

Workplace dynamics from a gendered lens: Do numbers matter?

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Abstract

The present paper intends to study the relationship of gender, nature of occupation and relative numerical strength of male and female employees with respect to the experiences of workplace tokenism. According to the theory of tokenism, (Kanter, 1977), "Tokens" (defined as those who are less than 15% of the group's total composition) are expected to encounter certain negative workplace experiences such as feelings of heightened visibility, isolation, and limited opportunities for advancement. During the past few decades, studies have defined tokenism merely on the basis of relative strength of workforce. The present research aims to expand the framework by examining the experience of Workplace Tokenism as a function of gender, nature of occupation and relative numerical strength. Semi structured interview schedule was used for 10 participants and the interview transcripts were content analysed to identify dominant themes. Results depict that there is a complex interplay of gender roles, stereotypes and power differentials between males and females which in turn gets augmented by numerical status at workplace resulting in different experiential realities for males and females.

Keywords: Gender, Workplace Tokenism, Stereotypes, Tokens, Experiential realities

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I. Introduction

Workplace Tokenism: Comparative insight into the experiential realities of males and females

Despite women constituting almost 50 % of the world's population, the division of labour and workforce participation is far from equitable, resulting from a mutual interaction of two dominant forces of capitalism and patriarchy. Regardless of the fact that women are beginning to breach the gendered boundaries and stepping out of the confines of stereotypical role prescriptions, their quest is often placing them at risk and conflict with the traditional hegemonic belief structure of male dominance. One of the most ubiquitous consequences in our gendered world is the phenomenon of 'tokenism'.

Laws (1975) made the concept of 'Workplace Token' quite popular with her analysis of the issues that women employees face in a male dominated academic setting in terms of gaining entrance followed by their struggle to participate fully. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) in her theory defined 'Tokenism' as the processes that are resultant of an interesting dynamics between the numerical majority and the numerical minority social group. Kanter (1977) highlighted three interactional perceptual tendencies that lead to negative token dynamics:

- Heightened Visibility indicates the magnified visibility that the tokens are subjected to which in turns intensifies pressure to achieve.
- Contrast points at the augmentation of differences between tokens and the dominants, which may eventually lead to segregation of tokens in some form including social isolation.
- Role encapsulation reflects the mounting pressure on tokens for conforming to the stereotyped gender perception.

Tokens are marked by a paradoxical experience of heightened visibility due to their 'uniqueness' sharply contrasted with a sense of loss of individuality behind the prescribed stereotypes roles. This turbulence can eventually lead to a sense of alienation and distortion of self concept significantly comprising individual's well being both on and off the job. Thus there is a variety of psychological, socio-emotional and organisational ambivalence or uncertainty lurking around individuals working in a gender skewed workplace. The theory of tokenism has provided a structural perspective to this issue; however it's important to note that structural issues

can't be addressed without acknowledging processual concerns. The issue of tokenism doesn't exist in socio-cultural vacuum and needs to take cognizance of the way males and females situate themselves at workplace.

In the past couple of decades researchers have worked in the area of Tokenism and many studies have confirmed that any extreme minority is likely to suffer negative consequences of Tokenism just the way Kanter(1977) had described, however recent studies also indicated that certain other variables such as Gender, Race, Ethnicity are strong confounding factors (Stroshine and Brandl, (2011); Chatman, Boisneir, Spataro and Anderson (2008); Wingfield (2009).

In the Indian context, most of the studies have focused on the quantitative assessment of role stress and occupational stress experienced by 'deviants' (Kaushik & Pullen, (2018); Kabat-Farr and Cortine (2014); Pandey & Srivastava (2000); Rastogi and Kashyap (2001); Devi (2007)), without making any kind of qualitative inquiry into their experiences. The present study intends to fill this lacuna by offering an insight into the way the realities of Tokens are constructed and deconstructed by the relentless pursuit to negotiate structures of inequality embedded in a patriarchal society like ours. In order to understand the dynamics of the workplace better, the present study aims to gain a comparative insight into the experiences of different groups on Workplace Tokenism and its dimensions (i.e. Visibility, Contrast and Assimilation). To explore these experiences, groups were made based on gender, numerical strength and occupational gender type and interviewed through a semi-structured interview schedule that was developed for the same.

Method and Sample

A semi structured situational interview was developed. The interview schedule was based on the work of Yoder (1994) that explored the potential impact of four causal factors: relational numerical strength (Numerical Token status), Gender status, Job prestige, and Occupational Gender-Inappropriateness on the experienced Token Dynamics. The study focussed on participants' expectations for targets based on the above 4 factors. The survey used in the study comprised 3 classes of tokenism measures. 1) Visibility items focussing on the attention expected to be paid to the target and consequent performance pressures. 2) Contrast items that focused on work atmosphere. 3) Role encapsulation that was measured with a single item probing expected task assignments. These measures by Yoder provided the framework for the development of semi-structured interview schedule and operationalisation of variables of gender typicality and atypicality as well as workplace tokens and non - tokens used in the study. After operationalization of these variable, keeping in mind the Indian context the data was taken from the report by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (2015).

Inclusion Criterion

The following inclusion criteria was used for selecting the sample-

Current job experience: 2-5 years

Educational qualification: Above Senior Secondary

Work Sector: Organized

Size of the organization: Small (< 50 employees)

Based on the inclusion criteria, 10 participants, consisting of Male and Female employees, were selected for the interview. The participants were working as numerical Tokens and Non Tokens in Gender atypical and Non atypical occupations.

Procedure

In order to gain insight into and understanding the experiences of the participants, the semi structured interview schedule developed was used. Along with the interview, the critical incident technique was also employed, in which the respondents were probed to narrate their true experiences related to the topic of research. The data collected was then analysed by employing content analysis technique.

Technique of Data Analysis

Conventional content analysis as proposed by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) was employed for analysing the transcripts. In this technique, coding categories are obtained directly and inductively from the raw data. The analysis approach takes into account both the manifest content i.e. the elements that are tangible and physically apparent as well as latent content that involves going beyond the surface level data and delving into the realm of symbolism. With the use of constant comparative approach and saturation the dominant themes that emerged from the data are gendered dichotomy-professional advantage versus disadvantage, pressure to 'do gender', threat to masculinity-struggle against social stigma, threat to ascribed femininity-threat to acquired masculinity: an existential dilemma, identity negotiation.

II. Discussion

A look into the qualitative data reveals how males and females ascribe different meanings to similar conditions to which they both have been subjected. The experiences, the meaning making process, the concerns, the struggles, and the conflicts are quite different for both males and females despite the similar outward appearance of conditions to the outside world. Qualitative data revealed important insights into the interplay between gender status and gender typing of occupations. Some of the dominant themes that have emerged from the data are discussed below:

Gendered dichotomy - Professional advantage versus disadvantage

The insights that emerged from the responses of males and females reflected that compared to the hardships experienced by the women who enter "male fields", the males, did not report the experiences of workplace disadvantages. The men in these professions often had male bosses or supervisors.

Table 1. First Theme Its Sub-themes and Excerpts

Theme	Sub-themes	Excerpts
Gendered Dichotomy- Professional advantage versus disadvantage	Professional Disadvantage	<p>“.....<i>Humesha ek pressure hota hai to perform so that people don't question your presence in the organisation. Waise hi sabko lagta hai ki I'm a misfit for the job, main unko mauka nai dena chahi...</i>”[There is always a pressure to perform so other that people do not question your presence in the organisation. Anyway people feel that I am a misfit for the job and I don't want to give any chance to them to say anything more...]</p> <p>“.....<i>I share a very good rapport with my principal. I am more like his right hand man. I have worked hard to earn that trust and respect. He knows that I'm credible and can pull off work that my other colleagues can't....</i>”</p>
	Females	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Magnification of mistakes ● Strict yardstick for evaluation ● Constant comparison with counterparts. 	
	Males	
	Professional Advantage	<p>“.....<i>ek comforting and warm presence bahut zaruri hota hai, koi ladaai jhagdaa hota hai toh hum log calm down kara dete hain male staff ko...</i>”[There is a need for a warm and comforting presence. If there is any fight or a quarrel, we help calm down the male staff]</p>
	Females	<p>“...<i>Saara bhaaga daudi, events organize karnaa, camps organize karne ka kaam ankh bandh karke mujhe hi milta hai. Toh ek tareeke se aapne jo visibility ke bare mein poocha uska nuksaan nai hota mujhe(smiles)...</i>”[All the running around, organising events, camps and related work are given to me, by putting their trust blindly on me. So, in a way with regards to visibility, I am not at a disadvantage at all.]</p>
	Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competitive edge <p>Provides a sense of expertise</p>

Source: The author

Many of the men interviewed reported that they share healthy and cordial relationship with their male bosses with some kind of camaraderie and bonding. Fascinatingly, men in non-traditional occupations experienced a distinct scenario as the difference in gender in comparison to the gender of the majority at workplace is viewed in a positive light. Therefore, there's a valence attached to flaunting their "distinctiveness" from the female majority. Also their personal rapport with people in authority who mostly happen to be same sexed has important implications for their career chart. A male school teacher shared, "*I share a very good*

rapport with my principal. I am more like his right hand man. I have worked hard to earn that trust and respect. He knows that I'm credible and can pull off work that my other colleagues can't. "Saara bhaaga daudi, events organize karnaa, camps organize karne ka kaam aankh bandh karke mujhe hi milta hai. Toh ek tareeke se aapne jo visibility ke bare mein poocha uska nuksaan nai hota mujhe" [All the running around, organising events, camps and related work are given to me, by putting their trust blindly on me. So, in a way with regards to visibility, I am not at a disadvantage at all.]

In sharp contrast female tokens often reiterated about the constant pressure to "prove that they belong". As shared by one of the respondents, *Humesha ek pressure hota hai to perform so that people don't question your presence in the organisation. Waise hi sabko lagta hai ki I'm a misfit for the job, main unko mauka nai dena chahti...* [There is always a pressure to perform so that people do not question your presence in the organisation. Anyway people feel that I am a misfit for the job and I don't want to give any chance to them to say anything more...] This clearly indicates how the numerical disadvantage gets compounded by the power differentials that exist in a patriarchy like ours.

Pressure to "do gender"

Ironically even after 'crossing gendered borders', tokens are expected to display gender conformity, in fact more intensely. Women respondents reported increased expectation from them to be especially compassionate, warm, nurturing and to constantly come across as a "maternal figure". They feel these expectations often make them focus less on the technical and administrative aspects of their jobs as they feel they will not be appreciated for that kind of acumen as much as they would be for playing the role of a "nurturer".

Table 2. Second Theme, Its Corresponding Sub-themes and Excerpts

Theme	Sub-themes	Excerpts
Pressure to 'do gender'	Males	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have to be 'macho always' Subjected to stricter yardsticks of evaluation 	<p>".....Main by nature caring hoon, apne students ka dhyaan rakhtaa hun, unki parvaah kartaa hun..But at times kar nai paata....."[I am a caring person, by nature. I take care of my students and am worried about their well being. But at times, I cannot do it.]</p> <p>".....A man should 'do that' attitude irritate kartaa hai bahut. Kai baar nai man hota fir bhi duty nibhaani padti hai....." [A man should do that attitude irritates me a lot.</p> <p>A lot of times I may not want to do it but have to do it out of duty.]</p>
	Females	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexist remarks made as a reminder of the feminine nature Expectations of maternal characteristics 	<p>"...distasteful remarks sun ne ko miltehai..(frowns).. Jaise is kaam mein talent chahiye, nazaakat nahi...." I get to hear distasteful comments..such as the job requires talent and not fragility.]</p> <p>"humaari presence se job mein thoda stress kam ho jaatahai.yousee..ek comforting and warm presence bahut zaruri hota hai"[Through our presence, the stress levels in the workplace come down. There is a need for a warm and comforting presence.]</p>

Source: The author.

As shared by one of the respondents, *"humaari presence se job mein thoda stress kam ho jaata hai you see, ek comforting and warm presence bahut zaruri hota hai, koi ladaai jhagdaa hota hai toh hum log calm down kara dete hain male staff ko"*[Through our presence, the stress levels in the workplace come down. There is a need for a warm and comforting presence. If there is any fight or a quarrel, we help calm down the male staff] This vignette clearly indicates how female tokens constantly try to re-establish the gender roles and expectations subtly indicating no breach in their gender identification.

Similarly it is not uncommon in nursing, for example, for men to be called upon to help catheterize male patients, or to lift especially heavy patients. Male teachers at time feel trapped in certain gender stereotypical expectations such as 'males being more tech savvy than females; as described by this teacher:

“.....all the time people are calling me to get computer related work done .Not that I mind doing any of those things, but it's ... you know, it just kind of bugs me that I'm supposed to do that all the time. A man 'should do that' attitude irritate kartaa hai bahut. Kai baar nai man hota fir bhi duty nibhaani padtithai. Yaa fir koi discipline issue ho toh mujhe villain ki tarah khadaa kar dete hain bacchhe ke saamne” [...all the time people are calling me to get computer related work done .Not that I mind doing any of those things, but it's ... you know, it just kind of bugs me that I'm supposed to do that all the time. A man should do that attitude irritates me a lot. A lot of times I may not want to do it but have to do it out of duty. Or else, if there is any disciplinary issue at hand, then I am the one who is projected as the villain in front of the students in dealing with the issue.]

The above vignette shows the hidden pain experienced by males by virtue of the constant expectation to 'act out' a certain script of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' day in and day out. But many men claimed this differential treatment did not produce any discomfort. In fact, several said they enjoyed all the appreciation and compliments that come their way for the display of “expertise and skills” in their profession as evident in the themes of 'being indispensable' 'expert' or 'dependable', etc.

Irrespective of their numerical status and occupational type the male participants reported a constant struggle to enact a gendered script handed down to them by patriarchy. The responses of male tokens who are in Teaching profession reflect the conflict some of them experienced when some of them who wanted to nurture children were frowned upon and even looked at with suspicion as if questioning whether they meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly the doubts cast on such men also swung in the other direction where their nurturance was believed to be camouflaging their sexual overtures. So either way, such men felt being coerced into behaving in a particular gender stereotypical manner irrespective of “how they feel”.

Unless they adapted more distant and masculine ways of being with children, men who nurtured were under suspicion of being “NAAMARD” or impotent. As reported by one of the male respondent “*Main by nature caring hoon, apne students ka dhyaan rakhta hun, unki parvaah kartaa hun..But at times kar nai paata.. Mere colleagues ek aadmi ka aisa attitude bacchon ke liye hona, bardaasht nai kar paate. Mujhe pata hai kuch log peeth peeche mujhe aurat bhi kehte hain..*” [I am a caring person, by nature. I take care of my students and am worried about their well being. But at times, I cannot do it. My colleagues cannot stand that a man can have such an attitude towards students. I know that a lot of them call me a woman behind my back]. After a pause he continued “*Bura lagta hai but aap doosron ki soch badal nai sakte*” [I feel very bad about it but you cannot change other people's thought process]. Male teachers are often ascribed the role of a strict disciplinarian thereby creating a self fulfilling prophecy that there's something inherent in men that makes them good disciplinarians thus ensuring that the stereotype gets perpetuated without being questioned. The above vignettes thus continue to put pressures on both men and women to “do gender”.

Threat to ascribed Femininity- Threat to acquired Masculinity: an existential dilemma

Women tend to experience an avoidance-avoidance conflict, having two unsatisfactory choices to make. On one hand, they would be condemned for not conforming to the traditional feminine stereotypes and gender role expectations. On the other hand, they would not be able to gain ground in their careers if they do not do so and continue to fit in the limited feminine qualities and stereotypes that have been attributed to them. In some cases, men also endure the backlash for negating masculine stereotypes. However, they are not required to do so in order to move forward in their careers. Thus, penalties for not conforming to stereotypes are more taxing and troublesome for women than men.

Table 3. Third Theme, Its Corresponding Sub-themes and Excerpts

Theme	Sub-themes	Excerpts
Pressure to 'do gender'	Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have to be 'macho always' <i>".....Main by nature caring hoon, apne students ka dhyaan rakhtaa hun, unki parvaah kartaa hun..But at times kar nai paata....."</i>[I am a caring person, by nature. I take care of my students and am worried about their well being. But at times, I cannot do it.] Subjected to stricter yardsticks of evaluation <i>".....A man should 'do that' attitude irritate kartaa hai bahut. Kai baar nai man hota fir bhi duty nibhaani padti hai....."</i> [A man should do that attitude irritates me a lot. A lot of times I may not want to do it but have to do it out of duty.]
	Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexist remarks made as a reminder of the feminine nature <i>"...distasteful remarks sun ne ko miltehai..(frowns).. Jaise is kaam mein talent chahiye, nazaakat nahi..."</i> I get to hear distasteful comments..such as the job requires talent and not fragility.] Expectations of maternal characteristics <i>"...humaari presence se job mein thoda stress kam ho jaatahai.yousee..ek comforting and warm presence bahutt zaruri hota hai"</i>[Through our presence, the stress levels in the workplace come down. There is a need for a warm and comforting presence.]

Source: The author.

Gender stereotypes act as normative assumptions of prescribed roles which consist of both descriptive and injunctive elements (Fiske & Stevens, 1993). In addition to illustrating the conventional judgments and beliefs that characterise men and women, gender stereotypes also exhibit a rigid and customary notion of prescribing how men and women "ought to be" and more significantly, how they "ought not to be". There is no denying that descriptive stereotypes are in flux. They are more fluid now than ever before, with newer contemporary conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity emerging in terms of 'alpha female', 'metrosexual men' etc., yet a traditional gender prescription remains unscathed. There may have been striking developments and expansion of career opportunities for women which led to some revisions in their job roles. Nonetheless, the age old stereotypical perceptions continue to perpetuate gender inequity. They tend to manifest through ideas like women ought to be different from men, especially in those aspects which reflect negatively about their abilities to execute high-powered jobs.

Interestingly men in atypical setups did not report experience of workplace hurdles coming from their colleagues and supervisors, instead, for them the major area of concern is the constant pressure on them to "do their gender" out of the fear of feminization as is evident in the recurrent aspects of constantly trying to 'establish their territory' and 'marking distinct identity' in their responses. For Males, whether they are workplace Tokens or Non Tokens, Boundary heightening is something that comes from their own side unlike their female counterparts who are often at the receiving end of such boundary erection practices. This clearly indicates the power play involved in the experience of workplace token dynamics.

It can be seen that the male workers mostly reported experience of "awkward flow of communication". As reported by one of the male participants, *"Staff strength zyaada nai hai humaare school ki. Aurtein zyaadatar saath rehti hain. Aapko pata hai mentality kaisi hoti hai logon ki. Zyaada friendly hona possible nai ho pata. Kahaaniyan banaa lete hain log. Aur dhyaan bhi rakhna padtaa hai ki muh se koi baat na nikal jaaye jo koi mahilaa galat samajhle. Aadmiyon ke mazaak aur aurton ke mazaak bahut alag alag hote hain. Kuch bol do toh bura maan leti hain ek dum se. Badi umarwaali teachers beta beta bolti hain. Unse salah leta hun ..khush rehti hain. Kam bolne mein hi bhalaai hai yahan"* [Our school does not have a huge staff strength. Females generally tend to stay together. You know how people's mentality is like. It is not possible to be too friendly. People start making stories. One also needs to be careful that such things should not be spoken that a female can take in a wrong manner. The jokes among men and women are different. If one says something, females start feeling bad immediately. The elderly aged teachers address me like a son. I take advice from them and they stay happy. It is better to speak less here]

For male tokens in gender atypical occupations, a sense of solidarity for their same sex colleagues' hints at the sense of comfort and security they seek in their same sex affiliation. It is interesting to note how one participant considers that the term 'Nurse' automatically implies a female incumbent as evident from the following lines, *"I think nurses (female) ko zyaada pareshaani hoti hai deal karne mein..."* [I do not think nurses have a major problem in dealing with cases....]. The statement clearly reflects how male job incumbents in a gender atypical job psychologically distance themselves from the very job they are in. They reconstruct the

meaning of their job for themselves in order to avoid any kind of intrapsychic conflict by virtue of being in a job dominated by females. Thus for them, only female colleagues are nurses while they are specialised “medical attendants”.

The most compelling evidence of discrimination against men in such professions is closely related to their dealings with the public (Williams, 1992). Men often encounter negative stereotypes when they come into contact with clients or “outsiders”-people they meet outside of work. For instance, it is popularly assumed that fashion designers, male classical dancers, male beauty experts etc. are gay. Librarians encounter images of themselves as “wimpy” a male in an atypical occupation is often type casted as “feminine” and “passive” (Budig and England 2002). Elementary school teachers are often confronted by suspicions that they are paedophiles. Men are very distressed by these negative stereotypes, which tend to undermine their self-esteem and to cause them to second-guess their motivations for entering these fields.

Identity negotiation

The responses clearly showed how women in masculine occupations/atypical occupations grappled with the pressure to build synchrony between two diverse expectations i.e. “being female enough” and “being professional enough”. So, there is a constant tussle where they want to achieve professional credibility and regard and “do gender” as well. As one of the dominant themes for occupationally atypical female tokens is the constant need to strike a balance between being “presentable” and “being professional”.

Females irrespective of their numerical strength and occupational appropriateness reported these pressures. However, the female tokens in occupationally atypical jobs reported more distress and experience of these prescriptive forces. The atypical female worker has to constantly juggle in a paradoxical situation where she is expected to tone down her femininity to achieve professional credibility but at the same time preserve the femininity lest she would be bullied for being “iron maiden”. Interestingly they try to ‘become one of the boys’ by dressing up in a more masculine manner but ensure that they safeguard their gender identity by engaging in stereotypical gendered behaviour once in a while. Unfortunately, both the approaches are not chosen out of free will rather there is a pressure on them to constantly negotiate between this dyad of “outwardly copying of males” and “maintenance of femaleness” as is evident in almost every interview transcript of females working in a gender atypical job.

Table 4. Fourth Theme, Its Corresponding Sub-themes and Excerpts

Theme	Sub-themes	Excerpts
Identity negotiation	Females	“.....Yeh sales and marketing ka kaam bhaaga daudi ka hota hai.us hisaab se dress up hona padta hai taaki log aap ko seriously le.....”[The work of sales and marketing involves a lot of running around. So, one has to dress ‘professional enough’ and accordingly so that people take you seriously] ‘feminine enough’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressure to strike a balance between being ‘professional enough’ and ‘feminine enough’ Struggle for acceptance as ‘insider’ 	“.....nobody cares to inform us about anything that’s happening in the office. Get-together ki khabar tak nai milti.It feels bad....”[... we do not get to know anything about get-together..]

Source: The author.

A participant reported, “ Yeh sales and marketing ka kaam bhaaga daudi ka hota hai.us hisaab se dress up hona padta hai taaki log aapko seriously le. Upar se hum logon ki maximum dealing bhi corporate houses and event managers se hoti hai toh thoda professional look chahiye. But kai baar ghar waalon ko mera ladkon ki tarah kapde daalna acchha nai lagtaa....unki bhi galti nai hai” [The work of sales and marketing involves a lot of running around. So, one has to dress accordingly so that people take you seriously. In addition, most of our dealings are with corporate houses and events managers, so we need to look professional. But a lot of time, my family does not like the fact that I am dressed like males generally do...it is not their fault to have such thoughts]. The above reported incident highlights the guilt that women carry when they cross the boundaries set for them. The feelings of guilt may not stem from their personal frailties. Rather, the socialisation process has reinforced the expectations of an ideal feminine role and failure to comply with it might evoke such emotions.

The paradox lies in the fact that they don’t even enjoy a complete ownership of their own emotions. If they feel unapologetic about their choice then they are made to feel sorry about it and if they feel guilty of ‘crossing over’ to the other side then they are constantly reminded of how “they had strayed away” and now on,

every action of theirs should be towards the path of atonement. So they are either ostracised as “deviates” or are labelled as “apologetics”, nonetheless they cease to be a woman in either case.

Ironically this dyad of “outwardly copying of males” and “maintenance of femaleness” is evident even in the occupations that are considered to be gender neutral/gender non atypical. Pharmacy represents one such gender non atypical set up those women have entered and are negotiating. The responses of medical representatives and Lab in-charges to the questions about the experience of Token dynamics of Visibility, Polarization and Role Encapsulation reveal intricate and nuanced ways women are doing gender even in a supposedly gender-neutral occupation.

III. Conclusion

The study offers an insight about how the power dynamics between males and females in a patriarchal society like ours gets carried over to workplace setting as well. The female interviewees irrespective of their relative strength at workplace (Tokens or Non tokens) have shared experiences of differential treatment at workplace and a constant struggle to prove that 'they deserve to be there'. Interestingly, when males cross 'gendered boundaries', the leverage that patriarchy has provided them helps compensate for their numerical minority in female typical occupations. However, they have reported concerns related to societal stigma attached to their choice of work. The findings highlight that the issue of tokenism cannot be addressed solely on the basis of numbers and the socio-cultural milieu against which both the stakeholders are operating needs to be taken into account. Any kind of affirmative action will not be effective as long as it is just a standalone legislative measure. Workplaces are microcosm of the society; hence there is utmost necessity to take up an eclectic socio-organizational approach to improve our understanding of workplace dynamics in order to design effective interventions for addressing this deep-rooted problem.

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