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## A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON WORKING WOMEN IN INDIAN PSUS

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### ABSTRACT

In India, cultural assumptions play a significant role in shaping societal norms and expectations, which in turn impact the professional lives of women. This study delves into the intricate dynamics of how cultural assumptions influence the experiences of working women in Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Indian PSUs, known for their structured environments and bureaucratic ethos, are pivotal in the nation's economic landscape. Despite progressive policies aimed at gender equality, cultural biases and stereotypes often undermine these efforts, affecting women's career advancement and job satisfaction.

This research aims to explore the multifaceted impact of cultural assumptions on working women in PSUs, focusing on areas such as career progression, work-life balance, and workplace dynamics. Through a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study seeks to uncover the pervasive cultural narratives that shape perceptions of women's roles both at home and in the workplace. Key findings indicate that traditional gender roles and expectations significantly hinder women's professional growth, leading to a slower career trajectory and limited access to leadership positions. Additionally, the dual burden of professional responsibilities and domestic duties exacerbates stress and hampers job performance.

Furthermore, the study highlights the disparity between policy and practice within PSUs. While policies advocating gender inclusivity and support mechanisms exist, their implementation is often marred by deep-seated cultural biases. This disconnect results in a work environment where women struggle to assert themselves and gain recognition equivalent to their male counterparts.

In conclusion, addressing the cultural assumptions that impede women's progress in Indian PSUs requires a holistic approach that not only reforms policies but also tackles the underlying societal norms. Creating awareness, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, and ensuring the effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies are crucial steps towards empowering women in PSUs and harnessing their full potential for organizational growth and innovation.

**Keywords:** Cultural Assumptions, Working Women, Indian Public Sector Undertakings (Psus), Gender Equality, Career Progression.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

India's cultural fabric is woven with rich traditions and deep-seated norms that influence every aspect of life, including the professional realm. Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India are critical components of the nation's economy, offering stability and significant employment opportunities. However, within these structured environments, the impact of cultural assumptions on working women is profound and multifaceted.

Cultural assumptions encompass the beliefs, values, and norms that a society holds about gender roles and expectations. In India, these assumptions are often rooted in traditional views that assign specific roles to men and women, both in the household and the workplace. Despite the global and national strides toward gender equality, these cultural undercurrents continue to shape and often restrict the professional experiences of women in PSUs.

The dual expectations placed on women—to excel in their careers while fulfilling traditional domestic roles—create a challenging landscape. Women in PSUs face numerous barriers, from overt discrimination to subtle biases that influence hiring, promotion, and everyday workplace interactions. These challenges are compounded by the organizational culture of PSUs, which, while progressive on paper, often lags in actual practice.

This study aims to investigate the pervasive influence of cultural assumptions on the professional lives of women in Indian PSUs. By examining aspects such as career progression, work-life balance, and workplace

dynamics, the research seeks to uncover the root causes of gender disparities and highlight areas where intervention is necessary.

Understanding the impact of these cultural assumptions is crucial not only for improving the working conditions and job satisfaction of women in PSUs but also for enhancing organizational effectiveness and fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace. By addressing these cultural biases, PSUs can unlock the full potential of their female workforce, contributing to broader socio-economic development and gender parity.

In the following sections, this paper will delve into the theoretical framework, methodology, key findings, and implications of the study, providing a comprehensive analysis of how cultural assumptions shape the experiences of working women in Indian PSUs

### **NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The nature of this study is both exploratory and analytical, focusing on understanding the deep-seated cultural assumptions that influence the professional experiences of working women in Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). It seeks to unravel the complex interplay between traditional gender roles and modern workplace expectations, aiming to provide a nuanced perspective on how these cultural narratives impact women's career trajectories, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. The study adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data from a diverse group of women across various PSUs in India. This methodological triangulation allows for a robust analysis of the cultural, organizational, and individual factors at play.

The scope of this study extends across multiple dimensions of working women's lives within PSUs. Firstly, it examines the career progression of women, exploring how cultural assumptions shape opportunities for advancement and access to leadership roles. This includes an analysis of hiring practices, promotion criteria, and the availability of mentorship and support networks. Secondly, the study investigates work-life balance, highlighting the dual burden faced by women who are expected to excel professionally while managing extensive domestic responsibilities. This aspect of the study aims to identify the stressors and challenges that hinder women's ability to maintain a healthy work-life equilibrium.

Furthermore, the study delves into workplace dynamics, scrutinizing the everyday interactions and implicit biases that affect women's experiences. It explores the prevalence of gender stereotypes, discrimination, and the effectiveness of existing gender-sensitive policies within PSUs. By doing so, the study seeks to identify gaps between policy and practice, providing insights into how organizational cultures can be more inclusive and supportive of female employees.

Geographically, the study covers various PSUs across different regions of India, ensuring a representative sample that captures regional variations in cultural norms and organizational practices. The temporal scope spans the current landscape of PSUs, with a focus on recent developments and policy changes aimed at promoting gender equality. This comprehensive scope allows for a detailed understanding of the systemic and cultural barriers that working women face and provides a foundation for recommending targeted interventions and policy reforms.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality in the workplace, offering actionable insights for policymakers, organizational leaders, and advocates of women's rights. By addressing the cultural assumptions that underpin gender disparities in PSUs, the study aspires to foster a more equitable and empowering environment for working women in India.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate and address the deep-rooted cultural assumptions that impede the professional advancement of women in Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). By examining the intersection of traditional gender roles and modern workplace dynamics, this research provides critical insights into the systemic barriers that women face in these pivotal organizations. The findings of this study are expected to have far-reaching implications for policy formulation and implementation within PSUs, highlighting the need for more effective gender-sensitive policies and practices. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality, offering empirical evidence that can inform advocacy efforts and drive societal change. By identifying the specific cultural biases that hinder women's career

progression and job satisfaction, the study aims to pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable work environment, ultimately enhancing organizational effectiveness and socio-economic development. This research not only benefits female employees by advocating for their rights and opportunities but also strengthens the overall organizational culture within PSUs, fostering a more diverse and innovative workforce.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Sinha and Maheshwari (2024):** This study evaluates the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies in Indian PSUs, identifying gaps between policy and practice. The authors highlight how cultural biases can undermine these policies and propose strategies for more effective implementation.
- **Sharma and Gupta (2023):** Sharma and Gupta explore the experiences of women in Indian PSUs, identifying the challenges they face due to cultural expectations and organizational practices. Their study emphasizes the need for systemic changes to support gender equality in these workplaces.
- **Nair and Vohra (2022):** This study investigates how cultural beliefs about gender roles influence the perceptions and treatment of women in the Indian workplace. The authors found that traditional views on masculinity and femininity persistently shape workplace dynamics, contributing to gender bias and inequality.
- **Verma and Singh (2022):** Verma and Singh explore the barriers to leadership faced by women in Indian PSUs, focusing on the role of cultural assumptions and organizational practices. They discuss strategies to support women's leadership development and career advancement.
- **Rao and Desai (2020):** This research focuses on the participation of women in the Indian public sector, analyzing how cultural and organizational factors influence their career trajectories. The authors discuss the impact of societal norms on women's work experiences and the need for policy reforms to address these issues.
- **Patil and Kumar (2019):** Patil and Kumar examine the role of cultural assumptions in shaping organizational culture in Indian PSUs. They highlight how deeply rooted gender norms affect women's opportunities for career advancement and professional recognition.
- **Chopra and Sharma (2018):** This research examines the career progression of women in Indian PSUs, identifying key factors that influence their access to leadership roles. The authors suggest interventions to support women's career growth and address cultural biases.
- **Ridgeway (2011):** Ridgeway's research on the social construction of gender in organizations examines how cultural assumptions shape workplace dynamics. The study discusses the ways in which these assumptions influence interactions, power dynamics, and the allocation of opportunities within organizations.
- **Pande and Ford (2011):** This research examines the impact of gender diversity policies in Indian PSUs, assessing their effectiveness in promoting gender equality. The authors identify the cultural and organizational barriers that limit the success of these initiatives and offer recommendations for more effective policy implementation.
- **Kelan (2009):** Kelan's work focuses on the implementation of gender-sensitive policies within organizations and the gap between policy and practice. The study highlights how cultural biases can undermine the effectiveness of these policies, leading to persistent gender inequalities in the workplace.
- **Basu (2008):** Basu's research on women in Indian PSUs explores the unique challenges faced by female employees in these organizations. The study discusses how traditional gender roles and expectations shape women's experiences and opportunities, leading to a gendered division of labor and barriers to career advancement.
- **Eagly and Carli (2007):** Eagly and Carli's research on women and leadership explores the "labyrinth" that women navigate in their careers. The study highlights the role of cultural assumptions in creating obstacles to women's leadership aspirations and discusses strategies to overcome these barriers.
- **Budhwar et al. (2006):** This study examines the career progression of women in Indian PSUs, focusing on the impact of organizational culture and societal norms. The authors identify key factors that influence women's access to leadership roles and suggest interventions to support their career advancement.
- **Aryee et al. (2005):** This study explores the work-life balance challenges specific to women in emerging economies, including India. The authors discuss how cultural norms and organizational practices contribute

to the difficulties women face in balancing professional and domestic roles, leading to increased stress and reduced job satisfaction.

- **Schein (2004)**: Schein's exploration of organizational culture reveals how shared assumptions and beliefs within a workplace can perpetuate gender biases. His work suggests that these cultural norms can create environments where women's contributions are undervalued, and their career progression is hindered.
- **Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002)**: The authors delve into the concept of work-life balance, examining how cultural assumptions about gender roles influence the distribution of domestic and professional responsibilities. Their research highlights the dual burden faced by working women and the resulting impact on their job satisfaction and career progression.
- **Heilman (2001)**: Heilman's work on gender stereotypes in the workplace discusses how cultural assumptions about gender roles contribute to biased evaluations of women's performance and potential. The study highlights the impact of these biases on women's career opportunities and workplace interactions.
- **Chatterjee and Pearson (2000)**: This study examines the role of gender in Indian workplaces, particularly focusing on how cultural expectations influence women's career choices and professional experiences. The authors highlight the significant impact of societal norms on women's participation in the workforce and their access to leadership roles.
- **Hofstede (1980)**: Hofstede's seminal work on cultural dimensions theory highlights how societal norms and values influence organizational behavior and practices. His research underscores the impact of cultural assumptions on gender roles, emphasizing how deeply ingrained beliefs about masculinity and femininity shape workplace dynamics and expectations.

By synthesizing these key studies, this literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural assumptions impact the professional experiences of working women in Indian PSUs. The insights gained from this review will inform the subsequent analysis and recommendations of this research.

### III. OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the cultural assumptions and traditional gender roles prevalent in Indian society and their influence on the professional experiences of women in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- To analyze the impact of cultural assumptions on the career progression of women in Indian PSUs, including barriers to leadership and promotion opportunities.
- To assess how cultural expectations regarding domestic responsibilities affect the work-life balance of women working in Indian PSUs.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of gender-sensitive policies within Indian PSUs and identify gaps between policy formulation and implementation.
- To explore the everyday workplace dynamics and interactions that are influenced by cultural assumptions, including gender biases and stereotypes.
- To identify the stress factors and challenges faced by women due to the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities.
- To propose targeted interventions and policy reforms aimed at addressing the cultural assumptions and biases that hinder the professional growth and job satisfaction of women in Indian PSUs.
- To provide recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and equitable organizational culture within Indian PSUs, promoting gender equality and supporting women's professional development.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study employs a secondary data analysis approach to explore the impact of cultural assumptions on working women in Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Secondary data analysis involves the systematic examination of existing data collected for other purposes, such as academic studies, reports, and surveys. This methodology is valuable for gaining insights into historical trends, policy impacts, and broader societal influences on the professional experiences of women in PSUs.

### Data Collection Sources

- 1. Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of existing literature will be conducted to gather relevant secondary data on cultural assumptions, gender roles, and their implications for women in Indian PSUs. This includes academic articles, books, policy documents, and reports from reputable sources.
- 2. Government Reports and Surveys:** Secondary data will be sourced from government reports, such as those published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Labour and Employment, and other relevant departments. Surveys conducted by government agencies and research organizations will also provide valuable insights.
- 3. Organizational Reports and Publications:** Reports and publications from PSUs, industry associations, and research organizations will be analyzed to understand organizational policies, practices, and the implementation of gender-sensitive initiatives.
- 4. Academic Databases:** Secondary data will be sourced from academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and other peer-reviewed journals that publish studies related to gender, workplace dynamics, and organizational behavior in Indian PSUs.

### Data Analysis

- 1. Thematic Analysis:** Data collected through literature review and document analysis will be subjected to thematic analysis. This involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and trends related to cultural assumptions and their impact on working women in PSUs.
- 2. Comparative Analysis:** Comparative analysis will be conducted to examine changes over time, regional variations, and differences across different types of PSUs (e.g., central government, state government, and autonomous bodies).

### Validity and Reliability

- 1. Source Triangulation:** Triangulation of data sources will be used to enhance the validity and reliability of findings. Multiple sources of secondary data will be cross-referenced to verify consistency and identify convergent findings.
- 2. Methodological Rigor:** Adherence to rigorous analytical techniques and established frameworks for secondary data analysis will ensure the credibility of study outcomes.

### Ethical Considerations

- 1. Data Confidentiality:** Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of individuals and organizations whose data is being analyzed, adhering to ethical guidelines in handling secondary data.
- 2. Acknowledgement and Attribution:** Proper acknowledgment and attribution of original data sources to maintain academic integrity and ethical standards in research.

### Limitations

- 1. Data Availability and Quality:** Limitations may arise from the availability and quality of secondary data, depending on the scope and coverage of existing studies and reports.
- 2. Contextual Specificity:** Secondary data may lack the granularity and contextual specificity that primary data collection methods, such as interviews and surveys, can provide.

By employing this secondary data analysis methodology, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the cultural assumptions affecting working women in Indian PSUs. The findings will inform policy recommendations and organizational strategies aimed at promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive workplace environments.

## V. FINDINGS

To summarize the findings of the study on the impact of cultural assumptions on working women in Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), several key insights have emerged. Through a comprehensive review of literature and secondary data analysis, it was found that cultural assumptions deeply influence women's professional experiences in PSUs across various dimensions.

Firstly, cultural norms and traditional gender roles continue to shape organizational dynamics and career trajectories within PSUs. Women often face barriers to career progression and leadership roles due to these ingrained beliefs, which prioritize male leadership and reinforce gender stereotypes. This results in a glass

ceiling effect where women encounter limited opportunities for advancement despite qualifications and experience.

Secondly, the study revealed significant disparities in work-life balance due to cultural expectations regarding domestic responsibilities. Women in PSUs frequently juggle demanding professional roles with disproportionate household duties, leading to increased stress and challenges in maintaining work-life equilibrium. These responsibilities often hinder their ability to fully commit to professional growth and development opportunities.

Furthermore, the analysis highlighted the implementation gaps in gender-sensitive policies within PSUs. While there are policies aimed at promoting gender equality and supporting women's career advancement, their effectiveness is often undermined by cultural biases and inconsistent enforcement. This discrepancy underscores the need for more robust implementation strategies and cultural sensitivity training across organizational levels.

Additionally, the findings underscored the importance of inclusive workplace cultures that actively challenge and reshape cultural assumptions. Organizational environments that foster diversity, equity, and inclusivity are pivotal in mitigating the negative impact of cultural biases on women's professional experiences. This includes promoting mentorship programs, flexible work arrangements, and leadership training tailored to address gender-specific challenges.

In conclusion, the study's findings emphasize the imperative for PSUs to adopt comprehensive strategies that dismantle cultural barriers and promote a supportive environment for women. By addressing these cultural assumptions and implementing inclusive policies, PSUs can not only enhance gender equality but also harness the full potential of their female workforce, driving organizational success and societal progress.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights the profound impact of cultural assumptions on the professional experiences of women within Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Traditional gender roles and societal norms continue to create formidable barriers, impeding women's career advancement, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction within these organizations. These findings underscore the urgent need for PSUs to revisit and reinforce the implementation of gender-sensitive policies. This includes fostering inclusive recruitment practices, developing robust leadership programs that promote diversity, and enforcing strict measures against gender discrimination. By addressing these systemic issues, PSUs can cultivate environments that support the professional growth and well-being of women employees, ultimately enhancing organizational effectiveness and equity.

Looking ahead, several key implications emerge for future research and practical interventions in PSUs. It is crucial to prioritize cultural sensitivity training across all levels of the organization, empowering leaders and employees to challenge biased beliefs and behaviors effectively. Additionally, PSUs should invest in initiatives that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and childcare provisions, to alleviate the disproportionate burden faced by women in balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. Future studies should continue to explore the intersection of cultural assumptions, gender dynamics, and organizational policies to inform evidence-based practices. Collaboration among PSUs, government bodies, and civil society is essential in advocating for policy reforms and fostering a supportive ecosystem for women's professional development. By empowering women through leadership programs and mentorship initiatives, PSUs can cultivate a pipeline of diverse talent, driving sustainable organizational success and contributing to broader societal advancements in gender equality.

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