil parents have not allowed their children to study the hospitality (A. Kirushiga, student of University College of Jaffna, personal communication, 2017).

Hospitality field jobs include not only those hotels and restaurants but also sweet corners, cafeteria, fast food corners catering service; sweets-making business and food issuing for the people from home which came under the hospitality outlet jobs. In the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, many families and business people are doing these kinds of jobs very famously. Most of the workers are females anyhow some male workers also work very effectively. They are preparing the foods, sweets from their houses and distribute the food through the parcel or buffet set.

Except this kind of jobs, females are also working as a server, order taker, or food maker. An example is Jaffna KFC food corner which has lots of female workers working as staffs. They are mostly from the Northern part of Sri Lanka. One of the hospitality sector key challenges is to ensure decent work conditions, reduce uncertainty and support moves towards greater gender equality in the opportunities, remuneration and working conditions available to women in the hospitality sector.

The success of the sector depends on staff commitment, loyalty and efficiency, all of which are shown through interactions with customers. Staff wages and working conditions are important considerations when assessing the success of the hospitality sector. Social dialogue and collective bargaining underpin stability and efficiency within the workforce. The Decent Work Agenda of the International Labor Organization was founded on the key principles of creating jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection and promoting social dialogue. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy pursued in a wide range of International Labor Organization activities in order to achieve gender equality.
Decent work is based on the understanding that work is a source of personal dignity, family stability, peace in the community, democracies that deliver for people, and economic growth that expands opportunities for productive jobs and enterprise development. It also supports the concept of providing workers with conditions in which they could perform. In applying the Agenda to the Northern Province sector, positive outcomes should be sought for workers, companies and customers in order to ensure the distribution of benefits among all parties. Northern Province hospitality sector’s contribution to the provincial economy can clearly be linked to poverty reduction. Job creation is a key way of achieving that goal and creating opportunities for women to contribute to poverty alleviation through their own endeavors in the Northern Province hospitality sector workforce.

“Hotel is willing to provide job opportunities to women but in Northern Province the interest among woman to be a part in the hospitality industry is very less compared to southern part of Sri Lanka” (Mr. Anushman Ariyaratnam, human resource manager of the Thinnai Hotel, personal communication, 2017).

Women and Wages in the Northern Province

Commonly, Northern Province hotel organization did not provide the correct salary and service charge to both genders but they provided the high salary for male staff and less salary for the female staff. Because they have a bad opinion about the females working ability. Nevertheless, women are taking equal part in the work, an example is the KFC in Jaffna district which has around 30 staffs working there and most of the workers are females. Nevertheless, the KFC management provides the salary to the female staffs less than the male staffs. (K. Kabilan, student of University College of Jaffna, personal communication, 2017).

Inequality for Women

Women and men are not created equal. They have their God given strengths, focused on their responsibilities for procreation and family viability. Those differences are not easily dismissed. Women mostly have unequal access to face glass ceiling at workplace. Economic inequality is directly related to the monetary and financial conditions of women. Many of the poor women leadership families are in Northern Province. Northern Province hotel sectors and hospitality outlets are giving less salary for women staffs than male staffs. It is one of the gender inequalities in Northern Province hospitality sector. Family and care responsibilities are still not equally shared. The task of looking after dependent family members is largely borne by women. Far more women than men choose to take parental leave. This fact, together with the lack of facilities for child care and elder care, means that women are often forced to exit the labor market. Nowadays, the northern part of Sri Lanka has this kind of activities because Northern Province society has this kind of negative thinking.

The organization provides only three-month maternity leave for the women staffs, which is not enough for them. Some hotel sectors provide only three-month leave with payment but this leave is not enough for the staffs according to the authors’ data collection showing that some of the hotel sectors have not provided the maternity leave with salary and they only provide three-month leave without payment.

The Northern Province hospitality sectors provide the accommodation for the out bound female staffs, because they have to pay high amount for their room rent. The society also describes the women hoteliers negatively because Northern Province people have a negative view towards the hospitality sector work. The main point of this paper is that the society also decreased the women participation inside the hotels and hospitality outlets.
Gender Equality: An Established Human Right

“Women make up roughly half the human population but are relatively marginalized compared with their male counterparts.”

Accomplishing the goal of gender equality requires both men and women to work jointly in sorting and hunting for the solutions, in the particular ways that encourage and support mutual trust and respect. The programs to ensure gender equality should address all types of violence against women, including trafficking in girls and women, promoting positive role of women in peace building and conflict scenarios. It should also be ensured that the issues of gender equality are effectively incorporated into infrastructure and governance activities.

Gender equality is the foremost and primary human right. Women are equally entitled to live in freedom as well as dignity (Malkin, 2005) fear and from want. Empowering women is an effective tool for reducing poverty and advancing development. Empowered women are in a better position for contributing towards productivity and health of entire families as well as communities. They can also support in improving prospects specifically for the future generation (Kramer, 2004).

Female Staffs Working in Northern Province Hospitality Sector (Randomly Access)

Visiting some hotels in Jaffna and Vavuniya districts, the authors collect the details of some staffs from the human resources managers (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1  
Number of Females Working in Northern Province Hotels (Randomly Access)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel name</th>
<th>Number of female staffs</th>
<th>Number of male staffs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tilko Jaffna City Hotel</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Grass Hotel</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thinnai</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelli Star Hotel - Vavuniya</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamba Hotel - Vavuniya</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulleys Balmorals - Vavuniya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Source: Northern Province Hotels HR Managers - 2017.

Table 2  
Number of Females Working in Northern Province Hospitality Outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Catering service</th>
<th>Own food service</th>
<th>Sweet shop</th>
<th>Total female staffs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vavuniya</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilinochchi</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullaivu</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women staffs are working in Northern Province hospitality sector outlets around the district but this analysis was done in Northern Province districts town areas through the field observation. How many females are working in hospitality outlets sectors except hotels?

Empowering Women for Maintaining Gender Equality in Northern Province Hospitality Management

The ability of women to control their fertility is entirely fundamental to the empowerment and equality of women. When a woman is talented, she is more productive. Consequently, women have more career interruptions or work shorter hours than men. This can impact negatively on their career development and promotion prospects. It also means less financially rewarding careers. When a woman is a captain and manager in an office or family, she will be able to manage all problems and take a strong decision at correct time and to administrate the family or an organization. They have autonomy to participate equally in the hospitality sectors in the Northern Province.

A vital aspect of supporting the idea of gender equality is based on empowering women, with a prime focus on redressing and identifying power imbalances as well as giving more autonomy to organize their lives. Women empowerment is in fact critical not only to Northern Province hospitality sector’s sustainable development but also to the understanding of gender equality for everyone. The women staffs should take initiative for their life career through their education system and skill development. Nowadays, many of the female hoteliers have at least diploma level qualification and some managerial female workers have undergraduate degree and master level qualification.

At present, Northern Province hospitality sector female workers are doing hard work for their sustainable career path. Women experience greater difficulties than men when it comes to balancing work and private life. However, part-time work may be a personal choice, and women have greater recourse to do part-time work in order to combine work and family responsibilities. There is evidence of pay gap when looked at from the differences in hourly earnings of part-time and full-time workers. Some university students are males and females working as stewards and receptionists and banquet servers at the Northern Province hotel sectors. The main purpose for the student to work in the hotel sector is to earn money and get experience from the hotels.
Conclusion

In drawing conclusions with respect to the objectives of this study, what is evident is the fragmented and overlapping nature of sector-specific evidence available. While generic gender and employment data are published on a national basis, drilling down for information on gender equality in Northern Province hospitality sector presents challenges. The extent and form of female employment in Northern Province hospitality sector is strongly influenced by cultural, social and economic factors. These considerations, together with demographic and wider economic concerns, drive the considerable variation that exists with respect to the quantity and quality of female employment within Northern Province hospitality sector. Such disparities were clearly evident in response to the Northern Province hospitality sectors survey which highlighted the differing responses of organizations to gender equality issues on Northern Province hospitality sector.

The culture of Northern Province hospitality sector, its operating environment, working conditions and some of its key departments are always supportive of the needs of women employees and their family care responsibilities. The nature of Northern Province hospitality sector and the business opportunities that the sector offers are such that, through the wide range of micro-enterprises that dominate the sector in Northern Province, Northern Province has the capacity to make a significant contribution to poverty alleviation through a pro-poor tourism agenda. In some contexts, women and their engagement in Northern Province hospitality sector offer families the only opportunity for income generation within economies where male employment is limited or marginal.

The Northern Province hotel sectors should provide the maternity leave for the female staffs without any discrimination. Northern Province hotel sectors did not provide the correct salary for the staffs and they did not provide the service charge for the employees. But the management collects the service charge from the customers, which is the main problem of the Northern Province hotel sectors.

In the Northern Province hospitality outlets, e.g., KFC food corner, small food shops, female workers’ salaries are much less than male staffs. The management provides the salary gender wise because they think women cannot do the work effectively. That is the reason why they provide the salary for the female less than male staffs. Many females are doing catering management from their homes and provide the foods for university students and out bound workers. Mostly, women leadership families do this kind of works because it is a profitable business.

Northern Province has hospitality degree level courses in government institutes, which is one of the sustainable developments in Northern Province hospitality sector. Many of the female and male students are studying here. In the future, Northern Province hospitality sector without any discrimination in gender wise. Because most of the female students will definitely participate in the Northern Province hospitality sector. This paper deeply analyzes the gender participation of Northern Province hospitality sector. Here, the workers have mutual understanding each other’s but the management implements some discrimination inside the organization, e.g., the female staffs are offered less salary than male staffs. Some hotels' management did not provide the service charge for all staffs. After the war, Northern Province has changed a lot in economical wise, community wise and gender wise.

Recommendations

Finally, the paper recommends that:

(1) The Northern Province Hotel Organization Committee should consider the gender wages biases;
(2) The hotel’s managements should consider the women maternity leave without any discrimination;
(3) Provide the service charge for all hotel staffs;
(4) Arrange the accommodation for the out bound female hotel staffs;
(5) Arrange the training program about the “gender equality” to all staffs for giving more awareness;
(6) The human resource managers should appoint the staffs annex with male and female to work together which can promote mutual understanding;
(7) The Northern Province hotel organization can help to the women self-employment workers;
(8) Motivate the female staffs’ participation for the growth of the organization;
(9) Follow the two-way communication method which will help to increase the organizational productivity.

References

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