Perception towards Glass Ceiling Among Women Executives

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Abstract: The very fact of women being adequately represented in the workforce but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been labeled “The Glass ceiling” a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up in the management hierarchy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Promoting gender equality in organizations isn't just a move towards democracy. It's good for business too. Most democratic societies consider themselves – constitutionally at least – to be gender equal. But while legislation may not discriminate against women outright, real equality is still a long way off. The answer to greater empowerment and more profitable leadership may lie within women themselves. In recent years, women as well as gender issues have turn into a major area of concern. Some studies illustrate that during the last two decades there has been an increase in the proportion of women at entry and middle-level management positions, resulting largely from the activities of the women’s movement, policies of the political system, and corporate equal opportunity initiatives. However according to Meyerson & Fletcher (2000) women at the highest levels of management are still rare. They comprise only 10% of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies; less than 4% of the uppermost ranks of CEO, president, executive vice president, and COO; and less than 3% of top corporate earners.

To be more precise, the recent researchers reveal the fact that 81% of well-qualified women that can occupy top positions face serious barriers engendered by the existing stereotypes and preconceptions (Andrica 1997) which are basically generated by male and accumulated in the society where male ideology is dominating.

2. MEANING OF GLASS CEILING

The concept of Glass Ceiling is invisible but real barrier through which the next stage or level of advancement can be seen, but cannot be reached by a section of qualified and deserving women employees. Such barriers exist due to implicit prejudice on the basis sex.

The concept of glass ceiling is present all over the world since the forces that keep women away are the same. The degree of intensity of these forces may differ by nation or by region. In emerging and developing countries, religious, legal, and economic factors are particularly discriminatory towards women. Since women do not get equal opportunities even at the grass roots level, the question of a glass ceiling does not even arise. For the women who do have these opportunities and who are able to have a career, in emerging country like India, the glass ceiling they confront is no different from that confronted by women in the western world.

Thus it is essential for the Management to know about how the glass-ceiling phenomenon may directly or indirectly impact an organization’s reputation, customer loyalty, diversity of skill sets, growth potential and even its bottom line. Oftentimes, the CEO or president of an organization may tap HR professionals for their advice and expertise on the strategic organizational changes that are necessary to reduce the existence of a glass ceiling in order to maximize an organization’s performance and reputation which may lead and give an opportunity to women to reach top positions in their career which will contribute to the growth of the Nation as well.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The study concentrates on analyzing the opinion of the presence of glass ceiling in the Indian corporate world for women at higher levels of management.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the level of perception towards Glass Ceiling among women executives.
- To compare the level of perception towards glass ceiling among women executives in different sectors.

5. NEED OF THE STUDY
It is observed that in India despite increase in women’s education and participation in labor force, representation of women in management jobs is significantly low as compared to men. The few women who do make it to the top, make us believe that there is a sustainable change in the gender equations within corporations and businesses, which is not true in practical situations. A few studies that have been carried out so far provide a very dismal outlook about women representation in management jobs in India. Those studies though have tried to understand the reasons behind it yet they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that retard their progress. Thus, this study is therefore significant as it will not only be looking into the reasons that contribute to such unequal gender representation in organizational leadership but also will recommend strategies for employer and society in order to break the glass ceiling.

6. PROBLEM FORMULATION

7. TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used self structured questions to know the information about socio economic profile of the respondents and Perception of Glass Ceiling Scale, developed by Wrigley's (2002) to find out the level of Perception towards Glass Ceiling among Women Executives.

8. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The researcher adopted purposive sampling method. The researcher has chosen five professions like Banking, IT, Manufacturing Industry, Teaching and Media where women were employed in middle and top level management. The researcher purposively has chosen 75 respondents from each profession and collected data required for the study.

9. RESEARCH DESIGN

The major objective of this study is to find out the perception of women executives towards Glass Ceiling and also to find out the factors influencing Glass Ceiling. Hence the researcher has adopted the descriptive and diagnostic research Design.

10. ANALYSIS

In the present study simple percentage calculation was used to find out the details regarding the personal and demographic details of the respondents. Further T-test and Anova tests were used to find out significant difference between groups and within groups with regard to the Perception of Glass Ceiling among Women Executives.

11. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. More than half (52 percent) of the respondents are Post Graduate holders
2. Majority of (69 percent) of the respondents are married.
3. Majority of (70 percent) of the respondents hail from Nuclear Family.
4. A vast Majority of (72 percent) of respondents are from Urban Areas.
5. A Vast Majority of (81 percent) of the respondents are from the Middle Level Management. This proves that very few women are found in top level management and thus Glass Ceiling do exist in corporate world.
6. The study proves that nearly half (47%) of the respondents experience the presence of moderate level of Glass Ceiling at work place which retards the growth of women to top positions of Management.
7. The study proves that (44%) the women executives face moderate level of practical
problems like non cooperation from male colleagues, lack of opportunity to update knowledge and present views in decision making due to the presence of gender discrimination in work place, and also domestic issues.

8. The study proves that majority of 60 percent of women are satisfied with their career inspite of the practical problems faced both at work and life setup. Thus through analysis the researcher concludes that the respondents in the present study have a great aspiration in career development inspite of the existence of unseen barrier “Glass Ceiling”.

11.1. Findings related to T-Test

1. It was found that the mean value of unmarried women was high with regard to perception towards glass ceiling, which reveals that women who are unmarried try hard to reach high positions in their career in the process of which they feel that at higher positions they experience barriers from their counter parts.

2. It was found that the mean value of women in the middle level management was high with regard to perception towards glass ceiling, which interprets that women’s progress in career stops at middle level itself due to gender barrier and only very few women reach to the top level position in all sectors of employment.

3. It was found that the mean value of women in the joint family was high with regard to perception towards glass ceiling, which interprets that women in joint family have more responsibilities with regard to family ties and find little cooperation from the family members which forces the advancement in their career to stop either at entry level or middle level.

11.2 Findings related to ANOVA Test

1. It was found that there is significant difference between the women executives with regard to their education and the scores on perception towards Glass Ceiling. Respondents with higher qualifications (M.Phil & Ph.D) are facing more Glass Ceiling (Mean=106) than the respondents with lower qualifications.

2. It was found that there is significant difference between the women executives with regard to their religion and the scores on perception towards Glass Ceiling. From the mean value it is clear that women executives who are Christians (Mean=101) are facing more Glass ceiling than the other categories namely women who belong to Hinduism and Islamic religion (Mean = 99 & 93 respectively).

3. It was found that there is no significant difference between the women executives with regard to their area of residence and the scores on perception towards Glass Ceiling. From the mean value it is clear that women executives who hail from Suburban areas (Mean=102) are facing more Glass ceiling than the other categories namely women who from Rural and Urban areas (Mean = 100 & 99 respectively).

12. WAYS TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING

- Review HR policies and practices to determine if they are fair and inclusive (e.g., pay differences, hiring practices, history of promotions to senior positions, affirmative action plans).
- Examine the organization’s informal culture: look at subtle behaviors, traditions and norms that may work against women.
- Through surveys and focus groups, discover men’s and women’s perceptions about organization’s culture, their career expectations and what drives their intentions to stay or leave.
- Support top-management commitment to talent management, including women in senior positions.
- Develop a list of women for succession planning.
- Develop and implement retention programs for women. Educate and Support Women in Career Development
- Emphasize the importance of women acquiring line management experience.
- Acknowledge successful senior-level women as role models.
- Support the development and utilization of women’s networks inside and outside the organization.
- Create and implement leadership development programs for women, including international assignments, if applicable.
- Develop policies that create a women-friendly workplace environment.
- Establish training programs for women, such as mentorships, career guidance and leadership development.
- Promote awareness initiatives that highlight the value of women managers.
Elicit input from women employees regarding policies, promotion and performance review processes.

Have a true commitment to hire and promote women and include women in the annual business strategy.

13. FORUMS AND NETWORKS FOR WOMEN AT WORK

In India, there are a growing number of industry forums and networks that actively help women managers deal more effectively with corporate challenges, particularly with progressing in their careers. A leading organization for women is the Forum for Women in Leadership (known as WILL). Founded by Poonam Barua in 2007, WILL brings together senior women executives from across corporate India. The purpose is to develop an open dialogue on women’s aspirations and opportunities, nurture mindset, and mentor and harness the rewards of collective thinking to improve the workplace. WILL focuses on setting a strong agenda for women executives including private and public sectors and multinational corporations to leverage the large talent pool of women, creating opportunities for them and, ultimately, sharing the rewards of best practices to make a contribution to business and society. These forums have been hosted by major corporate organizations such as Infosys Technologies, Indian Oil Corporation, Tata Consultancy Services, Deloitte, KPMG and ONGC Ltd. Another organization that promotes women leaders is India’s National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) through its IT Women Leadership Summit. Such groups and forums provide opportunities for women to learn grow and become leaders in their fields. They fill a need in the marketplace, because both society at large and Indian organizations have to work together to make the Indian workplace effective for women. Finally, the U.S. business magazine Forbes published its 2009 list of “The 100 Most Powerful Women.” Such listings provide visibility to women, further promoting public credibility. A number of Indian women are on this list: Ranked at #3 is Ms. Indra Nooyi, Chief Executive, PepsiCo; #13 is Ms. Sonia Gandhi, President, Indian National Congress Party; #20 Ms. Chanda Kochhar, Chief Executive, ICICI Bank; and #92 Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman, Biocon.

14. CONCLUSION

Thus in today’s global economy, Indian corporations need talent in order to be competitive. Generally, women at top level management are underutilized in corporate India. The present study also reveals that the majority of the respondents who are married and live in nuclear family, who reside in urban areas are placed in middle level management positions only are not placed in top positions or women themselves deny to take up top management positions because of the prevalence of unseen barrier “Glass Ceiling.”

In the present study as per the analysis majority of respondents placed in middle level management face practical problems like non cooperation from male colleagues, lack of opportunity to update knowledge and present views in decision making due to the presence of gender discrimination in work place, and also domestic issues. The study also proves that majority of (60%) women are satisfied with their career in spite of the practical problems faced both at work and life setup. Thus through this analysis the researcher concludes that the respondents in the present study have a great aspiration in career development in spite of the existence of unseen barrier “ Glass Ceiling”.

Thus to advance women in managerial roles, and help them break the glass ceiling support by top management is essential. Promoting diverse management practices and opening doors to women in management, through proactive human resource policies and programs, is one way for Indian organizations to expand their talent pool and, ultimately, their leadership pipeline. As highlighted by the Indian women professionals interviewed, specific success factors such as a good education, mentoring, family support before and after marriage, strong communication skills and lifelong learning, good work life balance, sound knowledge on career growth pathways, women friendly working environment etc are essential for Indian women to progress to the top levels today.

REFERENCES: