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CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL CAREER

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ABSTRACT

The success of a multinational organisation depends on the effective international human resource management and in identifying the skilled expatriate. The sociocultural, economic, political and organisational factors in home and host country affect the participation of women in international assignments. Women face greater barriers when compared to men in taking up international jobs owing to socio cultural norms, worklife balance issues and lack of organisational support. These barriers prevent the career progression of women. The negative stereotypes about women, occupational segregation and the masculine culture of organisation hinder the integration of women at all levels. In spite of skill shortage and rising global competition, the participation rate of women is very low at international context. Acknowledging the gendered nature of organisation, inclusion of women at all levels, addressing to their special needs and providing supportive organisational policies and provisions will empower women and promote gender diversity. This article discusses the numerous organisational barriers to international positions for women and how each barrier disadvantages women. It also briefs how the present male centered organisational culture is detrimental to women's development.

KEYWORDS

diversity, expatriation, gender, global organisation, international career, women.

INTRODUCTION

Women, confined to domestic works for long time in history have been pursuing career in various sectors. It is heartening to see increasing number of women CEOs in global organisations. However, they have a long way to go. Though the number of working women is gradually increasing, they face innumerable problems both inside and outside organisations. There have been various researches focusing on the barriers faced by working women for more than a decade. As organisations go global, women also pursue their career in global organisations. But the difficulties that women face in domestic organisations get compounded when they move to international career. The barriers are from various organisational and sociocultural factors. This article focuses on the organizational factors that play a major role in promoting or hindering the career progression of women in international organisations. This also highlights the significance of international assignments and the need for organisational support to women expatriates in various aspects.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNATIONAL CAREER

The expansion of multinational companies across the globe has created a need for expatriates to conduct operations and establish business globally. This has opened up numerous international jobs for employees who are relocated to a host country in a professional capacity. The role of expatriates is significant in expanding global market and in attaining success. The expatriate must be potential enough to conduct business across varied cultures. The successful performance of an international assignment is purely dependent on the skills and ability of an expatriate. These expatriates coordinate various operations abroad and facilitate the communication process between the home country and host country organisation. They represent their company, take control of processes and protect the company interests by getting understanding of the international operations and expanding their company's knowledge base. Though the international assignments are challenging, they are developmental. They involve broader responsibilities, working in new and risky environment, higher level of autonomy and adjustment difficulties arising out of cross cultural differences. These assignments need fulfillment of broader criteria, possession of unique skills and cultural awareness. The expatriates must be open minded and flexible to adapt to the culture and expectations of the host country.

The multinational organizations of almost all countries have difficulty in identifying, attracting and retaining potential employees with required skill set and knowledge base to stay competitive in a global environment. Torrington (1994) suggested from his research that "there is no profile of the ideal expatriate but that culture, economic development, geographical location and the job are important issues that should be considered in the selection of expatriates" (cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2001). This has been proved by a survey that the respondents who find it difficult in identifying potential candidates has increased from 67% in the previous year to 74% (Frazee, 1996 as cited in Haines III & Saba, 1999).

Almost 15% of the employees have been reported to reject the offers of international assignments due to the career of their spouse (Punnet, 1997). The relocation and repatriation problems like loss of status, loss of career direction and loss of autonomy, financial difficulties, and family problems affect the attractiveness of international offers. It has been reported that 25% of repatriated employees leave or intend to leave the organization within one year of repatriation as the companies fail to support them (Selmer & Leung, 2002). Though the attractiveness of international career is declining, they are considered to be significant for career progression.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the organisational barriers to international positions for women and how each barrier disadvantages women by hindering their career progression.
2. To present male centered organisational culture is detrimental to women's development.

INTERNATIONAL CAREER OF WOMEN

The organisation must consider women at the instance of rising demand for expatriates. Women in international positions are not studied much and it remains an under researched area. The role and influence of gender at international level were not studied to a greater extent. Many researches were conducted to know the level of success, adjustment and performance of expatriate managers, but have neglected to study the women's perception and evaluation of their jobs in an international work environment (Guzzo et al., 1994; Caligiuri, 2000; Shore and Martin, 1989; Ostroff, 1993 as cited in Culpan & Wright, 2002). The gender of expatriates were not considered to the extent that the descriptive and prescriptive studies of expatriation have perpetuated the profile of an expatriate as male

and married to a trailing spouse (Harris, 2001). It was also found that even the studies carried out in countries like Europe, Australia and USA focused only on international move by men particularly married men.

The expatriate positions are generally occupied by upper level employees and so the prevalence of glass ceiling has reduced the number of women expatriates (Selmer & Leung, 2002). Adler and Izraeli (1994) pointed out that in spite of improvement in the qualification of women, increase in their commitment to career and less availability of expatriates, female managers occupy only a small fraction of senior management positions (cited in Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). International Labour Organisation (1998) (as cited in Tzeng, 2006) has found from a survey that although women occupy 40% of the world's workforce, only 20% of them occupy management positions and 2-3% of them are found in top positions in most powerful organizations. The number of women expatriates has increased from 3% in 1980 (Adler, 1984) to 15 - 20% in 2008 (Brookfield, 2009a; ORC Worldwide, 2008 as cited in Shortland, 2011). This shows that the increase in women expatriates is at a much slower rate when compared to the proportion of women employees employed in domestic organisations.

The slow increase of women expatriates may be due to greater level of gender discrimination and family responsibility issues encountered by them when compared to women working in home country organizations (Moran & Riesenberger, 1994 as cited in Tzeng, 2006). Hence, the organization must expand their recruitment base and promote gender diversity at top level management thereby increase the pool of potential expatriates. The study based on a group of American and Canadian personnel managers showed that "companies' reluctance to select women was based on: traditional male chauvinism, greater risk involved in sending women with no overseas track record, and the paucity of women with sufficient technical training and domestic managerial experience to qualify for high level line management positions overseas" (Adler, 1984). Although the actions promoting equal opportunity are acknowledged as socially worthwhile, the organizations view it as a burden rather than investment (Rubery et al., 2003 as cited in Shortland, 2009). On the other hand, according to Fisher, 1992 (as cited in Paik & Vance, 2002) the personal characteristics like gender, ethnic background are found to be irrelevant to achieve success in global market. Adler (1994) found that the success rate of women expatriates is higher than that of North American male expatriates. This has encouraged many companies to send more women abroad and they have also been promoted based on their performance overseas. It is interesting to note that the financial performance of companies with more female executives has improved during 1990s (catalyst 2004 as cited in Tzeng, 2006). As more women are recognised to perform well overseas, the growth trend of women expatriates are expected to intensify.

BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL CAREER OF WOMEN

1. MALE MODEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As men had traditionally been to employment, organizations consider the male model of career development to be appropriate which disadvantages women during recruitment, selection and other career development processes. The occupational segregation, formal policies and informal processes act as barriers for women from attaining senior management positions. A career-development process for female managers is essential to retain and promote female managers. The career development model for women is different and complicated to design as women have a necessity to balance work and family (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). The organization favours the male lifestyle that measures managerial commitment by number of hours an employee works. Hence, organizations do not favour women as they would not fit in to this model due to their greater family responsibilities. A female career plan must include maternity leave, career breaks for child rearing or part-time working opportunity to balance their worklife which are often seen unfavourably by the senior management.

In a study by Haines III & Saba (1999), it was found that women gave high ratings for career related international mobility policies and practices that includes mentoring opportunity, cross cultural training before international assignments, opportunity to use the competence acquired during their assignment upon their return, assignments not exceeding two years of duration. However, no gender differences were found in ratings on family and financial mobility policies and practices. This shows the importance women place on their career and their cautious approach in managing international career.

Mathur-Helm (2002) stated that women are expected to behave like men and work harder to fit in to male model in order to progress. Home country male managers believe that the male characteristics are necessary for effective management. The successful managers are expected to prove themselves in their earlier thirties and the career breaks for family issues are unfavourably seen as lack of organizational commitment (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a). This is further supported by Harris (1995) that senior managers make initial assessment of managers during their early stages of career and chooses high potential managers who would qualify to work abroad (cited in Linehan & Walsh, 1999a). This forces female managers to follow traditional male linear model in order to display themselves as highly potential.

2. STEREOTYPE

Married women are discriminated for international assignments with an assumption that they will not accept due to family responsibilities. They had to ask the organization for their next career move to show their readiness rather than waiting for opportunities to be offered by the organization (Linehan et al., 2001). There is a myth that women do not want to be international managers. Various researches have disproved the myth and results showed that both men and women are equally interested to take international positions and they wanted to take it at some point in their life time (Adler, 1994; Chusmir and Frontczak, 1990; Hill and Tillery, 1992 as cited in Altman & Shortland, 2001).

Adler (1994) also added that a few organizations limit women to work internally with their own employees and do not prefer to send women externally to deal with clients with the assumption that their own employees are less prejudiced than people outside. The organizations assume that the cultural norms of host country will be unfavourable for women and may have hostile working environment for women which leads to selection bias against women (Paik & Vance, 2002). The organizations hesitate to send women for foreign assignments as they believe that the foreigners are prejudiced against women that might impact their success. However, in reality women faced more problems and prejudices from home country nationals than outside. Getting opportunity for international assignments by overcoming resistance from home country is the biggest challenge for women. Women expatriates' biggest obstacle is the low performance expectation held by their home country managers. This is further supported by Shortland (2009) in his literature that "Women's unsuitability for expatriate roles, particularly in respect of deployment to perceived masculine (Hofstede, 2001) or machismo (Owen and Scherer, 2002) societies, is based on home country managers' stereotypical views of women as managers, rather than local societal cultural factors". Adler (1994) explained the Gaijin Syndrome, according to which, female expatriates are seen as foreigners, not as local people and is not expected to act like the local women. The social and cultural norms of the local people that limit their access to managerial positions do not apply to foreign women. Mandelker (1994) derived the term "glass border" that describes stereotypical assumptions by home-country senior management about women as managers and about their availability, suitability and preferences for international appointments (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). The glass border discriminates against women from getting international opportunities.

Vinnicombe and Sturges (1995 as cited in Linehan & Walsh, 1999a) suggest that few organizations consider married men as assets with an assumption that married men will have supporting network at home and can give his full dedication towards his career. On the other hand, married women are seen as a liability because they are more likely to sacrifice their career at the expense of their family. The impact of marital status of men and women on careers are perceived differently by the managers of the home country organisations. The marriage is considered to be a stabilizing and sustaining factor for male expatriates whereas it is perceived to suffer greater risk of failure of assignments for women due to their additional difficulties with their trailing spouses. Another study by Izraeli and Zeira (1993) suggests that women expatriate whether married or single, their family status is presumed to be problematic. Male managers believe that single women expatriate, away from social influence of home country, is vulnerable to harassments and other dangers than a men whereas married women are disadvantaged due to family and dual career issues. The situations of uncertainty and absence of reliable knowledge about their performance leads to stereotypical beliefs about the characteristics and ability of women expatriates.

"The organisation must not assume that the male partner's career will always take precedence, and that the female partner will always subordinate her career aspirations to those of her partner" (Pierce and Delahaye, 1996 as cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2001a). Females are mostly considered to be a trailing spouse as it is not a norm for a family to relocate to facilitate female's career. The accepted social role of men is to work and that of women is to take care of the family. Such social norms, family pressures, relocation problems of spouse and stereotypes about women question the flexibility of women in moving abroad. This obstructs the career of women taking international roles.

Futoran and Wyer (1986) suggested that "the use of sex stereotypes can be activated by repeated observations of one sex in a certain type of job" (Harris, 2001). The same happens in the selection of international managers where the existing managers are mostly men and the informal organizational system prevents the opportunity from reaching women. This occupational segregation and expectation that an occupation ought to be filled by only one sex prevents women from taking international assignments that were traditionally held by men. Generally, such attitudes of bias and discrimination are typically based upon generalized beliefs and perceptions.

3. LACK OF MENTORING

Mentoring is an essential and active contributor to the career development of employees. Mentoring helps in discussing problems and in finding solutions for the same, improves self-confidence and aids in promotional aspects. Linehan et al., (2001) discussed that the number of female in top management and in international positions is very less to mentor other female protégée. Hence, females are more likely to be mentored by men but many don't get mentoring opportunity. However, Linehan et al., (2001) also added that male mentors are more likely to prefer male protégées that disadvantages women and at the same time the mentoring needs of women are also differed from that of men. Women need more psychological support in handling the barriers faced by them inside and outside an organisation. Women who had male mentors were reluctant to talk about discrimination and glass ceiling as men perceive that such barriers do not exist (Mathur-Helm (2002). Though mentoring relationship is important for men, it gains more importance for female managers as they face greater organisational, interpersonal, and individual barriers to advancement (Linehan, 2000; Burke and McKeen, 1994; Collins, 1983 as cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2002). This is essential especially in international context compared to domestic context and particularly during early stages of career.

Mentoring helps in providing international assignments, providing contacts, support from home country and facilitates their reentry. This support of the mentor through which the mentee receives the benefits of an intensive developmental relationship provides organisational reward through career enhancement (Baruch and Bozionelos, 2010 as cited in Shortland, 2011). Linehan & Walsh (2000) suggested that women felt that regardless of gender, cross gender mentoring was of great help in their career development. However, researches by Arnold & Davidson (1990) and Fitt & Newton (1981) contradicted with this result and observed the existence of sexual tension in cross gender mentoring (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). Extending support through mentoring is found to be a critical factor in the advancement of women.

4. LACK OF NETWORKING

Unlike mentoring, peer relationship is essential at all stages of career development and is a key factor for career progression especially in international context. This is essential both during and after international assignments to maintain contact and alleviate the feel of isolation. This would be of great help for those women who do not get mentoring opportunity. "Peer relationships are different from mentoring relationships in that they often last longer, are not hierarchical, and involve a two-way helping" (Linehan et al., 2001). Networking helps in their promotions and awareness about their career opportunities. Shortland (2011) found the following from interviews: networking has helped women in understanding the country and regarding the lifestyle of people in that country, to gain insights about the real work and be proactive in preparing to face the issues, to learn about vacancies in subsidiaries in other countries, to facilitate career development and to learn about different functions in the organizations across countries. It provides a sense of affiliation and belonging in the host country (Hutchings, 2008). Formal networks were found to be more advantageous in learning and in getting professional support than informal networks. Some feel that women-only network further enhances solidarity and excludes women from men's network instead of integration. Women-only network creates an artificial divide between sexes rather than promoting diversity and also reinforces stereotypes. The networking gains its importance on moving towards senior management level as jobs are few and difficult to get. A supportive peer relationship is essential to deal with the issues of women like discrimination, stereotyping, work life balance and social isolation. Men use networking to widen their contacts with variety of people in their profession and discuss their business issues for their development. Women are excluded from such networks and do not gain access to it easily. Men always try to maintain their dominance and do not want women to be a part of their network thereby they strengthen their old boy's network. Men uses various forms of social capital in order to preserve and enhance male patriarchal structures rather than to widen women access and leave women as expatriate tokens (Kanter, 1977 as cited in Shortland, 2009). This perpetuates negative attitude towards women. Not much literature is found related to organizational support through policies for networking arrangement and how these are implemented and its effect on women's participation in international roles. Managerial women are still less integrated in organisational networks that can influence promotion and acceptance. Denial of access to it leads to less career satisfaction for women. Maintaining more number of professional contacts can improve their level of satisfaction. Linehan et al., (2001) explained that men's networking extends beyond working hours (through involvement in club, sports etc.) that strengthens their male bonding whereas women feel that they don't have enough time for networking due to family responsibilities. According to Shortland (2009) "even when the organization include open and formal selection processes for expatriate positions and the inappropriate gendered assumptions are contradicted, women still face hurdles to reach such positions due to lower social capital".

Men working in a female dominated environment do not face challenges similar to women in male dominated environment (Bozionelos, 2009 as cited in Shortland, 2011). It was also found from the study that women at more senior levels with high experience and who have already taken many international assignments are more positive towards and recognise the value of networking (Nicolau-Smokoviti and Baldwin, 2000 as cited in Shortland, 2011). The author also added that it is difficult for women to maintain relationship with two different groups (female social group and senior male managerial group) and the intergroup sanctions prevent them from fitting into either.

Linehan (2000) pointed from researches that while female expatriates often rely singularly on their family and partners in creating social contact with expatriate networks, males have numerous other options like sporting activities and male bonding sessions (Hutchings et al., 2008). This supports the notion that male expatriates would be more likely than their female counterparts to have higher levels of PESS (perceived expatriate social support), regardless of their family status whilst on assignment (Hutchings et al., 2008). Westwood and Leung (1994) found a significant number of expatriates indicated dissatisfaction with their social lives, particularly single women (as cited in Hutchings et al., 2008). This may be due to that it is more culturally acceptable for single men to socialise than for women.

Policies on and provision to access networks, mentors, sponsors and role models may act as facilitators to improve the social capital of women expatriates. The social capital and experiences gained by expatriate helps in developing tolerance, flexibility, patience by allowing them to develop a global outlook (Hamza, 2006 as cited in Schearf, 2008). Flexible forms of international assignments and communications technology might potentially enable women to have greater access to network communities. This is supported by Nicholson (2000) (as cited in Shortland, 2009) who states that technology provides a basis for expanding women's social capital. However, Collinson and Hearn (1996) suggest, "the development of trans-national organisations facilitated through communications are likely to result in male-dominated networks expanding from a local domain to an international one rather than networks being opened up to women as a result of increasingly global spans of communications" (as cited in Shortland, 2011). As the availability of women expatriate role models and mentors remains low, women need to largely rely on men to achieve this.

5. DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION OF WOMEN

Women need to prove themselves succeeding in their careers and stay highly competent by putting extra efforts in increasing their visibility. They need to face additional demands when compared to their male counterparts to grab international assignments. Promotion of women to international senior management positions is also very slow over the past 20 years. In a research by Linehan & Walsh (1999b), female managers who have reached senior manager positions believed that they need to be more qualified, more ambitious and more mobile than male managers. They had to break the glass ceiling first and then glass border and had to ask for their next career move rather than wait for the international offer. They need to volunteer for projects, meet frequently with board of directors and decision makers and learn things beyond their capacity. Powell (1999) (as cited in Tzeng, 2006) noted that the objective credentials such as education loses its importance at the higher management level and the discriminatory practices in selection process is more at higher levels. He also added that the equal employment opportunity laws and affirmative programs are helpful for women only at the entry level positions.

Even though women are competent with same talents as that of men, they are not recognized and rewarded due to gender stereotypes. The US Department of Labor (1995) has reported that women are not given rotational job assignments or special assignments that increase their visibility and promote career development. Women are poorly rated in male dominated organizations when compared to organizations with more than 50% of women (Sackett et al., 1991 as cited in

Selmer & Leung, 2002). Women had less availability of fast-track career programs, less individual career counselling, and less availability of career planning workshops compared to men (Selmer and Leung, 2003). Hence, when female expatriates less often attain their career goals, it makes them to feel that expatriation is a less successful career path than men.

The organizations tend to follow what they observe as successful practices of their competitors. Hence, the organizations deploying expatriates try to reflect the male expatriate norm and establish conformity in resembling each other in a similar environmental condition (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 as cited in Shortland, 2009). Traditionally expatriation is perceived to be a male role and there is articulation of shared norms, practices and shared rules of conduct among organizations through various professional relations including industry ties, professional bodies. Hence, imitation of the organizational policies and practices at individual level, firm level and inter firm level excludes women from expatriate world (Shortland, 2009).

According to Adler (1994), the companies generally offer short term temporary assignments with duration of six months to women rather than permanent assignments that extend up to 2 to 3 years. The organizations try to be cautious as women are new to such assignments and this communicates lack of trust and confidence to host country managers and they do not take women managers seriously. Due to this, the assignments become difficult or have chances of failure which leads to self-fulfilling prophecy.

6. INFORMAL SELECTION PROCESS

Most of the top level positions and the holders of organizational power who have the responsibility of sending employees to other countries are men and they in turn prefer male subordinates for international assignments rather than female. Roper (1996) (as cited in Selmer & Leung, 2002) points out that as organizations are dominated and governed by men, senior managers frequently appoint in their own image, leading to the reproduction of power and gender segregation. Such subtle bias and overt discrimination processes obstruct the careers of female expatriates. As only few women are found on boards and at decision making levels, women find it difficult in accepting the structures and behavior created by men. The formal organizational policies are framed based on gender based societal assumptions and the managers believe that these formal policies reinforce the informal processes that affects the participation of women managers in international management (Linehan et al., 2001). Women find themselves excluded from expatriation through biased, informal and haphazard selection processes (Linehan and Scullion, 2001b). Hence, the gendered nature of organizations must be acknowledged and objective recruitment and selection processes must be implemented.

The organizations find it difficult to identify and measure the competencies of employees and the line managers circumvent the framed selection criteria as they want to play safe in decision making process that leads to lack of clarity in the selection process of expatriates (Reiche and Harzing, 2011 as cited in Shortland, 2011). The organizations rely on personal recommendation from either a specialist personnel staff member or line manager for selection of expatriates and the selection interviews are conducted to negotiate the terms of offer rather than to determine the suitability of the candidate (Brewster, 1991 as cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). This excludes women from selection process.

According to Harris (2001), the suitability and acceptability are considered as different components and being objective in assessing the appropriate personality and behavioural trait is questioned. Even though women are considered to be suitable for international positions, there are few forces that obstruct them from being seen as acceptable. Harris (2001) discusses about the categories of selection procedures as: organizations either use open or closed selection procedures. In open system, any candidate with the appropriate qualification and experience can apply for the vacancy. It is more or less formalized testing and decisions are taken on the basis of consensus among selectors. In closed systems, the line managers have the authority to accept or reject candidates nominated by selectors from headquarters. The interview is conducted to negotiate the terms with the selected candidates. The formal and informal systems combined with open and closed selection procedures provide four categories of selection processes (open-formal, closed-formal, open-informal and closed-informal) that influences the participation of women in international management. Formal and open system provides equal opportunity for all employees with well-defined criteria for selection and restricts subjective judgments. Even though closed and formal system also has well defined criteria, there is lack of personal contact that has chances of bringing in subjective judgments. Here, there are chances of omission of suitable candidates during nominations. In case of open and informal system, even though all employees have access, decisions are made by the relevant managers on the basis of personal recommendation and reputation and are almost already made. In case of closed and informal systems, employees are not aware of the process and there is lack of clarity in the criteria for selection and so this is considered to provide a worst situation. The recruitment and selection procedures are not formal, open, elaborate and transparent in most cases (Borg and Harzing, 1995; Brewster, 1991 as cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000).

7. REPATRIATION PROBLEMS

Organizations do not recognise and pay attention to the problems of repatriation. According to Linehan & Walsh (2000); Shortland (2011), expatriates returning to home country organisation are found to experience loss of status, loss of autonomy, no opportunity to utilize the skills acquired during international assignment, difficulty in reintegration socially with home country organization. Home country managers find it difficult to allocate suitable positions with similar status and responsibility to those held by expatriates abroad after their reentry. Research evidence suggests that the individuals who return from overseas assignments and leave their organisation within one year after repatriation, is approximately 25 per cent (Black, 1989; O'Boyle, 1989 as cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2002). It has a profound impact both on the expatriate and family members upon their return. Many required readjustment period of six to nine months in their home country organizations. In most cases, subsequent job position on repatriation is not considered as a part of overall career plan which must be planned before making the international move. Women face more difficulties on repatriation than men due to their low representation and low networking. The repatriates experience unanticipated re-entry culture shock or sense of loss and isolation resulting from a lack of current behavioural understanding of the repatriates' home country (Linehan & Scullion, 2002).

8. GLASS CEILING

The term glass ceiling refers to barriers faced by women who attempt or desire to get promoted to senior positions in an organisation. It prevents the upward mobility of women. The socialization process, tradition and negative stereotypes about women forms the layer of glass ceiling that results in discrimination against women. Glass ceiling is also a main reason for less women expatriates as expatriate management positions generally involve upper level management. Expatriates need enough senior managerial experience in their domestic organization to avoid greater risk during their work abroad. Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli (1993) suggested that "the role of the expatriate involves even more uncertainties than that of the domestic manager and, as uncertainty increases the need for trust, this is perceived as having further implications for limiting women expatriate managers" (cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000). As women find it difficult to break the glass ceiling, their opportunity to international career is also affected to a greater extent which resulted in a very few women with international experience. Even if the organizations are prepared to promote women across hierarchy in domestic management, they are not given opportunity to expand their career at international levels (Adler and Izraeli, 1988 as cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000).

It was also observed that as women move up in the managerial hierarchy, the glass ceiling also appeared to move up (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). Women managers sometimes are not aware of the existence of glass ceiling effect and even those who are aware of it are unwilling to share openly with others. Women managers must acknowledge its existence and equip themselves to produce adequate performance to be successful in their career (Mathur-Helm, 2002). Flexibility, networking, proving oneself and letting the management know their career aspirations will help to break the glass ceiling. Studies by Schein et al. (1994) established that "male sex typing of the managerial job is strong, consistent, and pervasive and appears to be a global phenomenon among males" (cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000). Hence it was found from the research that adopting an individualistic style combining best of both male and female leadership traits will help in breaking the glass ceiling.

It was found that the status of women in the organization has a major influence in the perception of host country nationals towards women expatriates (Caligiuri and Cascio, 1998 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2002). Higher the position they occupy, greater is the favourable treatment and less discrimination by host country organisation. Empowerment of women through greater power and autonomy to make decisions would deliver more respect towards women and would protect against gender stereotypes and discriminations.

9. HIGH VISIBILITY

Women suffer stress due to high visibility and critical attention in a male dominated environment as they belong to a minority group in an organisation. Loss of privacy adds further burden to women. The feeling of isolation owing to culture, gender barriers and tokenism are more prevalent for female managers in a foreign

country on comparison with domestic organization. The female expatriates need to take responsibility to represent other female managers and their success would help in encouraging and developing confidence in other female managers. According to Tanton (1994), women being members of a minority group can lead to various uncomfortable roles and issues such as loneliness at work, little recognition for achievements and being taken for granted (cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000). The social support of other female colleagues is found to be more important to come out of these stresses.

10. LACK OF ORGANISATIONAL TRAINING

The time span before transfer to abroad is actually very less ranging from few weeks to few months which does not allow enough time for preparation and training. The managers also believe that the international expertise can only be learned through experience and gives little importance for training programs on relational skills, cross cultural skills that are essential for the success of international assignments (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a). Training before transfer is very important for women managers as they act as pioneers in making international moves in most cases. As they move farther from home countries, they experience more cultural shock and different set of adjustment problems. Most of the organizations over look and do not plan things seriously at the preparatory stage. Work by Harvey (1985) (as cited in Linehan & Walsh, 2000) highlighted the importance of including all family members in training programmes as most of the stresses associated with the international assignments falls on the family members. Training programs should also be conducted after repatriation to facilitate re-entry in to the domestic organization. However, most of the training programs are based on the experiences of male expatriates. As there is growth in female expatriates, the organization must reevaluate the cross cultural training programs and consider the unique issues of women expatriates (Linehan et al., 2000).

11. LACK OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The organizations do not have family related policies to support and facilitate the international move of dual career couples (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). It was also added that organisations do not consider flexible work arrangements like part time working, work from home that would help working mothers to meet their demands. These arrangements are considered to deviate from male norms of work. The career breaks of women take them out of competition for jobs. It is also found that the organizations are inflexible and forces the family to meet the organizational demands and do not give freedom for women to develop other areas of life (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). Women had to take most of their life decisions based on their family circumstances which affects women in their career growth. The organizational support for partner and children is essential for women to have less work adjustment difficulties and work family conflicts (Harris, 2004). As most international women managers act as pioneers and representatives of future female managers, the lack of supportive policies will discourage women from taking up international assignments.

According to Kanter (1997) (as cited in Selmer & Leung, 2002) women are deprived of career resources, information resources and support from organization that affects their career success whereas these are available for men. The organisation especially the corporate headquarters need to support women at all stages of international career as they encounter different challenges and issues arising out of sex role stereotypes. The legislation in few countries support women against employment related discriminations that force organizations to send women for foreign assignments even if they do not desire. The US congress amended the Civil Rights Act, 1991 to protect US citizens from employment discrimination by US multinationals in their overseas operations (Cava and Mayer, 1993 as cited in Selmer & Leung, 2002). However, Tzeng (2006) reported that "While they presumed their companies would not have a gender-biased policy in foreign assignment due to anti-discrimination laws in their home countries, in fact, this is not an accurate presumption because their home countries' anti-discrimination laws do not cover corporate promotion such as foreign postings."

There is evidence that many business failures in the international arenas are associated with poor human resources management (Desatnick and Bennett, 1978 as cited in Selmer & Leung, 2002). It is predicted that women with high perceived organizational support (POS) have high expatriate career satisfaction (ECS) whereas men are predicted to maintain their level of expatriate career satisfaction irrespective of the level of perceived organizational support (Hutchings et al., 2008). This may be due to the fact that men did not relate the organizational support with their career satisfaction whereas women did. Hutchings et al., (2008) pointed that female expatriates do not perceive equal treatment especially in terms of organizational support.

It was also found that organisational policies designed to support employees in balancing their family and work did not produce much impact in reducing work family conflict (Goff et al., 1990 as cited in Harris, 2004). This is because the family concerns are more complicated and broader and requires the support of family most of all. Few companies have formulated formal policies to support dual-career couples that includes career and life-planning counseling, inter-company networking, job-hunting/fact-finding trips, continuing education, international spouse assistance programmes, intra-company employment, commuter marriage support and short-term assignments (Harris, 1993). However most of these initiatives are based on the assumption that the trailing spouse is female.

CONCLUSION

Given the context of patriarchal values, which is pervading in all aspects of life, women stand to face innumerable difficulties. The article has highlighted the barriers that women face in international organisations. It is imperative that international organisations must evolve a proactive policy consisting of affirmative measures and practices to facilitate, support and empower women so that they are able to withstand the difficulties they face and pursue their career similar to their male counterparts. Organisations must encourage, promote and support women at all stages of their career. The gendered nature of the organisation must be acknowledged and necessary measures must be taken to promote diversity. Addressing to both organizational/ career issues and individual issues by developing integrated approaches, effective mentoring, formal and informal networking will help in successful repatriation of female managers. The organization with formal HR systems for selection and career development programs must ensure whether similar proportion of women are promoted to next level to that of their initial recruitment.

Providing training and development programs for substantial period of time before and after expatriation will improve the cost effectiveness of an organisation. It should also focus on measures to cope with additional stress arising out of trying to balance work and family life in a new environment. Maintaining regular contact with expatriates while abroad will provide emotional support to them. International assignment policies must include equal opportunities, diversity and affirmative action that would encourage women participation. Transparent and objective implementation of policies, use of communication technology, provision of flexible arrangements such as short-term, commuter, frequent flyer and other variable working patterns would promote women's career progression. The organisation must address these issues and facilitate the career progression of women both at domestic and international level.

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