

IMPACT OF GENDER EQUITY IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

Recent global statistics reveal that although women are continuing to increase their share of managerial positions but the pace of progress is not so fast, its uneven and sometimes discouraging for women faced with hindrances created by attitudinal prejudices in the workplace. The professions are mostly reserved for men and very few women are seen there. Even in female-dominant sectors, men rise to higher positions disproportionately. The rule of thumb is still: the higher up an organisation's hierarchy, the fewer the women.

There has been an increasing concern in recent years that gender discrimination is not allowing women to progress in a way in which their male counterparts are progressing. Despite the growing number of women managers, they are restricted to move to upper management positions. (Hymowitz and Schellhart, 1986). As women started entering the management field in 1970s, (Henning and Jardim, 1977), the study of women in management has become a well-known and important topic. Although gender equality at institutional level is not denied, but men are still able to achieve more authoritative and rewarding positions (Jacobs, 1995). Despite the fact that women these days are having more professional experience and higher academic qualification as compared to men, men are still earning more than women. The fact becomes more evident at senior levels (Jacobs, 1995, Wajcman, 1999). All over the world, women are not represented properly in management positions (Schein, 2001) and there is no upward growth for women within managerial ranks (Powell, 1999). Surveys reveal that women hold only around 10% of management positions (Deal and Stevenson, 1998), and 21.3% of technicians are women (Wu, 2000). Glass ceiling is the invisible barrier which acts as a hindrance for women and minorities to grow upwards and hence is an important part of discussion in promotion justice decision (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1987). The proof a glass ceiling for women is widespread (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). In addition, Lyness and Thompson (1997) reported that in spite of lot of publications on misrepresentation of women at top level, women are still not accepted and recognised as managers and have to face an invisible barrier.

The women are now being appreciated as managers by companies because females bring a fresh outlook in organisations as they are to some extent outsiders and hence companies want to invest in them as talent (Thomas and Ely, 1997). Women bring in innovative ideas and new working styles and they can pinpoint the shortcomings of work environment which were not noticed by mainstream workers (Thomas and Ely, 1997; Martin, 1998). Gender equity is therefore essential for increasing organisation performance, however research on gender and organizations has analysed in detail, how gender discrimination emerged, persisted and transformed (e.g., Alvesson & Billing, 1992; Hearn & Parkin, 1987; Knights, 1994; Mills & Tancred, 1992). Although workers are supposed to be gender neutral but culture and norms of the organization reward those traits and characteristics which are masculine in nature. (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1998). Korvajrvi (1998) for example, found that working styles of men and women are different but men's styles of working are rewarded more in an organisation to achieve organisational efficiency goals.

Despite tall claims of organizations of being gender neutral, this research shows that there is a lot of discrimination and females are feeling demotivated. In the Asian context also similar studies were done (Tan, 1991; Selmer and Leung, 2003; Youkondi and Benson, 2005) which examined that there is increase in the acceptance of women as managers but they also face constraints in their career growth. Similarly in Indian context also, a number of studies are done indicating that women are now economically more productive and participate in labour force in India (Liddle, 1988; Joshi, 1993; Buddapriya, 1999). The study by Liddle (1988) indicates segregation of Indian men and women in different sectors and has also done a comparative analysis of work done by Indian and Western women. Buddapriya (1999) has concluded that men and women are treated differently at workplace due to some stereotypes because of which there is a difference in their wage rates and women are not involved in decision making. The research in this field has grown significantly in recent years as compared

to past because more women are participating in management these days due to equal employment opportunities legislations (Sands, et al, 1999), increasing pressure from customers and competitors as a result of globalisation and to achieve competitive edge. In order to create gender equitable workplace environments, only increasing the numbers of women within the organization, adapting policies and procedures catering to women's needs or even providing gender sensitivity training are not sufficient (Kolb, et al., 1998). The focus should be on identifying and changing those issues in the system which are the root cause of gender inequity and negatively effect organizational performance (Bailyn, 2003; Kolb, et al., 1998), and thus inhibiting the organisation's ability to envision alternative work practices or adapt to new demands. An important component of gender equity is breaking the glass ceiling on which a number of studies such as (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Chugh and Sahgal, 2007) are done, which reveal that there is no difference in terms of education and recruitment among men and women but the advancement of women to higher positions is slow. A study by Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010) reveals that Men get more promotions than women, although both of them are provided mentors but results of mentoring are different for both. This is due to the fact that men are sponsored more as compared to women by their mentors in promotions.

Women are not encouraged to high level science, math and engineering jobs in the US, without giving any solid reasons (National Academies Report). The experts have not found any good reasons for it, but given a number of excuses- biological differences in ability, hormonal influences, child-rearing demands and even differences in ambition.

Thorenau et al. (1994) found that women were not allowed to advance in their careers because there were hindrances in the structure of organisations resulting in short career ladders for them so that they could not rise to middle and upper level positions in organisations. Organisations these days are trying to be gender inclusive because they want to succeed in business and also this enhances their corporate social responsibility. Organisations are providing equal recruitment opportunities to males and females and are committed to provide a culture where females can be retained but senior level managers are not taking responsibility and diversity as a concept is also new for them (Saxena,2009).

Promilla Kapur (1975), in her study, has related the socio-economic conditions of India with the working women has concluded that now a days women take up jobs not because they are hard pressed by economic necessity but also in other socio- psychological situations. In her survey she found the change attitude of husbands that 86% husbands wanted or at least did not mind their wives working. However, she adds, her working is at the same time disliked by the husbands because he feels insecure and his ego is hurt and her mixing with the men at work and at official functions is resented by him and is viewed with suspicion and jealousy.

Steinberg and Shapiro (1982) in a study of the personality traits of male and female MBA students noted that some women scored higher on masculine traits than some men while some men scored higher on feminine traits than some women. Recent studies provide extensive empirical support of the theory. Costa et al (2001) reported that women exhibited characteristics of warmth and agreeableness while men exhibited characteristics of assertiveness and openness to ideas.

Women Managers and Discrimination at workplace

Discrimination is defined under ILO Convention No.111 as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of sex, colour, race, religion etc. which impairs equality of opportunity in employment. Discrimination can give rise to poverty, hampers development, productivity and competitiveness and triggers political instability as per reports of ILO.

Sex discrimination is so far the most common form of discrimination and constitute the largest discriminated group. Not only they face glass ceiling but there is also inequity in pay in most of the countries. Discrimination can take place at any stage, in recruitment, salaries, training, and at time of lay-offs.

Discrimination at workplace

Discrimination at work can from both employer and colleagues. This problem is generally faced by new comers. This has a negative impact on both employees and employer. The effect on employees can be more or less but effect on organisation is long lasting. Discrimination leads to demotivation and dissatisfaction leading to decrease in performance.

Effects of Gender Discrimination at workplace

Performance of an organisation is greatly effected by gender discrimination at workplace. The quality of work is deteriorated. Employees feel demotivated. This also harms the image of organisation among customers. The turnover rate of employees increases and luring potential employees becomes difficult. Preventing Gender Discrimination at work place.

The responsibility of ensuring gender equity lies with management. Proper policies should be framed to ensure equality in opportunity in recruitment, promotion etc. Employees should also be aware about their rights.

Biased Perception towards women

Stereotypes based on gender have historically placed women in a nurturing, submissive role while men are seen as the dominant, more aggressive gender (Levinson, 1994)

Glass Ceiling

Glass ceiling is the invisible barrier which women face in organisations when they move to higher positions. Where Glass Ceiling Starts.

Glass Ceiling starts at the top level of management. Women are able to get into lower and middle level jobs but they have to face a number of barriers while moving upwards.

Breaking the glass ceiling

Slowly the things are changing and women are breaking the glass ceiling, their presence is seen more in boardrooms. They are heading many corporations but overall percentage of women at top is low. A discrimination free environment would enhance gender equity and inclusive organisation culture which would lead to increase in organisation commitment and job satisfaction which would further enhance organisation performance. All these phenomena are discussed in detail below:

Gender Equity

Organisations and employees should keep in mind that men and women pass through different fields which force them to cross two different zones with completely different “fields of logic” each of which has a different “organisation and time rhythm” (Hochschild, 1989). If the concept of gender is to be rooted in the workplace environment, it's not gender equality but gender equity which should prevail. Women alone cannot change anything, Men need to act as security guards of gender equality and equity. Changes would take place only when men are willing to change already established practices and norms.

Inclusive Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has been defined as those beliefs, values and attitudes which members of the organisation have common among them (Williams et al., 1993), those norms, beliefs and expected behaviours which are shared by employees of an organisation (Cooke and Szumal, 1993, 2000), or a sum total of values, beliefs, and behaviours that reflects the way individuals and groups interact in achieving a common goal (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974). Chalofsky (2003) says, that the best employers are those which have conducive organisational culture and policies that promote meaningful work, and a nurturing as well as supportive workplace and not those which provide perks and benefits. A research by Buddhapriya (2009) reveals the expectations of the women professionals in terms of the support that organisations can provide to help them in achieving better work-life balance and advance in their career. Lack of gender sensitive policies by the employer are considered as important barriers which affect the career advancement of women professionals to senior positions.

Organisation Commitment

Mowday et al. (1982) define organisational commitment as the “extent to which one is involved in and identifies with one's organisation.” Relations between individuals and organisations are perceived to be satisfying if they are mutually considered beneficial. If an employee believes that he is being adequately compensated for the work done by him, his commitment to the organisation will be high. Job autonomy i.e. freedom and control over one's work activities has also been found to positively impact organisation commitment (Bailyn 2003; Belanger, 1999; Hill et al., 1998, Eby et al., 1999). When employees feel committed to an organisation they are more likely to stay with the organisation (Mobley et al., 1978; Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Igarria and Greenhaus, 1992; Ahuja et al., 2007). The Organisational commitment consists of the three facets: continuance commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment (Greenberg and Baron, 2003).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined as an emotional state of feeling pleasure by an individual due to appraisal of his job or experience (Locke, 1976). Wanous and Lawler (1972) developed a general understanding of job satisfaction construct by identifying a number of definitions of job satisfaction which were examining different facets of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a measure of emotional evaluations of individuals about their expectations from their job and the degree to

which they have been met in an organisation. Schnake (1983) conceptualized three dimensions of job satisfaction covering cognitive and affective responses made by individuals in connection to their work environment. There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and organisation performance (Greenberg and Baron, 2003).

Organisational Performance

Organisational effectiveness or performance is defined as the degree of attainment of short-term and long-term goals of an organisation, the selection of these goals reflects the strategies adopted, personal interest of operator and life stage of organisation (Robbins, 2001). As far as the relationship between organisational culture and organisational effectiveness is concerned, it is argued that organisations possessing a strong culture that is congruent with their top management leadership style, organisational structure and internal management practices attain higher levels of effectiveness than their competitors (Arogyaswamy and Byles, 1987; Robbins, 2001).

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