

Corporate Glass Ceiling: An Impact on Indian Women Employees

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Abstract

This paper aims at focusing on glass ceiling effect or gender diversity issue in organizations along with cultural biases, gender stereotypes and the approaches that all organizations should take to encourage and promote eligible women in respectful and managerial positions. For the decades, it has been seen that the presence of women in senior managerial positions is very low in spite of having good scholastics, plethora of knowledge, quality and efficiency and this happens only due to the barriers like mental blockage or prejudices and glass ceiling phenomenon. Organizations publish their balance sheets to disclose their financial health and to motivate shareholders as per financial considerations but the invisible balance sheets of human resources are unbalanced from the long past as per gender is concerned and are discouraging our society and women.

Keywords: Glass-ceiling, managerial positions, barriers, talent, diversity, India.

1. Introduction

We simultaneously utter “Half the sky thou art woman” and celebrate International Women’s Day(IWD) not only for the role of women in society but to draw the attention of gender issues or gender discrimination which is all pervading and continuously affecting our modern society. Standing in this 21st century, women are still fighting for their rights in every aspects of life and the women employees too are not the exception. As per the research report published by Accenture, women think that gender barrier is playing a determinant role in pulling in their achievements at the workplace.

The word “Glass ceiling” refers to an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that restrains qualified women or minorities from obtaining higher level positions at their workplace.

Society have consciously maintained the tradition: “a woman’s place is at home” (Jacob,1999; Moore,1995). Most of the women still believe that their duties are only restricted to household works and looking after their children. To speak the truth, our society is compelling women not to think beyond that. But with the introduction and advancement of education and changing mindset of ‘generation-Y’ have compelled women to think differently maintaining social values and ethics. Besides, globalization and changes in economic and social condition act as positive catalyst for changing of the role and self perception (Stedham & Yamamura,2004). Nowadays, women are trying to participate in the public domain and progressing towards managerial ranks or higher level of management of their participating organization. But the career path does not welcome women with red carpet. In spite of these positive changes, women still have to face intangible barriers in climbing up the corporate ladder. Along with “glass ceiling”, women, in the leadership position, may have to face the metaphors like “glass elevators” and “glass cliffs” which refer to greater scrutiny and criticism (Ryan and Haslam,2005). Eagly and Carly(2007) have suggested another metaphor of the “labyrinth” which suggests that a woman accepts many obstacles for her career progression.

Despite of all these obstacles, women are trying to put strong foothold in corporate in India but the percentage of women in senior management position in India is roughly 3%-6%. which is still very low.

1.1 Barriers: Can it be touched and felt?

Barriers may be tangible or intangible, actual or as imagined by the recipient (Maskell-Pretz and Hopkins,1997). Prejudices, glass ceiling effect or gender diversity are such barriers which are unseen and yet cast spell a lot on working woman so that organizations having intention to retain them, ultimately are in vain. Glass ceiling effect is instigated by the issues of gender differentiation and gender stereotyping which affect women continuously. There are some barriers e.g. *psychological barriers*, *societal-related barriers*, *organizational barriers* against which women are still fighting to strengthen their presence in the higher level of management of organizations.

1.2 Psychological barriers

From the very childhood days, women are bound to abide by some so called social rules which are deeply enrooted in their mind and they can not even ignore the influence of those rules in their matured age. In some cases they accept these rules as the rules of thumb and flow their lives as it goes. This kind of mindset gradually demotivate them and they loss their confidence and enthusiasm. And also there is class of women who try to overcome these rules and reshape their mind as career oriented. This class of women are actually psychologically potential to cope up with any

situation either in war fronts or in organizations. But to ignore these rules and prejudices is not so easy as it works against the society or rather societal rules.

It has been found in psychological studies that certain personality traits like emotional, social, soft heartedness, warmth found in women which are not suitable for managerial roles. They are also risk averse. Whereas, in this era of globalization and increased competition, organizations demand aggressiveness, competitiveness and risk taking ability to develop and sustain. And the society driven psychology which is playing the whole game of gender discrimination have a great impact on organization.

1.3 Societal-related barriers

Indian society has not been able to break the shackles of old tradition of “woman at home” concept. Women are always in dilemma to make progress in their career. This problem creates a heavy impact basically on married women. Marriage is social institution and once a woman is married, it is their prime responsibility to take care of her husbands, in laws and child. It has been seen that male members are the main bread earners of their families and women, either married or not, do their domestic or household works including elder care and if married, neonatal and child care. As women have long been considered as household or domestic workers so ‘education for women’ got the least or no priority in the society.

Now, the mentality of the society has been changed with the change of time and economy of the country. In this era of globalization, no country can progress having the ‘half human resources’.

In spite of changing situation, women employees still have to face problems as they have to play dual roles like an employee of an organization and household worker. Due to the improvement of thought and need for financial security, husband also wants a working wife. Nowadays many organizations have started Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) for women by the means of job sharing, flexi-time, telecommunicating etc. to give them relaxation. But according to Anker (1977), women can not concentrate at their workplace as they bring their domestic responsibilities and children with them at their workplace and prefer flexible work time for convenience. So women are compelled to take a career break or flexible working hours to look after their young children (Schwartz, 1989) and these are the barriers in acquiring managerial positions in their organizations. Whereas, male employees can focus solely on their assigned work as they have stay-at-home wives who are taking dual responsibilities as of office and home and children. Our society expect a woman to be a “good mother”. But there is a dilemma with dual roles: “If they do access FWAs, they are seen as good mothers, but not good workers. If they do not use FWAs, they face being viewed as good workers, but lousy mothers” (Beard *et.al*, 2010). Besides, women have to relocate with the relocation of their husbands due to job switch and thus women have to sacrifice their prospecting jobs to honour this kind of social norm.

1.4 Organizational barriers

Having the stereotyped and preconceived notion, male employees cannot accept women for their upward mobility in the organization and try to create barriers in any form. Women are excluded from informal organizational network and get no help from their colleagues in decision making process. Thus by restraining women from strategic decision making process male counterparts try to heckle intentionally and creates a barrier for promotion. So women are less popular in strategic decision maker role. Due to male imposed pressure women are also stressed throughout the day and indirectly it affects their performances and then it would be easy to find excuse to restrain them from promotion. This kind of thing sometimes causes losing of enthusiasm and it also affects their personal lives. It has been seen that a woman, in her prime time in organization or at the peak of her career, suddenly bounds to drop her career to meet social obligations and responsibilities and never think of returning back due to the unwelcoming situation of the organization.

2. Literature Review

The term glass ceiling signifies a range of barriers mug by women and by minorities as they try to find the improvement at their employment status. A lot of studies established the assumption of glass ceiling and pointed out that women experienced a numeral barrier at some stage in their pronouncement of their career pathway (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). There are also some hidden barriers, which sustained to put a stop a woman to moving up on a higher position in organizations (Adair, 1999; Baxter & Wright, 2000; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). Women countenance greater barriers and they need unusual tactics to thrive than do men.

According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission there are three classes of barriers for women in top level management. The foremost barriers are Societal Barriers portray the available good quantity of erudite women for particular positions. The next class of barriers is Internal Structural Barriers. These barriers include corporate climates.

Women employees, holding important designation, have to be cautious by their performance as they are supposed to represent womankind. In some cases, women leader may take help from their mentors but, as usual, is not successful as male leaders due to gender issues (Nieva and Gutek, 1981). Mentoring to women have certain constraints which include the less availability of mentors to help women employees and if available, the relationship between the male mentor and female manager becomes the prime concern to themselves as they become worry about how people will interpret their relationship. In the societal Barrier there are also pipeline barriers which comprise a confrontation to training and mentoring associates for future promotions.

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and argument and insufficient reporting on the existence of a glass ceiling. On the other hand, Effective leadership rewards brazenness, fierceness and sovereignty, which are usually documented as “masculine” personality. Women are projected to be cheerful, reliant and nurturing characteristics. Researchers have noted that people who are a successful manager behaves like a masculine characteristics (Burton & Parker, 2010; Frey, James, & Eitzen, 1991). Women who perform in a positive, antagonistic, self-governing mode are seen as performing outside of societal norms (Burton & Parker, 2010). Men who communicate with their subordinates as tough leaders in their organizations are often seen as being “direct,” but women who acquire the same communication style with her subordinates are seen as “punitive” (Brittany J. Galloway, 2012). Eagly and Carli (2003) propose that moderation this dilemma of role congruity needs feminine leaders to be enormously educated, while encouraging others that they are compliant to prospects of suitable feminine behavior.

Table 1 shows some of the individuality in general endorsed to women and men in leadership positions. Note that the masculine personality are sighted as the most optimistic and successful features of leadership.

Table 1: Managerial Characteristics, Based on Gender (Atwater et al., 2004).

Managerial Subroles Feminine	Managerial Subroles Masculine
Developing and mentoring	Problem Solving
Recognizing and rewarding	Disciplining
Communicating and informing	Delegating
Motivating and inspiring	Strategic decision making
Planning and organizing	Allocating resources
Supporting	Punishing

“For example, women are more likely to take an informal, as opposed to an official leadership role in organizations, and use terms such as ‘facilitator’ or ‘organizer,’ instead of ‘leader’” (Northouse, 2012, p. 357). Effective leadership is not distinguished by gender, but by a hermaphrodite fusion of personality including brainpower, inventiveness, and the capability to win over (Northouse, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

The study is mainly based on the secondary source in form of various research papers, websites and eBooks. On the basis of secondary data the argument in this paper has been developed. The researchers have placed their own observations regarding the same.

4. Conclusion

The concept "Women, the incarnation of motherhood" must not be changed but be modified with the time. Till now, women are considered in such a way as if they come

from different planets and societies have curiosities on them but have no faith. Like new gadget in the new market, organizations treat women where they have interests on women but cannot rely on their efficiency. So women in an organization are still facing barriers on career advancement, gender stereotyping and other threats from within or out of the organization. There is a hairline difference between female feticide and gender diversity or gender stereotyping because killing the honest motives of life of human being is very much synonymous with the killing of lives. This scenario should be changed and only the modernization of thought process of the management of organizations can change it with the help of positive societal changes. Every organization should prioritize talents over anything else for the growth of themselves which in turn, helps the society to grow. Every organization should focus on "human resource" rather than "man resource" or "woman resource" separately. Everything should be balanced and nothing can be grown being unbalanced. Some initiatives have been taken for women like women bank, women police station which are directed fully by the women.

Our society should carry on this noble Endeavour by encouraging women in every step of their lives keeping a thing in mind that where women are the creators of new life then they can easily maintain lifelines of the organization. Alternatively, Entrepreneurship may be the option for women who are ambitious, careerist and have passion for work and especially who want to prove themselves. On the other hand, society, government and private organizations should take collective efforts to diminish the practice of gender diversity and gender stereotyping for the amelioration of society, organizations and women.

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