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CRACKING THE GLASS CEILING: A STUDY AT INDIVIDUAL SOCIETAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL**SWATI SINGH****Ph. D. RESEARCH SCHOLAR****UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN****JAIPUR****ABSTRACT**

Business culture is flexible in nature and by way of Globalization and technological inventions. Owing to exchange of ideas and cultures, Indian corporate sector has been formed into an entire new world in recent times. Main attribute of this changed structure is elevating contribution of females into various business processes, females have to compete a lot even after possessing the desired qualifications and traits to move forward on the success ladder. The glass ceiling causes women to be absent at top management positions compared to men, particularly at the senior level. This study addresses the barrier which creates the glass ceiling phenomenon, such as individual, societal and organizational barrier and suggested the changes required to be implemented at individual, societal and organizational level to attain balanced and diverse workforce. The secondary data has been collected from the various research, article and newspaper. On the basis of information remedial model of glass ceiling has been developed.

KEYWORDS

gender diversity, glass ceiling, senior position.

INTRODUCTION

The word "Glass ceiling" refers to an invisible barrier within a structure that restrict qualified women or minorities from achieving higher level positions at their workplace. According to a report by a leading UK management organisation most women aspiring to senior management positions believe the glass ceiling to career progression still exists. The survey of 3,000 members of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) concluded 73% of women respondents believed that barriers still existed for female to obtain senior management and board-level positions in the UK. In opposition, only 38% of men believed that there is a glass ceiling. Facts suggest that there are intangible barrier which restrain women to obtain leadership position. From last few years, women presence can be seen in board of directors. Moreover changing role of women with the introduction of learning played a great role in gradually participation of women in higher managerial position. But the picture does not come to an end here. It was when she has to face pressure and choose among the conflicting situation between career and domestic work. Organizational change helped women in advancing career and various development programmes have been sponsored. This helped in breaking the visible barrier but invisible barrier are still unbreakable. The gender stereotype and the opinion of male gender is still need to be change.

Presently the women working in corporate in India are expanding significantly. With the increase in number of women various employment law has been constituted. Moreover despite these laws women at senior level is hardly 3% to 6%.

The main objective of writing this paper is to explore challenges faced by working women and the barrier in their career progression. The paper also focuses on gender stereotypes, cultural biases and what an organization can do in support of women to break that glass ceiling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cotter (2001), the glass ceiling phenomenon refers to a business metaphor used to describe the way a woman can reach a certain level in a company but can never reach a higher rank. Burns (2005) also describes it as a term that refers to various barriers that prevent qualified women from advancing upwards into 59 management positions in organizations. Research from Grant Thornton International Business Report survey 2012; found that only 21% of senior management roles are globally held by women. This has changed from 2004 which was 19% in that year. Russia holds first position of women holding senior position followed by Botswana and Thailand. The least number of women working at senior management is in Japan with 5% followed by India 14% and UAE with 15%. Women constitute 47% of the labour force, 1/3 of all MBA degrees, and only 2% of Fortune 500 CEOs. In 48% of Fortune 1000 companies, there are no women executives at all. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission issued a report summarizing its findings in 1995. The report identified three levels of glass-ceiling barriers: (1) societal barriers, such as stereotypes and prejudice associated with gender, race, and ethnicity; (2) structural barriers in organizations, including failure to recruit women and people of colour; organizational climates that could alienate these groups; and barriers that could limit their opportunities to advance; and (3) governmental barriers, including inadequate monitoring and law enforcement. An increase has been noticed in women in management at junior and middle management levels (Lyness, 2002; Powell, 1999), but at senior management or executive levels a considerable discrepancy has been found. The Glass ceiling occurs in workplace and politics is essentially a reflection of social and economic inequality. Burton & Parker (2010); Frey, James, & Eitzen, (1991) 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. (Basu, 2008) The widely held belief that females are more suited to a supportive, nurturing role such as motherhood than the decision-making role of management does not the low numbers of women being promoted into senior or executive positions. Powell and Butterfield (2003), "glass ceiling could exist at different levels in different organizations or industries; the term is typically used to suggest a barrier to entry into top-level management positions. No field studies to date have investigated whether actual promotion decisions for top management positions reflect the glass ceiling phenomenon.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data has been collected to develop the argument in study. Barriers that are faced by women and changes required to be made have been discuss in this paper. On the basis of information a remedial model has been developed.

INDIVIDUAL RELATED BARRIERS

The human capital theory, developed by economists such as Gary S. Becker, is a well-known theory that focuses on individual characteristics to explain differences in career outcomes, such as advancement and compensation. According to this theory, individuals with better qualifications, such as more education, job training, and relevant work experience, receive better jobs and organizational rewards because they have more to offer their organizations than do individuals who are less qualified. Although research has shown that differences in human capital can explain a portion of the gender or racial gap in career success, most studies also find that some portion of the gap cannot be explained by human capital variables. In addition, organizational research has found that comparable human capital qualifications do not always ensure that men and women managers will be equally successful in career advancement. While less research has compared minority and majority group managers, there is some evidence that human capital qualifications have a greater payoff in career advancement for Caucasian managers than for African American managers. Thus, human capital appears to be important in explaining career advancement but does not fully explain why there are relatively few numbers of women and people of colour in senior management.

Another perspective is that group differences in corporate advancement can be explained by self-selection. According to this explanation, women and people of colour may be less likely to hold senior-management positions because they have less interest or are less willing to do what is required to attain these types of

positions. For example, gender differences in corporate advancement are sometimes attributed to women's involvement with family and household responsibilities that interfere with the long work hours, travel, or relocations required for succeeding in a demanding managerial career. However, this explanation does not hold for many women and people of colour who encounter glass-ceiling barriers to their advancement but either does not have family responsibilities or are willing to meet the requirements of demanding managerial jobs regardless of family and personal responsibilities.

A different explanation for self-selection is provided by Robert Lent, Steven Brown, and Gail Hackett's social cognitive theory, which suggests that self-selection is sometimes based on awareness of external barriers rather than a lack of interest on the part of the individual. According to this theory, women and people of colour may be less confident than Caucasian men about their ability to succeed in managerial careers because they expect to encounter organizational barriers and lack of support that will limit their opportunities. Moreover, because of these external barriers, women and people of colour may decide to lower their career expectations or pursue other types of careers in which they expect to encounter fewer barriers.

SOCIETAL-RELATED BARRIERS

Indian society is traditional and it has not come out of the chain of old traditions. This attitude was visible when women were making their educational choices. Indian women are at crossway and trying to grow in their career. Women's career progression has many important aspects i.e. family responsibility related to marital status & child care. (Anker,1997; Davidson and burke, 2004; powell and butterfield, 2003). Marriage is socially recognized union that establish rights & obligations between spouses and in-laws. After marriage husband & in-laws decisions are to be followed by women. Moderately this situation is improving, husband preferred working wife but for working women there is no support system. According to Anker (1997), working women is not able to concentrate on workplace as they bring their responsibilities and children at their workplace. Therefore, it pushes women to take break in their career, so that they can manage time to look after their children. This is a hurdle for women to acquire managerial position. Schwartz identifies that women do not focus to grow in their career as they are not the single earner of family. However, career oriented women faces many restriction from society to hold managerial position ;(Davidson and burke, 2004; powell and butterfield, 2003). Unlike male, who focuses on their office work only women have to handle office as well as home and child care responsibility. Many organisations have started various flexible working arrangements for women, such as flexi-time, job sharing and telecommuting etc. FWA may be a challenge for women to coordinate between family work and career. society expect from a women to be 'good mother' and these communications are supported by family, parents, media and community. (Beard et.al, 2010). This creates a conflicting situation for women to perform 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 mother."(Beard et.al, 2010).One of fact is that when husband switch over the job women need to relocate themselves. It disturbs their career and expected from them to do this due to social norms.

ORGANIZATION-RELATED BARRIERS

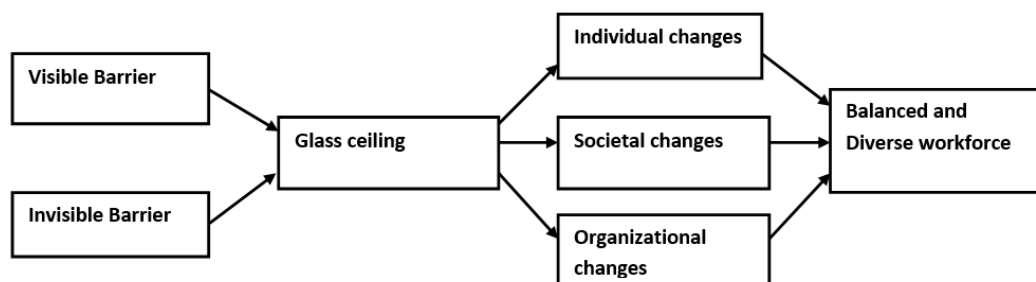
Harvey and Brown (1996) define organizational culture as "a system of shared meanings, values, belief, practices, group norms of the members to produce behavioural norms with regard to the working condition of organization." For female manager there are less upward mobility within organization. Marshall (1986) has explained that an individual make distance from informal network mostly it is in the case of female and where the boss is female in organization. Therefore it is difficult for her to handle situation like strategic changes and issues as it require convincing everybody and in such conditions it becomes difficult to satisfy everyone. In this respect Marshall says "professional exchanges become easy by informal communication. More familiar and unfriendly system shows unauthenticated than formal system allows". Informal communication includes exchange of conflict, dissatisfaction and reciprocity.

Sure to happen, women do not adopt informal organizational system. In decision making they do not get support and cooperation from their colleagues and therefore they are not as popular as effective decision makers, even though if they perform well in formal groups. This does not end over here, male pressurized women to perform well thus they are more stressed. To compete with male colleagues they take extra workload to perform better. While when they are at important designation they represent womanhood so they need to be cautious.

For female manager mentoring may help them in certain situation but by the virtue of their gender, they are not considered as successful leader as men-Nieva and Gutek (1981).Various researchers has identified the importance of mentor for women, yet certain factors restrict this relationship. First of all there are very less opportunities for women to avail mentor and secondly they are more stressed about how other will interpret their relationship between male mentor and female manager.

Women also shut down growth opportunities for various reasons as it includes outside commitments and risk to perform for a particular position that require modified skills to reach to a desired levels of roles. It has been continuously noted that to match up with the social obligations, a women drops out her career and do not want to return back due to unwelcoming and dynamic culture and climate of organization.

FIG. 1: REMEDIAL MODEL OF GLASS CEILING



THE ROAD AHEAD FOR WOMEN IN CORPORATE

To motivate the women personnel to achieve success in corporate, it is require to search out effective strategies which help them to cross every hurdles. Research suggests that real growth can only be achieved by wide change with the use of sharpen approach ensuring that women are to be considered for advancement. At the top management gender diversity plays a significant role not only for women but also for organization and skilled employees for higher productivity.

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

For women to climb the ladder of corporate requires an individual mind-set to be changed. The traditional work system has to be changed and new thoughts should be sum up. There are various support systems obtainable in the market; nevertheless male member of family should share responsibility of family. With the fast development of economy, double hand earner has become essential for luxurious living. To work for it smoothly we surely need to dropout our biases and prejudices. Couples who shares routine task are able to manage it. Shared responsibility is the single way left by which women can grow in their careers.

To grow professionally, women should build their image of confidence. It is a known fact that women do not urge for their promotions. A research in social psychology concluded that men constantly self-force their successes whereas women serve as master stroke to others. It require a modification in their trait and be more determined.

SOCIETAL CHANGES

Presently India follows strong traditions and customs and all women cannot easily handle dual responsibility. While managing dual responsibility she ends up with state line between them. Alternative solution to this situation is dropping out. She gets so stressed to be perfect on both the ground and finally discontinue from career. For the career ambitions of women family support plays an important role. She must be facilitated with better education and resources. Various research states that women faces challenges to balance among the work life and social life. To remove this barrier, stretch ability should be stimulated by the organization. Society should reinforce this cause; basically it is the society which is high-flown by any change. Due to societal changes, economy is growing fast.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

If companies in their strategic decision are not skilled enough to combine women's perspective they lose competitive edge, market share and profits. For women career advancement organization has to modify their mind set completely. It may take a time of generational transition. The commitment of company can bring a change and improve the treatment of women and its results. The need for training and development for women employ should be assessed and facilitated accordingly. Proper leadership training programmes should be conducted for middle managers. According to Kanter (1981) "even if women have formal authority, they may not necessarily be able to exercise it over reluctant subordinates". This leads to the exclusion of women managers. Herbert and yost (1978) states that it would be more beneficial to facilitate training to only those male worker who creates barriers in career growth and development of women. According to them, "organizational barrier faced by women can be removed by providing training to male manager to alternate their prejudice and attitude towards women". Favourable organizational climate can be developed through training.

"The system of male as the norm causes feeling of isolation, frustration and anger among women as they work within the organizations." (Oklaon, 1994) To remove such feeling women should adopt their male worker's style, like informal relation with other employees and to collect information and get cooperation & support when needed. This will help them to access information which they cannot gain through formal network. Female role models should be encouraged to attend programs at colleges, high schools or community events and therefore to convey that gender equality is mostly important for them to cross the every hurdle.

The organizations should have planned coaching programs and mentoring. The mentor provides an honest feedback to the mentee time to time, which support her to overcome the hurdles. Hema Hattangady, vice chairman and CEO, Schneider Electric konzerv India says "Once you have a mentor who backs you, you have the confidence to move forward." Her Mentor Mr. T. Thomas, the former chairman of HLL India, was instrumental in her success. (SHRM,2009) Kalpana Morparia, former joint Managing director of ICICI bank, and currently CO of JP Morgan gives the credit of her transformation from a corporate lawyer to a corporate leader to her mentor K.V kamath, the Infosys chairman (Business Today, September 2011)

Organizational diversity should be measured and data relating to it should be collected, this data explore the position of talent enriched in organization and what steps can be taken to retain future talent thus it will help to bridge the gap and corrective action.

BALANCED AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE AND FUTURE SCOPE FOR RESEARCH

Employing more and more women is the interest of companies. Given that approximately 50% of the environmentalist population is female, it becomes important for companies to understand women as consumer. This can be analysed by a female manager. It has been proved that employee diversity enhances corporate performance. A group with people from different culture and experience can bring innovative outcomes related to any issue as compared to homogeneous group. This argument support the gender diversity in organizations. Moreover corporate effectiveness is well managed. They must keep eyes on the business planet therefore should guide the management. They should visionize the forthcoming issues and with all force should be integrated with corporate goals and to maintain the dignity of worker. While balancing the business environment they should make sure about the profit for all stakeholders like employees, investor, business partner, supplier and society at large. Thus companies hiring more women not only bring diversity but bring competitive advantage to organization. Research work in this field will develop new guideline for companies' growth and prosperity.

CONCLUSION

In the past few years' women have constantly progressing but they still lack representation at top level management. They constantly face barriers in their career growth due to inflexible work environments, stereotyping and various other barriers. Within the society and organization an amount of modification is required, this explain the reason behind low representation of women in senior management. A lot of counter attack, conflict and hardwork are to be look over with the social change. To create gender diversity in the organization, relative changes in leadership management practices and talent management are required. Gender balance can only be facilitated by strong effort. By the joint effort of employees, customer, local communities, government and other stakeholders gender equality can be promoted and gender stereotyping can be erased and sustain change for long term.

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