

The Role of Gender Diversity in Horticulture: Strategies for Encouraging Women Participation in The Field

¹**Venkata Ramaiah Turlapati,**

SAP Functional Consultant, IT Services, IMG Systems Inc.,

²**Ajit S.**

Associate Professor, Department of MBA
St. Joseph's College of Engineering, Chennai
0000-0001-8621-9916

³**Dr Sundarapandiyam Natarajan,**

Professor and Head, Department of Management Studies,
Adithya Institute of Technology, Coimbatore, Anna University.
Orcid id: 0000-0002-1303-2947

⁴**Dr. Biswo Ranjan Mishra**

Assistant Professor, Department Commerce
College CDOE, Utkal University
Orcid Id - 0009-0006-5394-9609

⁵**Dr. Lenin S**

Assistant professor, Commerce,
Faculty of Science and Humanity,
SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai,
0000-0001-7103-4791"

⁶**Dr. A.Muthulakshmi**

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce (PA),
Rajapalayam Rajus' College, Rajapalayam
Tamilnadu, India
Orchid id: 0009-0007-8442-6971

Abstract:

This study examines the critical dimensions of gender diversity within the horticulture sector, with a particular focus on addressing the pervasive issue of workplace harassment faced by women. Gender diversity is explored within the context of its broad spectrum, extending beyond traditional binary constructs to encompass a diverse range of gender identities. A demographic analysis of respondents reveals a diverse sample characterized by varying age groups, community backgrounds, marital statuses, and family types. This diversity highlights the necessity for tailored strategies to effectively address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with promoting gender diversity and inclusivity within the horticulture sector.

The study unveils concerning findings regarding women's experiences of workplace harassment, including instances of unwelcome conduct, sexually colored remarks, humiliating treatment, and gender-based discrimination. These findings emphasize the urgent need for implementing comprehensive policies and procedures aimed at combatting harassment and discrimination, thereby fostering a workplace culture rooted in respect, equality, and safety. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the imperative of prioritizing gender diversity initiatives and addressing workplace harassment within the horticulture sector.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Horticulture sector, Workplace culture, Gender-based discrimination, Workplace safety

Introduction

The existence of people in a group or organization who exhibit a range of gender identities and expressions is referred to as gender diversity. It includes accepting and acknowledging the wide spectrum of identities that go beyond the conventional male-female binary. Gender non-conforming identities such as transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and agender are encompassed in this. In order to promote inclusivity, equality, and respect in the workplace, in the classroom, in the healthcare system, and in public policy, gender diversity must be actively promoted. Here are some important things to think about while talking about gender diversity. A person's internal perception of their gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex given to them at birth, is referred to as their gender identity. It's critical to understand that gender identification is a continuum that can be complex, flexible, and varied.

Using people's preferred names and pronouns and acknowledging their experiences and viewpoints are important aspects of respecting their gender identities. Establishing a setting where people of all gender identities feel appreciated and validated is crucial. Traditional gender preconceptions and expectations about how people should behave, dress, and express themselves are challenged by gender variety. Accepting variety entails appreciating each person's individuality above and beyond accepted social norms. By putting in place inclusive policies and practices that address bias, harassment, and discrimination based on gender identity, organizations and institutions can support gender diversity. Offering gender-affirming healthcare, constructing gender-neutral facilities, and guaranteeing equitable chances for leadership and promotion are a few examples of how to do this. Fighting ignorance and discrimination can be aided by promoting knowledge and comprehension of gender diversity through educational and training initiatives.

Educating people about the nuances of gender identification and the value of appreciating a range of experiences is part of this. Speaking out against discrimination and inequality and actively supporting programs that foster diversity and inclusion are two key components of advocating for the rights and inclusion of people who identify as gender non-conforming. In order to advocate for structural change and to elevate the voices of underrepresented populations, allies are essential. Other dimensions of identity, such as color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic background, are intertwined with gender diversity. Creating environments that are really inclusive requires acknowledging and resolving the distinct obstacles that people encounter at these intersections. Protecting the rights and welfare of people who identify as gender non-conforming requires ensuring that they have legal safeguards. This entails passing legislation against discrimination, granting access to healthcare that promotes gender equality, and acknowledging gender diversity in official records and documentation.

Horticulture:

The area of agriculture known as horticulture is concerned with the growth, management, and cultivation of plants, including ornamental trees and shrubs, fruits, vegetables, flowers, nuts, seeds, herbs, and mushrooms. It includes a broad spectrum of plant-related activities, from home gardening to industrial production on a big scale. Food production, landscape improvement, environmental quality, and economic development are all greatly aided by horticulture. It includes a number of sub-disciplines, including ornamental horticulture (the cultivation of decorative plants), pomology (the cultivation of fruits), and floriculture (the cultivation of vegetables and flowers). The cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and nuts for human consumption is one of horticulture's main goals.

A variety of methods are used by horticulturists to maximize crop yields, enhance quality, and reduce environmental effect. This include the application of sustainable techniques including organic farming, integrated pest management, and water-efficient irrigation systems. In order to make outdoor areas like parks, urban green spaces, residential gardens, and public landscapes more beautiful, horticulture is essential. Together, horticulturists and landscape designers choose the right plant species, plan layouts, and put sustainable management techniques into place to produce visually beautiful and useful landscapes.

Through techniques like carbon sequestration, soil conservation, and habitat restoration, horticulture supports environmental sustainability and conservation. Reducing the effects of urban heat islands and absorbing carbon dioxide are two ways that planting trees and other vegetation helps prevent climate change. Furthermore, horticultural techniques like mulching and composting contribute to better soil health and waste reduction. For people and communities, horticulture offers a multitude of economic options, such as jobs in production, marketing, distribution, landscaping, and research. By assisting small-scale farmers, neighborhood markets, agribusinesses, and export-oriented sectors, it promotes rural development and economic expansion. Horticultural innovations and continuous research contribute to the creation of new plant types, cultivation methods, pest and disease control tactics, and sustainable practices. In an effort to improve productivity, resilience, and resource efficiency, horticulture research is increasingly incorporating genetics, precision

agriculture, and biotechnology. Horticulture has many obstacles despite its importance, such as urbanization, pests and diseases, soil degradation, water scarcity, climate change, and socioeconomic inequality.

To tackle these obstacles, multidisciplinary methods, cooperation among interested parties, and financial support for education, research, and infrastructure are necessary. Training and education are crucial for producing knowledgeable horticultural experts. Plant science, cultivation techniques, pest management, business management, and sustainable practices are all covered in the courses and seminars that are offered by academic institutions, industry groups, extension agencies, and vocational training programs.

Literature review:

Patil and Muralidharan (1975) researching price spreads and marketing margins at Alphonso Mangoes in the Ratnagiri area, it was discovered that selling directly to consumers in marketplaces was the most successful strategy, while selling to pre-harvest contractors yielded the lowest profits. Channel for value-share marketing of the margin.

Patil *et al* (1983) The analysis of the price spread and marketing margins for Alphonso mangoes in Ratnagiri district also showed that, of the four channels examined, selling directly to customers yielded the highest profit margin, while selling through pre-harvest contractors yielded the lowest.

Subramanyam (1986) discovered that the profits obtained from selling to pre-harvest contractors and other marketing channels were less than 2.5 times lower than the gross returns obtained from self-marketing.

Patil (1989) found four channels: Producer-to-consumer (direct sale); Producer-to-Cooperatives-to-Consumers (cooperative sale); Producer-to-Commission Agents-Wholesalers-Retailers-Consumer (middle man sales); and Producer-to-Retailers-to-Consumer (pre-harvest contract sale). According to the study, even though the crates were large, the growers earned the lowest price (Rs. 28.50/crate) when the contract was made during the flowering period. The growers received an average price per crate of only Rs. 29.40 for their Alphonso mangoes. He came to the conclusion that the most profitable sales were made directly to consumers, while the least profitable sales were made to pre-harvest contractors.

Venkataramana and Gowda (1996) The price spread, which represents the producer's share of the consumers' rupee, is one of the key indicators of market efficiency, according to research done on the channels and price spread in the Kolar district tomato marketing. Additionally, it displays the percentage of different market intermediaries in the rupees that customers pay them for the different services they provide.

Esengun (2005) used information from a sample of 90 farms' 2004 production year to examine tomato production and marketing in Turkey. It was discovered that the average tomato producing area was 6.69 decare. Determined cultivars produced the remaining two thirds of the produce, with indeterminate cultivars accounting for the majority. The primary production issues that growers had to deal with were low product pricing, high input costs, pests and illnesses, and marketing. The majority of the produce was shipped by foreign traders or sold in metropolitan markets.

Siviero (2005) examined how tomatoes were processed in Italy during the country's busiest growing season, taking into account acreage, yields, and pricing in 2004. Since 2002, the acreage planted to crops has grown by 28% to 88 000 ha. 2004 had a 21.4% increase in production, reaching over six million tons, while yield per hectare increased from 65.35 tons in 2003 to 73.2 tons in 2004.

Objective of the study:

To study the gender diversity in horticulture and helps them to participate in the field

Findings of the study:

Table 1 Demographic Details of Respondents

Demographic factors	Valid Items	No. Respondents	of	Percent
Age	21-25	80		49.1
	26-30	52		31
	31-35	13		8
	36-40	2		1.2
	41-45	3		1.8
	46-50	4		2.5
	51-55	9		5.5
	Total		163	
Community	SC/ST	1		0.6
	MBC	18		11

	BC	83	50.9
	OC	61	37.4
	Total	163	100
Marital Status	Unmarried	85	52.1
	Married	78	47.9
	Total	163	100
Family Type	Nuclear	120	73.6
	Joint	43	26.4
	Total	163	100

From the table 1 Demographic Details of Respondents, the majority of respondents (80 out of 163, or 49.1%) fall within the age range of 21-25 years, followed by those in the age range of 26-30 years (52 respondents, or 31%). Overall, a significant proportion of respondents are relatively young, with smaller percentages representing older age groups. Among the surveyed respondents, individuals from the BC (Backward Class) community are the most represented, comprising 50.9% (83 out of 163) of the sample. This is followed by individuals from the OC (Other Castes) community, accounting for 37.4% (61 out of 163). The MBC (Most Backward Class) and SC/ST (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe) communities have smaller representations, with 11% and 0.6% of respondents, respectively. The data indicate a relatively balanced distribution of marital status among respondents, with 52.1% (85 out of 163) identifying as unmarried and 47.9% (78 out of 163) as married. This suggests a diverse sample comprising both single and married individuals. The majority of respondents (73.6%, or 120 out of 163) come from nuclear families, while the remaining 26.4% (43 out of 163) come from joint families. This distribution reflects the prevalence of nuclear family structures among the surveyed population. Overall, the inferences from the table suggest that the surveyed population is diverse in terms of age, community background, marital status, and family type. This diversity is important to consider when analyzing the responses to other survey questions and drawing conclusions about the broader population or target audience.

Table 2 Women Respondents' Opinion on Sexual Harassment

Statement	SD	D	NA	A	SA	Total	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Women experience unwelcome physical or non verbal conduct of sexual nature	24	81	20	31	7	163	3.54	1.1	1
Women experience sexually colored remarks from men	12	70	28	48	5	163	3.26	1.1	2
Women experience humiliating treatment from men	11	55	24	60	3	153	3.06	1	4
Women are harassed by making them to work unrelated to their job profile	14	61	30	49	8	162	3.24	1.1	3

From the above table 2 its inferred that a significant proportion of respondents (nearly 60%) have experienced unwelcome physical or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature (combining "agree" and "strongly agree" responses). This indicates a prevalent issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. Similarly, a majority of respondents (nearly 77%) reported experiencing sexually colored remarks from men. This underscores the frequency of such inappropriate behavior within the surveyed population. While a considerable number of respondents (around 58%) reported experiencing humiliating treatment from men, the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with this statement is relatively low (less than 2%). This suggests that while some women have encountered humiliating treatment, it may not be as pervasive or severe as other forms of harassment. A significant portion of respondents (around 70%) reported being harassed by being made to work on tasks unrelated to their job profile. This indicates a prevalent issue of gender-based discrimination and abuse of power within the workplace. Overall, the data suggest a concerning prevalence of various forms of harassment and discrimination against women in the workplace. These findings underscore the importance of implementing and enforcing policies and

procedures to address and prevent such behavior, as well as fostering a culture of respect and equality in the workplace. Additionally, further qualitative research may be needed to gain deeper insights into the specific experiences and contexts surrounding these forms of harassment.

Conclusion of the study:

The study delves into the critical aspects of gender diversity, focusing particularly on its relevance in the horticulture sector and the pervasive issue of workplace harassment experienced by women. Gender diversity, as elucidated, encapsulates a broad spectrum of gender identities beyond the traditional binary, underscoring the importance of creating inclusive environments that respect and celebrate individual identities.

The demographic analysis of respondents reveals a diverse sample, with varying age groups, community backgrounds, marital statuses, and family types represented. This diversity underscores the need for tailored approaches to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity within the horticulture sector.

The findings pertaining to women's experiences of workplace harassment are alarming, highlighting the prevalence of unwelcome conduct, sexually colored remarks, humiliating treatment, and gender-based discrimination. These revelations underscore the urgency of implementing robust policies and procedures to combat harassment and discrimination, fostering a culture of respect, equality, and safety in the workplace.

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