

WORKFORCE AND WOMEN-THE CASE OF MATRILINEAL MEGHALAYA

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Abstract

“Women hold up half the sky”- (Mao). Half of the world’s population is made up of women. But the question is whether they make up half of the workforce. Is the workplace equally accessible to women as it is to men? Is gender equality reflected in the workplace? The economic empowerment of women through their strong participation in the workforce holds utmost significance. Women should not be confined to the responsibilities of family and child care alone, as their presence in the workplace is equally salient. But, most of India is patriarchal, where male domination is a norm. The gender biases are reflected both within and outside the home. Matriliney, on the other hand, gives women more power in terms of rights and privileges rather than women in patriarchal societies. It would be interesting to examine if the enhanced status of women in matrilineal societies is translated into their equal or more numbers in the workforce. Based on an analysis of secondary data from two sources, the Census Report of Meghalaya State Government Employees, 2010 and Meghalaya State Government Employees Census from 2016-2020, the objective of the paper is to find out if women in matrilineal Meghalaya are adequately represented in the workforce and whether matriliney as a social order is supportive of women empowerment.

Keywords: *Women, Workforce, Female employees, Matriliney, Meghalaya.*

“.....reducing gender gaps in the world of work can yield broad development dividends: improving child health and education, enhancing poverty reduction, and catalyzing productivity.

Empowering women and girls is vital in order to achieve our twin goals: ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity.”(2013)

(Jim Yong Kim, President, The World Bank Group)

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Introduction

For democracy to be real, the notion of equality expressed in terms of equal rights and opportunities and equal representation is fundamental. Women need to be present, both at home and in the workplace. Our workplace, therefore, has to be accommodating towards both men and women. Only then will the aspiration for a gender balanced world, a world where women are empowered will be realised and any deviation from this goal will severely compromise the values of democracy. In this context, Pramila Patten states, "Women's economic empowerment through employment is critical to achieving gender equality." (2007, p.102) However, the social reality we are confronted with, tells a different story – women continue to face inequality and discrimination on different levels.

The march towards gender equality and women empowerment has been a long march and with the discriminatory barriers against women continuing to prevail, many worries of women still remain unresolved. Patten also observes: "In most countries, the labour force participation rate is low and the unemployment rates higher for women than they are for men, women are mainly discriminated against because of stereotyping and misguided preconceptions of women's roles and abilities." (2007, p.103). Within the household, the traditional gender role places the woman, as a care giver, with the responsibilities of the children and family on her. This is a role which is viewed as socially desirable. At the same time, the role of the woman in the workplace assumes importance for realisation of her full potential, enhancement of her status and enrichment of her life. The role of the woman need not only be limited within the boundaries of the home alone, her contribution in the workplace is equally salient. The presence of more women in the workforce will motivate and encourage other women. Also, as men and women have different experience, they will bring their individual contribution, their creativity and world views to bear upon the work.

Inequalities are shaped by the cultural norms of a society. Under patriarchy, the men – women relationship is an unequal relationship – men are superior, women are inferior, men exercise control, women are subjected to control, men are privileged, women are subdued. Meghalaya, in the North-eastern region of India came into existence on 21st, January, 1972. The indigenous groups of Meghalaya, the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos are inheritors of a distinct culture, the matrilineal culture. It is characterized by uniqueness, whereby, the birth of the girl child is celebrated. After marriage, it is the husband who moves to the wife's home and children trace their lineage through the mother. In the Khasi society, for instance, the youngest daughter 'Ka Khatduh' as she is referred to is the custodian of the property. These practices are indicative of the special place of women in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya. In this region, women have access to rights and privileges which women under patriarchy are deprived of.

Objectives

The paper seeks to understand and examine,

1. The position of women in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya,
2. The share of women in the workforce, in particular, their proportion in relation to the total employees of the Meghalaya State Government and,
3. If the privileges and enhanced status of women under matrilineality translates into their significant numbers in the workforce.

Research Methodology

The methodology is firstly, the collection of census data of the Meghalaya State Government Employees from two sources,

1. The Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shillong, Meghalaya
2. The Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Shillong, Meghalaya

The secondary data collected from these two sources have been analysed and compared to achieve a conclusive result and to make an estimation of future projection using the Method of Least Square

Analysis

In the context of women empowerment and gender equality, equal participation of women in the workforce holds immense significance, more so, in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya. The trend and growth of male and female employees in the Meghalaya State government, their number across districts and their number in gazetted and non-gazetted categories, from 1972, the inception of the State, till 31st March, 2020 are analysed in subsequent tables and graph.

Table 1: Trend in Meghalaya Government Employees by Sex

As on 31 st March	Male		Female		Total	Number of Females per 1000 Male Employees
	Nos	%	Nos	%		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1972	8604	89.77	981	10.23	9585	114
1973	11913	89.53	1393	10.47	13306	117
1975	14577	88.05	1979	11.95	16556	136
1977	16404	86.46	2569	13.54	18973	157
1979	16949	84.72	3056	15.28	20005	180
1981	17363	82.58	3663	17.42	21026	211
1984	19060	81.62	4291	18.38	23351	225
1987	23680	80.60	5700	19.40	29380	241
1991	26817	80.01	6700	19.99	33517	250
1997	30404	77.91	8619	22.09	39023	283
2000	34352	73.83	12177	26.17	46529	354
2003	34957	72.44	13301	27.56	48258	380
2006	35846	71.39	14364	28.61	50210	401
2010	35401	68.73	16104	31.27	51505	455
2016	29499	68.00	13879	32.01	43378	470
2017	30915	67.77	14700	32.23	45615	476
2018	35079	67.29	17052	32.71	52131	486
2019	37536	67.90	17747	32.10	55283	473
2020	38229	67.94	18042	32.06	56271	472

Sources: (1) Report on Census of Meghalaya State Government Employees, March 31, 2010, Government of Meghalaya, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shillong. (2) Meghalaya State Government Employees Census (2016-2020), Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Note: calculated the percentage of male and female employees and the number of female employees to 1000 males for the years 2016-2020.

Table 1 shows a huge difference in the number of male and female employees. The disparity between them continues throughout from 1972 to 2020. In 1972, compared to 8604 males, there were 981 females. In 1981, the figure of male employees stood at 17363 in comparison to 3663 female employees.

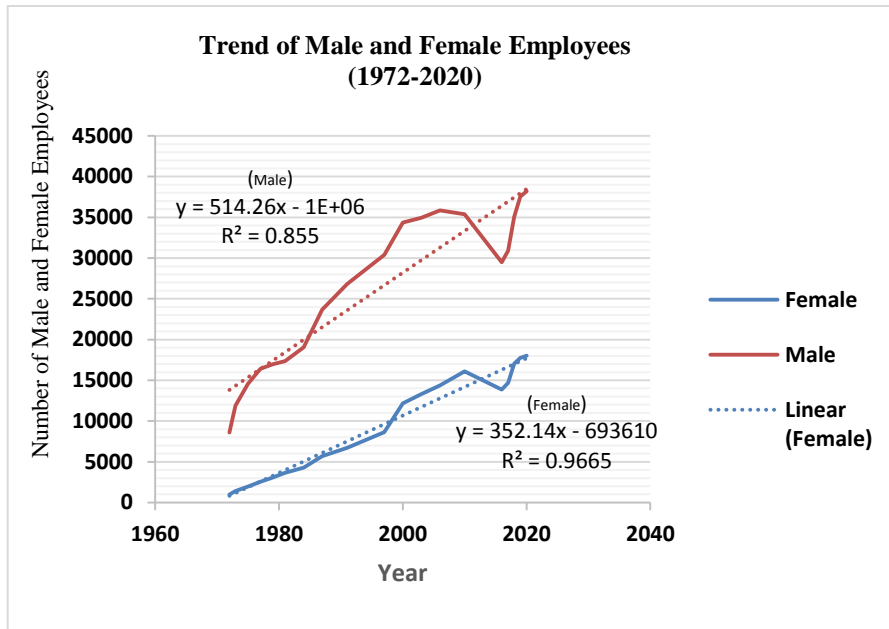
In 1991, as compared to 26817 male employees, the number of female employees was 6700. In 2010, the number of male employees progressed to 35401, while that of female employees to 16104. In 2020, the number of male employees stands at 38229 whereas that of female employees at 18042. As seen in Table 1, there is a significant drop in the number of both men and women from 2010 to 2016.

However, the need to probe the factors responsible for this trend is outside the scope of this paper. The analysis of trend from 1972 to 2020 reveals that the male employees significantly outnumber the female employees. With respect to the number of females per 1000 males, in 1972, it was a dismal 114 females to 1000 males and in 2010, the number of females was 455 to 1000 males. In 2020, the number of female employees is 472 to 1000 males.

Though the male-female gap is getting narrow, yet, in the year 2010, the share of male employees was 68.73% as compared to 31.27% female employees and in the year 2020, the share of male employees is 67.94% in comparison to 32.06% female employees.

The Table is also depicted in the form of a graph below.

Figure 1



The x-axis represents the ‘Year’ and the y-axis represents the ‘Number of Male and Female Employees.’ Using the method of Least Squares, a trend is fitted for both male and female employees. It is clear, from the graph, that the gap between male and female employees is huge. This is reflective of the reality of female participation in matrilineal Meghalaya, establishing that matriliney has failed to build a truly inclusive workplace.

Table 2: Growth of Male and Female Employees

As on 31 st March	Male Employees	Growth over previous census		Female Employees	Growth over previous census	
		Number	%		Number	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1972	8604	-	-	981	-	-
1973	11913	3309	38.46	1393	412	42.00
1975	14577	2664	22.36	1979	586	42.07
1977	16404	1827	12.53	2569	590	29.81
1979	16949	545	3.32	3056	487	18.96
1981	17363	414	2.44	3663	607	19.86
1984	19060	1697	9.77	4291	628	17.14

1987	23680	4620	24.24	5700	1409	32.84
1991	26817	3137	13.25	6700	1000	17.54
1997	30404	3587	13.38	8619	1919	28.64
2000	34352	3948	12.99	12177	3558	41.28
2003	34957	605	1.76	13301	1124	9.23
2006	35846	889	2.54	14364	1063	7.99
2010	35401	(-)445	(-)1.24	16104	1740	12.11
2016	29499	(-)5902	(-)16.67	13879	(-)2225	(-)13.82
2017	30915	1416	4.80	14700	821	5.92
2018	35079	4164	13.47	17052	2352	16
2019	37536	2457	7.00	17747	695	4.08
2020	38229	693	1.85	18042	295	1.66

Sources: (1) Report on Census of Meghalaya State Government Employees, March 31, 2010, Government of Meghalaya, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shillong. (2) Meghalaya State Government Employees Census (2016-20) Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Note: calculated in number and percentage, the growth over previous census of male and female employees for the years 2016-2020.

Table 2 indicates the growth rate of male and female employees. From 1972 to 2010, the growth rate in respect of female employees was more than that of male employees. In case of the latter, a negative growth rate is visible in the year 2010. From 2006 to 2010, the number of female employees rose by 12.11%, whereas, comparatively the number of male employees declined by (-) 1.24%. In spite of the positive growth rate, female employees, in 2010, were 16104 in number, in comparison to 35401 male employees, pointing towards a considerable gender gap in the workforce. In 2016, a negative growth rate is visible with respect to both male and female employees. Except for 2019 and 2020, where the growth rate for male employees is higher, for other years, the growth rate of female employees is higher in comparison to male employees. Yet, the share of women is considerably less in the total number of the State Government employees. Matrilineal Meghalaya, therefore, has a lot to achieve in the

area of gender equality. It is not unrealistic to expect strong presence of women in the workforce in a matrilineal society.

Table 3: Number of Employees according to Sex and District of Posting (As on 31st March, 2010)

District	Male	Female	Total	Male employees as percentage of District Total	Female employees as percentage of District Total
1	2	3	4	6	5
West Garo Hills	6694	2271	8965	74.67	25.33
East Garo Hills	3713	1062	4775	77.76	22.24
South Garo Hills	1604	516	2120	75.66	24.34
West Khasi Hills	3421	1341	4762	71.84	28.16
Ri-Bhoi	1952	817	2769	70.50	29.50
East Khasi Hills	13995	7018	21013	66.60	33.40
Jaintia Hills	4022	3079	7101	56.64	43.36
Meghalaya	35401	16104	51505	68.73	31.27

Source: Report on Census of Meghalaya State Government Employees, March 31, 2010, Government of Meghalaya, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shillong.

Notes: (1) Calculated the percentage of male employees as against District total. (2) In 2010, the total number of districts in Meghalaya were 7. At present, there are 11 districts.

Table 3 displays the number of employees according to sex and district of posting. What we observe is the presence of a large number of men in comparison to women. Jaintia Hills had the highest percentage of women (43.36%), whereas East Garo Hills had the lowest percentage of women (22.24%). Except for Jaintia Hills (43.36%) and East Khasi Hills (33.40%), the remaining districts had less than 30% of female employees. With respect to men, Jaintia Hills ranked lowest at 56.64% and East Garo Hills ranked highest at 77.76%. These figures establish the weak representation of women in the workforce in the seven districts of Meghalaya. It is clear that men are more visible in the workplace than women.

Table 4: Number of Employees according to Sex and District of Posting (As on 31stMarch, 2020)

District	Male	Female	Total	Male employees as percentage of District Total	Female employees as percentage of District Total
1	2	3	4	6	5
East Khasi Hills	15452	7667	23119	66.84	33.16
West Khasi Hills	2785	1240	4025	69.19	30.81
South West Khasi Hills	695	362	1057	65.75	34.25
RiBhoi District	2834	958	3792	74.74	25.26
West Jaintia Hills	3398	2210	5608	60.59	39.41
East Jaintia Hills	665	645	1310	50.76	49.24
West Garo Hills	5996	2332	8328	72.00	28.00
South West Garo Hills	978	562	1540	63.51	36.49
East Garo Hills	2679	827	3506	76.41	23.59
North Garo Hills	1224	600	1824	67.11	32.89
South Garo Hills	1523	639	2162	70.44	29.56
Meghalaya	38229	18042	56271	67.94	32.06

Source: Meghalaya State Government Employees Census (2019-20), Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Note: Calculated percentage of male and female employees as against District total.

Table 4 reveals the difference in male and female employees in the districts of Meghalaya in the year 2020. Out of the 11 districts, East Garo Hills accounted for the least number of women at 23.59% and the highest number of men at 76.41%. East Jaintia Hills accounted for the highest number of women at 49.24% and the lowest number of men at 50.76%. It is clear that male employees are more in number in the districts of Meghalaya in comparison to female employees. From 2010, as seen in Table 3 to 2020

as seen in Table 4, in a span of ten years, the female employees in the Meghalaya State Government has increased slightly from 31.27% to 32.06%.

Table 5: Group-wise distribution of Government Employees as on 31st March 2003, 2006 and 2010

Groups	As on 31.03.2003			As on 31.03.2006			As on 31.03.2010		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gazetted Group-A	1590	849	2439	1674	952	2626	1783	1077	2860
Group-B	407	98	505	442	152	594	517	220	737
Non-Gazetted Group-B	1505	725	2230	1473	876	2349	2467	1527	3994
Group-C	23033	9617	32650	24119	9897	34016	23161	10461	33622
Group-D	8422	2012	10434	8138	2487	10625	7473	2819	10292
Total	34957	13301	48258	35846	14364	50210	35401	16104	51505

Source: Report on Census of Meghalaya State Government Employees, March 31, 2010, Government of Meghalaya, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Shillong.

Table 5 provides data about the group wise distribution of government employees in the years 2003, 2006 and 2010. A close observation of the numbers in both in the gazetted (Group A and B) and non-gazetted category (Group B, C and D) reveals the presence of more men than women. In 2003, in the gazetted category, Group A and B, the number of males was 1997(1590+407) as compared to 947(849+98) females. In 2006, the figure of male employees stood at 2116(1674+442) as compared to 1104 (952+152) female employees. In 2010, the number of male employees was 2300 (1783+517) in comparison to 1297 (1077+220) female employees. In the non-gazetted category (Group B, C and D) in 2003, the male employees were 32960 (1505+23033+8422) against 12354 (725+9617+2012) female employees. In 2006, the number of males stood at 33730 (1473+24119+8138) as compared to 13260 (876+9897+2487) females. In 2010, the number of male employees was 33101 (2467+23161+7473) in contrast to 14807(1527+10461+2819) female employees. If one looks at the numbers in 2003, 2006 and 2010 in case of

male and female employees, in both categories, gazetted and non-gazetted, the divide between men and women is clearly noticeable.

Table 6: Percentage of Male and Female employees in Gazetted and Non-Gazetted category as on 31st March 2003, 2006, 2010

Groups	2003		2006		2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gazetted Group (A and B)	67.83	32.17	65.71	34.29	63.94	36.06
Non-Gazetted Group (B+C+D)	72.74	27.26	71.78	28.22	69.09	30.91

Note: calculated on the basis of data in Table 5

What is observed from Table 6 is the increase in the share of female employees, though, not substantially in both gazetted (32.17% to 34.29% to 36.06% in 2003, 2006, 2010) and non-gazetted category (27.26% to 28.22% to 30.91% in 2003, 2006, 2010) whereas the share of male employees dropped by 2% approximately in gazetted (67.83% to 65.71% to 63.94% in 2003, 2006, 2010) and 1 to 2 % approximately in non-gazetted category (72.74% to 71.78% to 69.09% in 2003, 2006, 2010) .

Inspite of this trend, closing the gender gap remains fundamental. The reason being, in 2010, males were 63.94% to 36.06% females in the gazetted category and in the non-gazetted category, in the same year, male employees were 69.09% in comparison to 30.91% female employees. Thus, men clearly exceeded women in both gazetted and non-gazetted category.

Table 7: Group-wise distribution of Government Employees (As on 31st March, 2020)

Groups	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of Male employees	Percentage of Female employees
1	2	3	4	5	6
Gazetted Group-A	2163	1601	3764	57.46	42.54
Gazetted and Non Gazetted Group-B	3579	2153	5732	62.44	37.56
Non-Gazetted Group- C	27753	11542	39295	70.63	29.37
Group- D	4734	2746	7480	63.29	36.71
Total	38229	18042	56271	67.94	32.06

Source: Meghalaya State Government Employees Census (2019-20) Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Note: the 2019-20 data from the Directorate of Accounts and Treasuries makes no distinction in the Group B gazetted and Group B non – gazetted category.

Table 7 shows the group wise distribution of government employees, male and female, as on 31st March, 2020. Whether one observes the gazetted or non gazetted category the number of men exceeds the number of women. The highest number of female employees, at 42.54% is in Group A and the lowest number at 29.37% is in Group C. With respect to male employees, the highest number at 70.63% is in Group C and the lowest number at 57.46% is in Group A. What is noticeable is, in the case of men, their lowest share across all groups is above 50% and in the case of women, their highest share across all group is less than 50%. Hence, the real issue of closing the gender gap needs to be addressed in matrilineal Meghalaya.

Upward progress in the number of women in the workforce is critical. This will result in better living standards and empowerment of women.

Findings

Under patriarchy, the domination of men and the peripheral role of women create unequal power relationships within and outside the home. The patriarchal ideology, thus, conflicts with the democratic ideals of equality and fairness. On the other hand, it is believed that matrilineal societies empower women, that women are far more privileged than their counterparts under patriarchal societies, that they are more valued. Given this understanding, the superior status of women under matrilineality need to have translated into their increased participation in the workforce. The Census Report of the Meghalaya State Government Employees, 2010 and Meghalaya State Government Employees Census (2016-2020) however, reveal the significant gap in the number of men and women in the workforce. Whether one observes the trend of male and female employees or the percentage of men and women in the different districts or the group-wise distribution of male and female employees in the gazetted and non-gazetted category, men are more in number than the women. It is, therefore, evident from the analysis of census data that the presence of less women in the State government are contrary to the popular perception about matrilineality. The conclusions, derived, there from, confirm that matrilineality has failed to work to the advantage of women in Meghalaya. There are more male than female employees in the State government in matrilineal Meghalaya, where descent is traced through the female line and where women are the custodian of property and where women do not move to their husband's home after marriage. The absence of equal number of women in the workforce is, thus, not only a feature of patriarchy, it is a trait of matrilineality in Meghalaya as well. In this regards, Tiplut Nongbri comments: "... with the process of modernisation and economic development and the struggle for autonomy by tribes in the region, not only has patriarchal control over women intensified but the relevance of matrilineality itself has been questioned."(2003)

A calculation of the Multiyear Growth Rate/Compound Annual Growth Rate¹ from 1972 to 2020 shows the growth rate for female employees at 6.25% and the growth rate for male employees at 3.16%. It is interesting to note that inspite of the higher growth rate for women, in the next ten to twenty years, women employees will still fail to outnumber their male counterparts. A projection, using the Method of Least Squares, (as per the equations given in Figure 1) reveals that in 2030, the number of male employees will be 43948 as compared to 21234 female employees. Again, in 2040, the number of male employees will be 49090 and in comparison, the number of female employees will be 24756. Hence, it may be safe to conclude that even in the coming two decade, the female employees will be less than the male employees in the Meghalaya State Government. In fact, men will be near double the number of women, reinforcing that matriliney as a social structure has failed to empower women and that the gains under matriliney have not translated into equal or greater number of women in the workforce.

Suggestions

1. As the findings reveal, matriliney in Meghalaya has failed to empower women and ensure their adequate participation in the workforce. Hence, there is the need to interrogate the contradictions and challenge the patriarchal traits within matriliney, to make it meaningful and supportive of women empowerment and gender equality.
2. Within the household, the roles are gendered – the responsibilities of the home, the family and child care are responsibilities of women. This is true not only of patriarchy but also of matriliney. These perception bias do little in promoting gender equality and therefore, requires a mindset and an attitudinal shift.
3. Women on their part should aim at greater level of educational achievement and enhancement of their professional competence. Added to this, they need to break the discriminatory barriers and

challenge regressive social and cultural norms. Many a times, the question of having to choose between career and family is a question, not for men, it is a question for women. There is need for women, therefore, to strive for a work-life balance.

4. The achievement of equality between men and women in the workforce, also, requires government intervention. Effective and comprehensive policies are needed to meet the challenges to equal opportunities in the workforce. Therefore, the role of the government to demonstrate its will and commitment through concrete actions becomes vital. For instance, gender bias should not come in the way of recruitment and promotion to plum positions. The government needs to formulate a road map to increase the participation of women in order to achieve a gender balanced workforce in matrilineal Meghalaya.
5. Positions of power and decision making are mostly in male hands. This is reflective especially in the political space in Meghalaya where women are marginalised and under-represented. Cultural norms come in the way of participation and representation of women in the Dorbars (Village Councils) and the State Legislative Assembly. This needs to be addressed. If there are more women in positions of power and decision making, they will firmly place the issues and concerns of women in the policy agenda of the government and work towards bringing parity between men and women not just in the workforce in Meghalaya but on all levels.

Conclusion

Whatever the cultural context women find themselves – patriarchy or matriliney – the obstacles and challenges for women are similar, emphasising that matriliney is unsupportive in enhancing the number of women in the workforce. Nothing much has improved for women in whichever cultural environment they are placed. This is disheartening and the goal of achieving gender equality in the workforce and moving towards a progressive egalitarian society appears distant. Matriliney has failed to

ensure significant inclusion of women in the workforce, establishing a dichotomy between matrilineal norms and social reality. The obstacles for women pursuing a career under matrilineal norms are similar to those of women situated under the patriarchy system. Gender discrimination and harmful stereotypes are features of patriarchy, but Meghalaya is matrilineal. It is here that gender parity should be highly valued. It is here that examples of gender equality should be set for patriarchal societies to emulate. In matrilineal Meghalaya, the workforce disparity between men and women needs to be reversed. Only then will transformative change happen.

Note¹

$$g = \left[\left(\frac{E_t}{E_{t-n}} \right)^{\frac{1}{n}} - 1 \right] \times 100$$

Where,

$g \Rightarrow$ Multiyear Growth Rate/ Compound Annual Growth Rate

$E \Rightarrow$ number of employees

$t \Rightarrow$ current year (here, it is 2020)

$n \Rightarrow$ number of years (here, it is 2020-1972=48)

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