

# Factors Affecting Career Progression of Women in the Corporate Sector.

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## Abstract

Over the last 90 years women have battled to become equal with men in all aspects of life and work. Women have made enormous advances in education and career but equality in pay and promotions in the workplace still elude them. It is well documented, widely known and discussed that women earn less. It would take another 55 years before women would be allowed that same right. The women's movement known as feminism began in 1848, when the first women's rights convention was organized. During this time in American history, women had very few rights and limited education. Women's advancement in the corporate workplace has taken significant strides over the last century. Research demonstrates, however, that despite an increased presence of female employees in mid-management positions, executive positions continue to be male dominated. Women are underrepresented in areas of governance, directorship, and executive leadership. This seems to contradict the apparent momentum of the promotion of women. This paper will unveil some of the hidden barriers that stubbornly exist for women in business this paper aims at finding factors which affecting on women's career development.

Key words- advancement, career opportunity, equality.

## Introduction

Women of the early centuries were mostly confined to their kitchens and those who were employed worked in factories, farms or shop works. Very few women had the access to higher education and they were forced to be at the mercy of their fathers' or husbands' attitudes towards women and work. The fast developing knowledge economy has given place for more number of women to be enlightened by higher education. Education has not only empowered them but also has given them robust careers. With brain power being the requisite skill in this knowledge era, rather than endurance or physical strength, the women workers seem to flood into every industry on par with men. But this has indeed become a tough challenge for women as they have to perform a lot of duties in home and office as well. As working women get married, they have additional responsibilities and when they become mothers, they have to manage the primary care of children and extended family and are thus, under greater pressure to continue on a career path. Working mothers of today fulfill family responsibilities and also try to remain fully involved in their careers coping up with the competing demands of their multiple roles. The caring responsibilities that working mothers have lays a heavy stress on them when it is combined with their professional duties. The attempt of working women to integrate, organize and balance the various problems and activities in their different roles simultaneously puts them under tremendous pressure. As a result, the family becomes an organizational stakeholder and this powerful social trend marked the beginning of the work/life balance paradigm shift. (Denise Horner Mitnick, 2007). Richard Welford (2008) in his survey results on work life balance in Hong Kong quotes that there is an alarmingly high percentage of respondents who feel that work is the cause of health problems, specifically stress and lack of exercise. Health problems are likely lead to lower productivity and effectiveness of workers. This paper focuses on the tough life of married working women of Pondicherry in their battle to strike a balance between work and family life.

This paper will unveil some of the hidden barriers that stubbornly exist for women in business. It will review research that demonstrates why gender inequality is difficult to recognize, the systems that perpetuate it, the complexities of how society views it, and the ways women respond to it. By understanding the interplay between external and internal obstacles, women who wish to assume positions of leadership can more easily navigate the labyrinth of gender inequality, and their male colleagues can better recognize the ways that they can either remove barriers or encourage equality. There are corporate, social and economic benefits to allowing women to fairly advance to positions of power. Recognizing and removing barriers is vital to the strength of companies, social networks and jurisdictions.

The female workforce in India remains much smaller compared to the opposite gender. Some estimates reveal that while 80 percent of men are in jobs or are looking for employment, only 32 percent of women remain in the workforce. Some of this can be attributed to cultural attitudes and social norms. Despite rapid economic growth, female workforce participation across all age groups, education levels, and in both urban and rural areas has not caught up. In addition, a recent survey by a hiring firm found there to be a significant gender pay gap in India – as high as 27 percent. Men earned a median gross hourly salary of US \$4 (Rs 288) while women earned US \$3 (Rs 207) per hour, with the highest gap in manufacturing and lowest in Banking Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI), Transport, Logistics, and Communication.

According to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), women constitute around 51 percent of entry-level hiring and are likely to get IT-BPM offers. Nevertheless, the majority of women in India are employed in the rural and agricultural sectors where wages currently favor men. Studies also suggest that if India increased its female labor force participation by 10 percent (68 million more women) by 2025, it could increase its GDP growth to 16 percent. It is estimated that 217 million women are missing from the workforce.

Women's advancement in the corporate workplace has taken significant strides over the last century. Research demonstrates, however, that despite an increased presence of female employees in mid-management positions, executive positions continue to be male dominated. Women are underrepresented in areas of governance, directorship, and executive leadership. This seems to contradict the apparent momentum of the promotion of women.

Definition. The United States Federal **Glass Ceiling** Commission defines the **glass ceiling** as "the unseen, yet unreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements."

Research on sex stereotypes suggests that gender bias is an invisible barrier—the so-called glass ceiling preventing women from breaking into the highest levels of management in business organizations. A survey earlier this year of America, Australia, Britain, France, Germany and Scandinavian countries by *The Economist* and YouGov, a pollster, gauged how children affected working hours. Of women with children at home, 44-75% had scaled back after becoming mothers, by working fewer hours or switching to a less demanding job, such as one requiring less travel or overtime. Only 13-37% of fathers said they had done so, of whom more than half said their partner had also scaled back.

Many CEOs who make gender diversity a priority by setting aspirational goals for the proportion of women in leadership roles, insisting on diverse slates of candidates for senior positions, and developing mentoring and training programs are frustrated. They and their companies spend time, money, and good intentions on efforts to build a more robust pipeline of upwardly mobile women, and then not much happens. The problem with these leaders' approaches is that they don't address the often fragile process of coming to see oneself, and to be seen by others, as a leader. Becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role, acquiring new skills, and adapting one's style to the requirements of that role. It involves a fundamental identity shift. Organizations inadvertently undermine this process when they advise women to proactively seek leadership roles without also addressing policies and practices that communicate a mismatch between how women are seen and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders.

In a recent study by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), no more than 14 percent of business establishments are run by female entrepreneurs. Out of 58.5 million businesses in the country, only 8.05 million are managed by women employing around 13 million people. The businesses range from mom and pop stores to venture-funded start-ups. Further, India ranked 29<sup>th</sup> out of 31 countries in the 2015 Global Women Entrepreneurs Leader report by ACG Inc,

**The three actions we suggest to support women's access to leadership positions are**

- (1) Educate women and men about second-generation gender bias,
- (2) Create safe "identity workspaces" to support transitions to bigger roles, and

(3) Anchor women's development efforts in a sense of leadership purpose rather than in how women are perceived. These actions will give women insight into themselves and their organizations, enabling them to more effectively chart a course to leadership.

In a recent Gallup poll, **15 percent** of American women said that they have been passed over for a promotion or an opportunity at work because of their gender. **Thirteen percent** reported having been denied a raise for the same reason. This is a problem disproportionately affecting women. When Gallup asked men these questions, just **8 percent** said they were denied a promotion because of their gender and a mere **4 percent** reported being denied a raise for that reason.

Women also report being less satisfied with their pay and promotions. Although men and women report somewhat equal satisfaction on many elements of the workplace, an **8 percentage** point gap appears between how satisfied the genders are on the amount of money they earn and a slight gap shows up in their chances at promotion.

These specific instances of gender bias are part of a larger climate. About a third of women in a recent poll released by Elle Magazine and the Center for American Progress said that they had experienced discrimination in the workplace. Thirty-one percent think they would be paid more if they were male, and men agreed **20 percent** felt they would be paid less if they were female. But the genders differ in other ways: **Two-thirds** of women think professional women are scrutinized more harshly than men, but just half of men agree, while just a third of men think women don't reach the top ranks because of discrimination but over half of women agree.

Overall, women still make less than men for similar work. Female college graduates of the same age, degree, grades, and schooling make less than their male counterparts in their first jobs. No matter how much more education a woman takes on, she will still make less than a man with the same degree. Women make less than men no matter what industry or occupation they choose. Even women who make it into top executive positions are paid less than their male counterparts. There is also evidence that women routinely get passed over for promotions or career opportunities. Even when women graduate from top business schools and adopt all of the proactive career advancement strategies that men do, they still progress more slowly up the ladder than their male counterparts. This is part of why just **21 of the CEOs at Fortune 500 companies are women and they hold just 16.6 percent of board seats.**

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Madula Sherwani (1984)** in her study "Why More Women Entering Work Force" focus that Indian women still works under creation limitation and hardship. Main common problem faced by her was the dual role. The married working women with small children have dual responsibilities that lead to great mental and physical strain.

**J. Sudha Dr. P. Karthikayan (2014)** titled "Work Life balance of Women Employee" in Literature review, have identified the various aspects such as work stress, carrier advancement, carrier aspiration work family conflict and family work conflict ,child care in context with Work life Balance. This paper also reveals the issues and various challenges faced by the women employees to achieve Work life Balance and also the role of women in balancing the Work. **Vijay Amani (2013)** titled "work Life Balance of Women Employees" have examined the factors influencing the WLB of women employment in India such as role conflict, lack of recognition, gender discrimination, child care issues, problems in time management and lack of proper social support.

**Dr. R. Prabhakara Raya (2013)** studied about work life balance of women's With dual career couples widely prevalent in this modern era, there is a need for systematic research into the nature of work-life conflict and further insight is required into ways by which the work-home interface can be more effectively managed. Considerably more research is needed to gain additional insight into the meaning and consequences of work-family balance. This study was able to measure employees' work-life balance and found weekly hours of work and the stress associated with work were very important determinants of employees' work-life balance, alongside their occupations, age and caring responsibilities. Conflicts in work-life balance of working women affects their health who report more stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gain and depress than their male counterparts. Juggling between the obligations towards the families and expectations of the organization and constant struggle to maintain a balance between work and family can have serious implications on the life of an individual by affecting their well-being and overall quality of life. There is a widespread demand from employees for the right to balance work and home life in today's busy

world where finding time for oneself seems impossible. Health and wellness programs can, for sure help working women in balancing their personal and professional life. But they alone cannot be the answer to addressing the problems of imbalance. The problems and difficulties of women are multi-dimensional as evident from the literature reviewed; therefore, they require further probing to help working women in balancing their work and family life.

**Nicole Parcheta (2013)** investigated the gender inequality at workplace and argued that more women than ever are in the workplace. Women have made enormous advancements in education and professionally especially over the last 20 years. This has begun to change the workplace for the better. We also have more women owned businesses than ever before. Our society still has some long standing views of women as the lesser sex and their place being in the home but that is on its way to being debunked. Corporations need to recognize the differences in males and females and use it to the betterment of the organization. Women also need to understand the differences and continue working to equality in pay and benefits, while realizing the reasons males often earn more.

**Daniela Beckmann and Lukas Menkhoff (2008)** analyzed the gender difference among financial experts and found that there are robust gender differences in the domains of risk taking, overconfidence and competition behavior. However, as expertise tends to level these differences, researcher asked whether financial experts still show gender dissimilarities in their domains of decision making? They analyzed survey responses of 649 fund managers in the U.S., Germany, Italy and Thailand, and find that female fund managers tend to behave as expected from gender studies: they are more risk averse and shy away from competition in the tournament scenario. The expected lower degree of overconfidence by women is yet so small that it becomes insignificant in fund management.

**According to Nicole Parcheta 2013** says Over the last 90 years women have battled to become equal with men in all aspects of life and work. Women have made enormous advances in education and career but equality in pay and promotions in the workplace still elude them. It is well documented, widely known and discussed that women earn less. Why is this happening and is inequality as skewed as most think? If there is a “glass ceiling” why is it there and what can women do to navigate around it to become successful top level executives with matching compensation? What can managers do to ensure that women have as many opportunities as men and equal pay?. This article showed Women have made enormous advancements in education and professionally especially over the last 20 years. This has begun to change the workplace for the better. We also have more women owned businesses than ever before. Our society still has some long standing views of women as the lesser sex and their place being in the home but that is on its way to being debunked. Corporations need to recognize the differences in males and females and use it to the betterment of the organization. Women also need to understand the differences and continue working to equality in pay and benefits, while realizing the reasons males often earn more.

### Objectives of the study

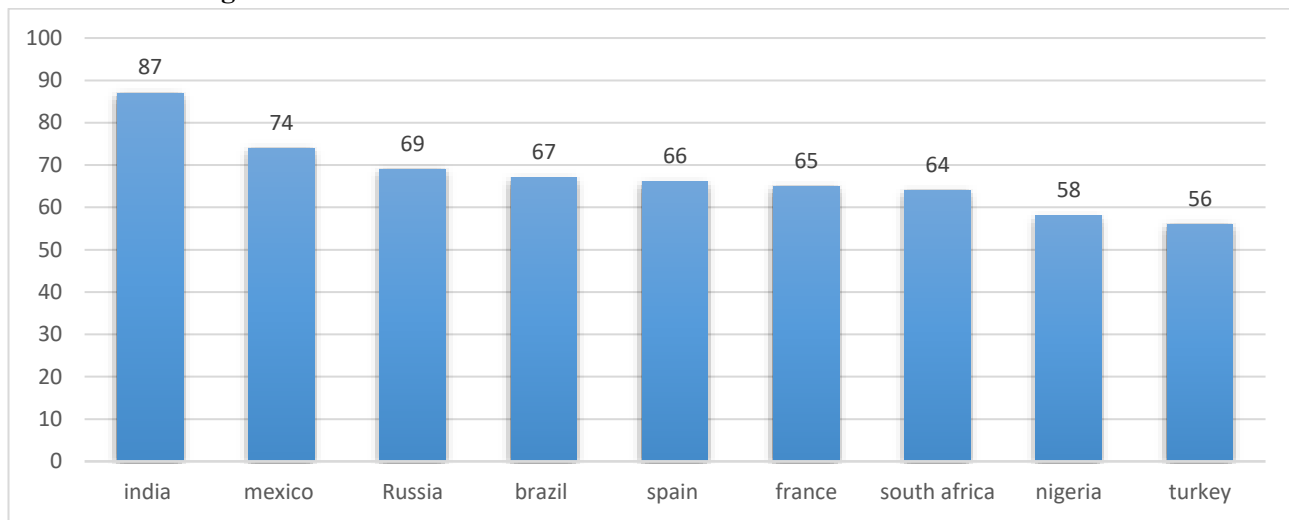
- ✓ To study the conceptual background of stress in women employees
- ✓ To study the various factors which affecting on the women employees while shifting to higher level.

### Statement of the problem

The emergence and determined survival of women in high flying jobs today in corporations and organizations depends on their own willingness to confront and fight strong barriers and hurdles that stand their way, some too grave to confront and others less weighty. They range from male chauvinism, corporate cultures/traditions organizational politics among many others. In their quest to climb up the corporate ladder, women are facing many challenges (Evertson and Nesbitt, 2004). Some barrier set up women for defeat; sluggish upward motion that drag them down in their pursuit to progress in their careers. Such pose as huge barricades, tests and trials for women employees.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on the secondary data which is collected from research reports, journals newspapers articles and several websites.

**Table – Percentage of women’s under stress in different countries**

(source: CNN)

Tapping its rich mine of educated female talent has been an important factor in allowing India to become one of the world’s fastest-growing economies. But recently this particular dynamo has been showing signs of strain. According to “Women of Tomorrow,” a recent Nielsen survey of 6,500 women across 21 different nations, Indian women are the most stressed in the world today. An overwhelming 87% of Indian women said they felt stressed most of the time, and 82% reported that they had no time to relax.

### **Factors Affecting career development of women**

Women generally continue to perform primary care giving to children and dependents while simultaneously juggling the demands of their workforce participation. Their career development issues, concerns, tasks, and responsibilities, molded by the work family pressures they experience, may be distinctly different from those of men. Thus, on account of family responsibilities, women's careers may take on forms, continuity and advancement patterns, and directions substantially different from those of men. In this regard, this section looks at the factors affecting the career development of women. It first looks at gender inequality, chauvinism and sexual harassment, organizational structure, the glass ceiling effect and discrimination at the workplace.

#### **Gender Inequality**

Gender inequality is particularly prominent in the professions today, where women are concentrated in those occupations which are relatively low in the professional hierarchy Turner 1986. Gender issues in today’s workplace can be traced to the different ways that women and men perceive the world (Banducci, 2002). Banducci adds that people are different and we need to understand those differences and act in a way to maximize the value of these differences.

The reasons for disadvantages for women in comparison to men can be described in terms of structural or systematic sexism. All structures are designed to either exclude women or discriminate against them. Women are taught at one level to have different expectations of life while at another level, they learn that they are not equal. This is why there is a confusion and conflict about their roles in society.

#### **Chauvinism and Sexual Harassment**

Male chauvinism in our country is deeply ingrained than many people realize. Gender sensitivity and sexual harassment concerns both men and women. Women generally bear the brunt of male chauvinism as well as sexual harassment. Some women just tolerate it as they find it difficult or embarrassing to speak out, those who do speak out may not get the support and in turn are further victimized or ostracized at work. Issues such as gender bias, gender sensitivity and sexual harassment concern both men and women in working towards a nation that is committed to rights. Sexual harassment stands out as the key contemporary site of gender struggles over gender norms, sexuality, power and gender equality, as well as legal and organizational norms (Zippel, 2002). Sexual harassment can be a form of illegal sex discrimination. Though public awareness of this form of workplace discrimination has increased, it remains a severe and pervasive problem for many female workers (Peplau& Garnets, 2000).

#### **Organizational Structure**

Organizations structures often mirror the society's ideas on what groups of workers are appropriate for certain jobs. Hiring and promotion often express the informal expectations about gender, race and class of people that are best suited for a particular position, which in turn produce race- and gender-stratified work forces. People of a particular gender become identified with certain kinds of women. Occupations that are usually labeled as "men's" jobs are not equally distributed across different racial groups (Xu & L'effler, 1992). Those who advocates a „color blind“ or „sex blind“ approach to hiring and promotions ignore the fact that the usual racial and sexual biases will persist without intervention. (Blumberg, 1987). Women have transformed the workplace and are here to stay (Kimmel, 2001). Kimmel adds that almost half of the labor force is female.

### **The Glass Ceiling Effect**

The Glass Ceiling effect is defined by the Labor Department in New York as artificial barriers based on bias that prevents qualified individuals progressing in upper management levels in an organization. Where the glass ceiling is present, women receive lower paying positions. This has a detrimental effect on the morale and economy of any corporation. Women are the most visible victims of the real glass ceiling due to the deeply ingrained attitudes at the lower levels. They have to be better than the equivalent male colleague to win in the promotion handicap stakes. It's tough to make it to the top, usually requiring higher levels of merit, in order to achieve senior executive status (Savage, 2002).

### **Discrimination at work place**

By 1995, in many employment cases; about 80 percent of female workers were discrimination against, 6.8 percent of the federal civil docket (Eisenberg and Clermont, 1995). Employment cases are less likely than other cases to privately settle out of court. Employees win only 26 percent of cases going to trial, significantly less than the 45 percent overall win rate by plaintiffs in federal civil litigation (Eisenberg and Clermont, 1995). Most employment-discrimination cases protest firings, not refusals to hire. The common image of discrimination is that employers reject black women job applicants or pay black or women workers less for the same work. Indeed, in the early years of Title VII litigation, most cases were hiring cases. By the 1980s, however, firing cases were six times more common than hiring cases

### **Conclusion**

Final conclude that at the management at the all sector has a positive perception towards women employees and as a result this perception affects female employees' career progression to a large extent. The study also concludes that the human resource management policies do embrace female employees and that the Human resource management policies at the all sector promote a balanced employee work life as well as affect female employees' career progression to a great extent. These findings indicate that offering family-friendly policies is advantageous policies but it is often adopted for symbolic rather than substantive reasons and may therefore fail to produce any real changes in organizational structure or behavior. The study also recommends that as a first step toward achieving gender equality and promoting the career progression of women, organizations can encourage the hiring, retention, and advancement of women by adopting work/life policies such as daycare centers for new mothers, work adjustments hours for new mothers to mention a few. Further the study recommends that the family-friendly, or work-life, policies ought to be designed to support employees faced with balancing the competing demands of work and family in today's fast-paced, complex environment.

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