

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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TIME TO CRACK THE GLASS CEILING: INDIA CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

In India the presence of professional women at workplace is growing drastically. The women's are no more the home makers, but are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with men. Today women are entering into global labour force in record members and its bringing a new gender dimension in the workplace. Women have attained incredible success in what was once considered as the "male domain", of the working world. The women's are entering into every field and have left no stone unturned. But still due to unbreachable barrier the percentage of women occupying top-notch managerial positions is very low. The fact that still the women are facing "the glass ceiling", "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it impedes women's from advancing up the job ladder to higher level management positions". In India women's are still seen as weak, emotional and unaggressive to hold higher level management positions. Gender-based discrimination is still subsisting at senior levels and there is male bastion hold. Although few women's have break the glass ceiling and struggled hard to achieved the corporate ladder to the top. The present paper is an attempt to identify the factors that create barriers for the working women and to reveal why there are few women in top positions in India. The paper will also investigate the presence of social norms and taboos that cause gender discrimination at the workplace.

KEYWORDS

Glass ceiling, Gender-based, masculine, feminine

INTRODUCTION

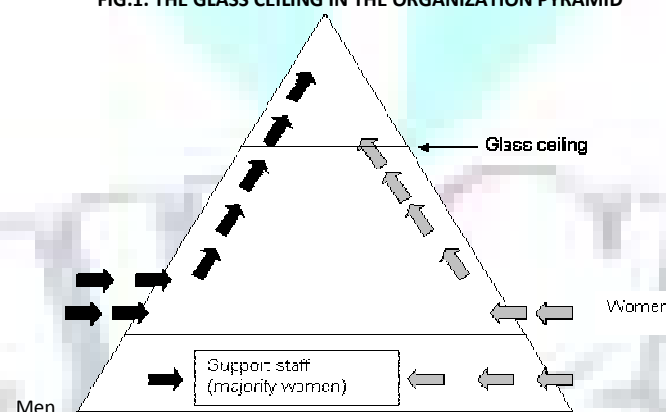
While gender inequalities in many arenas have been on the agenda of social research and activism for decades, gender inequalities in organizational leadership has been sadly overlooked. The number of working women force has increased tremendously with an increase in the number of highly educated women equipped with technical expertise. India has a rich history of women in positions of power, yet the country ranks 129 out of 146 countries on the Gender Inequality Index and women in India face barriers at all levels in areas. The presence of "Glass Ceiling" is covert which prevent women to get behold of the top positions in an organizations.

The article highlights the issues why women's are lagging far behind the men in top managerial jobs.

David Cotter and colleagues defined four distinctive characteristics of "Glass Ceiling" existence. It represents:

- i) "A gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee."
- ii) "A gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome."
- iii) "A gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels."
- iv) "A gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career."

FIG.1. THE GLASS CEILING IN THE ORGANIZATION PYRAMID



As appears from extant literature, the "glass ceiling" comes in many forms: women's under-representation at the corporate hierarchy, gendered wage gap, occupational segregation, discriminative corporate policies, lack of attention to the specific needs women have, sexual harassment at the workplace, exclusion of women from informal networks. The "Glass Ceiling" exists across all countries and is most evident at higher executive levels, particularly at the most senior level where female chief executives are very rare (Oakley 2000). A consultant firm in women's employment surveyed CEO's and personnel officers at 1000 leading companies and found that women hold a executives and board directors in the 70000 largest German companies was between 1 % and 3 %, while their share of senior and middle management was 6% and 12% respectively, by Catalyst, 1990. The fig.1 shows that women reaching at top level are very few in compare to men.

OBJECTIVES

Study is being conducted to focus on the following objectives:

- i) To explore why there are few women's at top positions.
- ii) Is the Glass Ceiling a myth or reality?
- iii) To recommend few suggestions as of how to overcome this problem by professionals and organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been done with the analysis of secondary data. The data has been collected from various articles, newspapers, journals and archives. In addition to this the data has been collected from various interim and annual reports presented to The Centre of Women's Business Research, Centre for Advanced Human Resource Studies etc. Many published, unpublished and electronic sources has been referred.

BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT JOBS**1- MALE –DOMINATED WORLD**

There are various reasons that why women's drop out? That can be an individual or societal factor which intrudes on their career development. The socio-cultural, legal, personal and organizational that affects women's to rise to the upper echelons of an organization. Women's generally prefer sitting jobs rather than a movable jobs. Like men they can't stay late nights at work and tour frequently as they are loaded with home responsibilities. They are paid less than the male counterparts as they are considered to be less productive. Theoretically, every women are capable and competence to reach at the top of her organization. If we look women like Indra Nooyi and Chanda Kochchar, they were highly self-confidence and emotional quotient, persistence and patience, a good leader and an extremely supportive family and luck somewhere, which differs them from other talented females. Often women's are having technical competencies, they are deprive of the opportunities that would capitulate them to the upper echelons.

2- LACK OF LEADERSHIP STYLE

Jobs like doctors, teachers, nurses etc are "feminine" where as jobs like senior manager, Vice-president, CEO etc. are viewed as "masculine". Women are seen as "soft and indecisive" or "hard and pushy". Many organizations have deep-rooted notions about women's capability to pursue high leadership positions. These approaches reduce the leadership capabilities of women and discourage them to hold leadership positions in organizations. Ms. Sunita Sharma, MD & CEO, LIC Housing Finance, who has break the glass ceiling, in an interview with "Times of India" said, she dislikes being labeled a 'women' achiever. She says that today women are climbing the corporate ladder more in India than in abroad. Further her advice, never feel that we are different from men and we have to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with men.

3- STRUGGLING WITH WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

The biggest challenge that women face while climbing the corporate ladder is to make a proportionate balance between work and family. They have managed with multiple roles of being a wife, mother, daughter-in-laws and working women off course. However, the idea of male "homemaker" is still alive to Indian culture.

A survey conducted on 3900 executives in 39 countries by "Accenture Global Study" states that only 28 in 100 women are able to maintain equilibrium between professional and personal lives. Especially women's at the age of 30's face this problem a lot. ICICI Bank Chief Chanda Kochhar says, due to these many women's drop out at this age. Shikha Sharma, Managing Director of Axis Bank, agreed that now a days the concept of nuclear family is growing because of which family support systems are definitely breaking down. Now a day the outlook of grandparents are changing they think that why they should take care of your baby when they had already looked after you, said Sharma.

They are restricted with family reasons due to which they can't take transfers or promotions. Women's resist mobility and compromise to stick with their current position. The ASSOCHAM study highlight that because of health problems, gender discrimination and possessive husband are some prominent factors that obstructing growth prospects of career women.

4- GENDER-BIASED COMPENSATION

One of the big hurdle faced by female executives are gender-biased compensation. They are substantially paid lower than their male colleagues. Indra Nooyi, who runs on of the leading US brand companies, has an annual compensation package that is worth half of her male counterpart at McDonald's(MCD-news people). In a survey conducted at India Inc. about employment discrimination reveals that only 1% of Chief Executive Officers in India are Women and only 465 out of 9000 board members in 1500 companies were women. The survey reveal that women's are getting 40% less salary than men and that 90% of them are underpaid. India poor ranked 115 out of 128 countries in terms of economic empowerment of women in a survey conducted by consulting firm Booz & Company in 2012. There is a stereotyped view that she is weaker and acquiescent person. At most of the work place they have to face inequality as they are considered low productive than the male peers.

Further it shows that women's are trapped under the invisible glass ceiling and it's hard to break, but not impossible. They possess the competencies, skills, knowledge and capabilities, only they need is the awareness among themselves. They have to overcome the obstructions and challenge their colleagues such as "why him and not me?" Despite the presence of a notional labyrinth and an unyielding glass ceiling, there are several successful and ambitious women's like Arundati Bhattacharya, first lady Chairperson at SBI, Chandda Kochhar (ICICI Bank), Naina Lal Kidwani (HSBC), Amirta Patel (National Dairy Development Board), Kalpana Morparia (JP Maorgan India) and many have proofed themselves as they are superior than men.

CRACK THE GLASS- CEILING

Indian women's are facing social, economic and political challenges. These challenges has to crack down by them only. "Women are capable of bringing about lasting change to improve their lives and that of their community", said Kurunji Ulaka, a tribal women from the State of Odisha. Mrs. Sunita Sharma, MD & CEO, LIC Housing Finance says that "women should never feel they are different from men, today women are climbing the corporate ladder more in India than abroad." The following leadership lessons, synthesize and update the women who know what it takes to get to the top:

- a- Be Determined : If the women want to get into the top they have to stay determined. Beth Brooke, global vice chair of Ernst and Young, was diagnosed with a degenerative hip disease at the age of 13 yrs and doctors told her that she will never walk. But before going for the surgery she was determined that she would walk and aspired to become one of the best young athletes of the world. Today she ranked amongst 100 most powerful women in the world.
- b- Be Courageous: Women have to be fearless and courageous to take up the roles. Rekha Menon, MD,geographic ops, Accenture says men often rush to conclusions about women workers can't travel, she has a baby. But have they even bothered to ask her? Women get excluded from roles without even getting the opportunity to raise their hands. She says we have taken initiatives to implement flexi hours and work to home.
- c- Think Bigger: To achieve big success, women have to have big impact. She prides herself more as a team player than an individual achiever and believes in the power of human potential to scale up any business.
- d- Take calculated risk: To move the needle, you have to make a big bets- but never rush or give-up, but put yours all afford to hit the challenges. Women's have the problem of own self-limiting beliefs, they feel guilt that they can't devote enough time at home. Women have to set their priority and have to get out from their comfort zone.
- e- Remain Disciplined: To achieve something and maintain success it needs to be disciplined. One can simply can't do everything and the world's most powerful women stay focused on the areas that will have the biggest impact from both a leadership perspective and a career management perspective.
- f- Balance and understanding your own need: Its important to achieve balance in her life and take care of herself. She should take care of her health. Women should not belief that self care is selfish.

CONCLUSION

Women in management across the countries and in India shows that there are certain universal features apart from the cultural attributres and specificities for which unable the women' sto break the Glass- ceiling. Women have to work harder than men to gain the same recognition. In India the women's are facing societal pressure. On the other hand, the sense of familial duty and support helps women get back on track after a hiatus.

In one of the report the number of women at the top management positions as well as on companies boards is likely to increase by 2020, a report by consulting and technology company Accenture has said. Around 40% Indians feel there will be slight increase in the percentage of women who hold seats on Boards of Director at Companies.

Apart from all these society have to understand the problems and feelings of woman. Indian society and coporate have to understand and improve their working life. The corporate should adopt for flexible working hours, compensatory leaves and medical benefits. Companies can provide them training and be in touch with them while they are on maternity leave or when there's a long break in their work cycle. Offering reliable child care options is the key which will help women's to grow in their career.

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