

# MANAGING DIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

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Diversity is the essence of the contemporary corporate world with the representation of both genders at the top level of organizational management, having their own specific set of innate qualities, skills and capabilities (Silzer and Dowell (2010). Diversity refers to treating everyone as an individual, respecting their differences and valuing them, while equality refers to equal and fair treatment to all individuals. Having a diverse workforce at all the different levels of an organization can lead to the creation of a more creative and dynamic environment, which is also more productive. Gender equality is also a constituent of equality which in business context means that both genders are provided with equal opportunities to earn and proceed in their careers irrespective of their genders (Sidanius, 2013).

In this report the important issue of impediments faced by women to reach to the executive levels within their organizations is highlighted with the identification of some of the predominant barriers hindering their ways. Some possible solutions to lessen the impact of these obstructions are also discussed and some recommendations to the management are also made to improve the situation.

### IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF BARRIERS THAT ARE NOT LETTING WOMEN TO GET THE TOP LEVEL JOB WITHIN THEIR COMPANY

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According to a research conducted by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman on the effectiveness of male and female leadership, they found out that are women are not only equally competent, in fact, they exceed men (2012). A summary of this finding is illustrated with the help of the following table:

Overall Leadership Effectiveness by Gender by Position (\*Percentile Scores)

Position	Male	Female
Top Management, Executive, Senior Team Members	52	61
Reports to Top Management, Supervises Middle Managers	47	53
Middle Manager	47	53
Supervisor, Front Line Manager, Foreman	52	51
Individual Contributor	51	52
Other	50	51

Source: Are women better leaders than men? (Zenger and Folkman, 2012).

But despite this fact, women all around the world are facing some obdurate impediments in the way of their constructive movement along organizational hierarchy. A brief explanation of some of these obstructions is given in this part of the report

### 1.1 Glass Ceiling

The term glass ceiling was first introduced in 1980 and it refers to the obstructions that are not visible but they hinder the career progression of women in organizations. The word glass is specifically used in this term to explain its nature of being unnoticeable (Akpınar, 2012). Although the individuals see everything, still they cannot notice its existence. It is kind of inequality that keeps women from advancing into the corporate ladder just because they are women, and no other specific reason. This glass ceiling impact is even stronger for women belonging to minorities. It exists when

- The same encumbrance doesn't apply for other individuals holding the same position
- The disparity of being a woman becomes more obvious at higher levels of the organization than at the lower levels.
- The inequality increases along with the increase in outcomes, like pay, authority and post
- The career progression prospects to higher levels are irrespective of the proportion of women and men

### 1.2 Glass Cliff

Glass cliff refers to a condition where in case of crisis or pandemonium, when the risk of failure is higher, women are offered leading roles. In such situations, if the company sails through then it doesn't give credit to the woman and if it doesn't succeed then that woman is blamed. It not only severely affects her reputation but even she is more at the risk of losing her career than a man in the same situation, because when a woman leader fails people tend to blame her for being the sole reason behind the failure rather than real existing reasons (Paul Vanderbroeck, 2010). Women are usually offered such opportunities because of the perception of women being nurturing, better able to lead strained situations, taking reproach to themselves in case of failure and because they are less likely to be offered such a higher post in normal circumstances so they accept it readily.

### **1.3 Gender discrimination**

A discriminatory treatment towards a person on the basis of his gender is known as gender discrimination, which is very common practice in corporate world hindering the path of women in their career advancements. This is because of the beliefs and viewpoints that people hold about women. It is commonly believed that men are a better option for higher positions in organizations because they inherently possess leadership qualities. This not only decreases the morale of the women at workplace but also leads to psychological and emotional disturbance, deteriorating their performance.

### **1.4 Poor organisational culture**

Male oriented organizational culture is another very critical barrier to women career development to higher posts in management. Shared values, beliefs and opinions or judgements of individuals working within form organizational culture. As there is comparatively a smaller proportion of women in top levels of hierarchy, therefore being the dominant gender mostly the organizational cultures are formed and shaped by men. In such culture the style is mostly autocratic with decisions and information being cascaded down with no power sharing and mostly men encourage other men impeding women from having equal opportunities.

### **1.5 Poor leadership**

Poor leadership also influences women career Prospects. A good leader has the potentials to inspire his team to reach to their high levels of performance by motivating and encouraging them. He takes feedback from his staff and values their opinions. Through proper encouragement he augments their morale and empowers them to prepare them for future higher roles to be performed by them. However, if a leader is biased towards women and doesn't encourage and motivate them it may demoralize them (Sherwin, 2014). Even it may lead to the creation of an environment in the organization where women are discouraged and will not be given chances of career advancement.

### **1.6 Lack of training and empowerment**

Another noteworthy barrier that is not letting women to get top level jobs is the lack of mandatory training for higher positions and the confidence and courage. Women usually

have a bleak access to the formal mentoring programs that can prepare them for future leading management jobs.

In addition to these barriers, **McKinsey & Co**, in its McKinsey Women Matter research identified the barriers faced by women to reach to the top level jobs in and categorized them into four groups, which are listed below

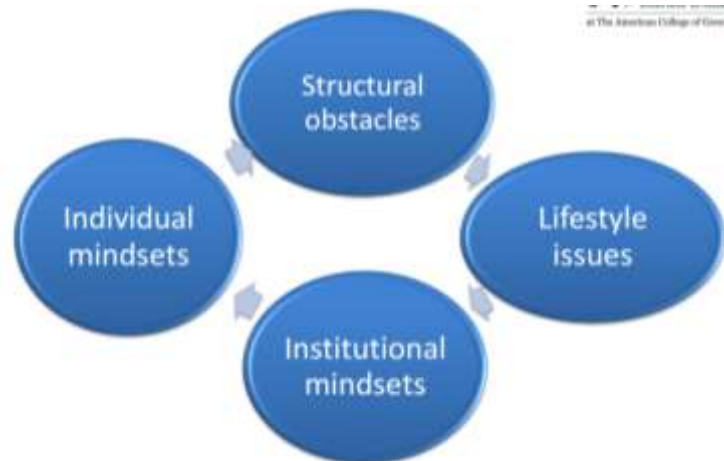


Figure 2: Barriers to women career advancement (McKinsey & Co, 2011).

### 1.7 Structural obstacles

Some of the structural predicaments faced by women comprise

- Lack of access to informal networks
- Lack of role models and sponsors
- Lack of opportunities for development

### 1.8 Institutional mindset

Institutional mindset includes the stereotypes and biased beliefs about women's capabilities and potentials for higher management jobs.

### 1.9 Individual mindset

It refers to the behaviours and conception of women about themselves that serve as impediments to their advancement. For example, lack of confidence, intention to keep away from controversies, less desire for higher jobs, etc.

### 1.10 Individual lifestyles

It includes the choices made by women that serve as barriers in their careers. For example, desire to have a work-life balance, concern for executive lifestyle and availability, family priorities, etc.

## **SOLUTIONS TO THE KEY BARRIERS IDENTIFIED IN THE TASK ONE AND THE POSSIBLE GENDER PAY GAP**

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In today's globalized world, where people from varied backgrounds, having their own values, beliefs, ideas and opinions work together to the attainment of organizational goals collaboratively, managing diversity is of indispensable significance (Koch et al., 2015). This also applies for opposite genders, as in this modernized world the number of women taking part in corporate world is surging at a very fast pace. As according to the Hampton-Alexander review of November 2016, 25% of FTSE executive committee and their reports are women. They are making huge contributions in the growth of economies of the nations by employing their own skills, knowledge and competencies optimally. They are no way lesser than men in their intellects or passion to outshine.

Although, many leading companies are now giving women representation at executive levels, still there are many obstructions that are hindering them to reach to the executive level jobs. This matter of underrepresentation of women at top levels is a matter of rising concern now and calls for serious attention (Ibarra et al., 2010). As mentioned in the previous section of the report, these barriers are of individual, institutional, cultural and societal nature.

According to the survey conducted by McKinsey & Co, some notable cause of women not wanting to move to the higher levels of hierarchy within the organization was the lack appropriate role models, sponsors and access to informal networks. As the following figure depicts, one of the reasons was the lack of connections. This lack of role models and sponsors to help women out to get access to high level jobs can be solved by the revision of an effectively devised mentoring program. Through these mentoring programs women can be imparted with some essential tips and guidelines that would provide assistance to women in future advancements. These mentoring programs can also help women in building business contacts networks by introducing them to other business professionals.

## Why Aren't More Women in Top Business Positions?

*% saying each is a major reason that fewer women are in top executive positions in business*

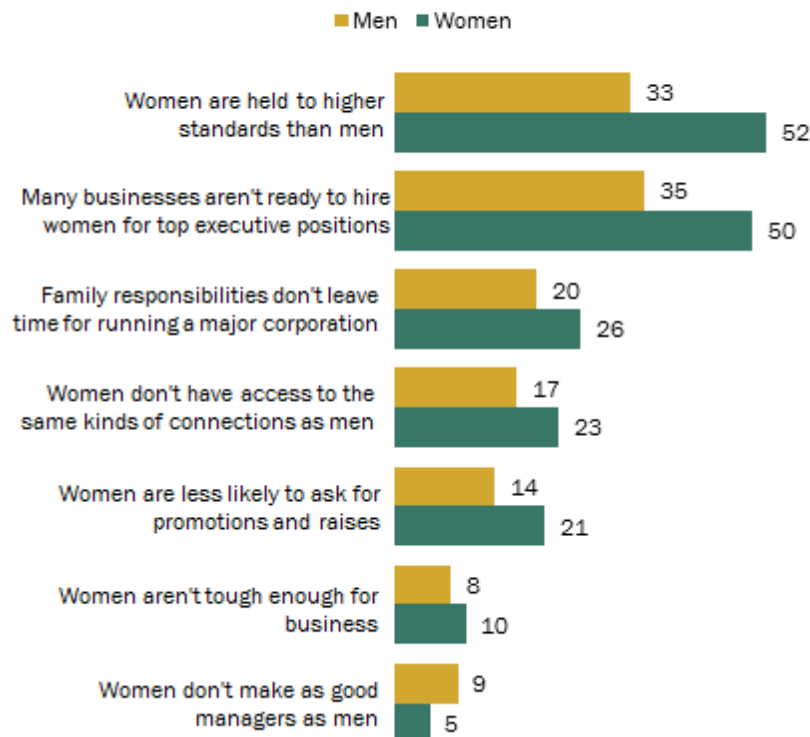


Figure 3: Pew Research Centre survey (Nov, 2014)

In addition to that, these mentoring programs can also help women in overcoming the individual mindset barrier, as mentioned in the previous section of this report. Such programs can assist them in building their confidence and removing their apprehension of being entrapped by controversies. Such mentoring programs groom them and prepare them to be open to learn new things and overcome fears. Mentors can make the mentee realize his shortcomings to progress and that how she can acclimatize herself to be more competent (Enache et al., 2011). Employees' morale is also improved to substantial levels after attending such programs and they will more put more effort to achieve their goals, hence improving their performance levels as well.

Institutional mindset barriers can be alleviated by creating an open and accommodating organizational culture, where women are treated as a counterpart of men working in the organization and they are judged on the same criteria as are used for men. The top management should exhibit equal treatment and serve as role model to inspire other in the organization to do the same. It should be included in the policy of the organization and made



clear to all. Gender diversity programs should be devised by the senior management and implemented effectively by warning the entire personnel about the negative consequences of not abiding by them (Global Gender Gap Index, 2012).

However, minimizing the impact of the embedded individual mindsets and empowerment issues because of which women mostly limit them to lower positions is somewhat difficult. Although women are very well qualified and talented still they fall short in their courage to take the risk of superior and complex responsibilities of a higher post. One solution to this problem can be arranging conferences or seminars where successful women are also invited, so that by meeting them and listening to their stories they feel motivated and encouraged to follow their ambitions.

Glass ceiling and glass cliff can be dealt by setting programmed goals and standards for a post (irrespective of the gender) to be met and used to measure their performances against. Employees' performances should be periodically measured and recorded and reports stating their performance records should be prepared. When the time for promotion comes, such reports should be used for making objective selection which is free of gender bias. In order to overcome Individual lifestyles barriers, employees should be given some kind of leverage to effectively and efficiently manage their work-life balance like, flex time and compressed workweeks.

Another issue faced by women is the disparity in their pay levels. Women are usually paid less than men for same kind of jobs or equal significance (Krantz, 2015). There are many legislation that come into action in this context, with Equality Act 2010 as the key governing legislation. A comprehensive code of practice concerning equal pay is issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission by the authorities of UK. EHRC provided an equal pay review model to ensure that both genders receive same compensation. This model comprises four phases of

1. Deciding the purpose of review and gathering relevant data
2. Assessing work done by both genders in same positions
3. Comparing the pays and identifying any gaps
4. In case of gaps deciding whether it's just or indicates some sort of discrimination.

It is mandatory for all kinds of organizations to conduct pay review to figure out any discrepancies and take steps accordingly to rectify them. The Equal Pay Review of 2015 has made amendments in previous reviews to minimize these gaps as much as possible.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This report highlights that despite the inevitable part played by the women employees in mounting the economic development of a country they are facing some impenetrable impediments to reach to the top levels of the organization's hierarchy. These barriers are of individual, institutional, structural, social and cultural in nature. However, organizations can implement many strategies to overcome or lessen the impact of these hindrances. Some of the recommendations for the organizations in this perspective are

- Mentorship programs should be designed and launched for female employees that can help them to overcome the lack of role models, sponsors and access to informal networks
- The organizational cultures should be reviewed to reveal any kind of discrimination on gender basis and the underlying reasons should also be investigated to resolve them
- There should be an appropriate system for objective measuring and recording the performances of both male and female employees being considered for career progression to executive posts
- Flexible work arrangements should be considered, that would not affect the overall performance or working of the organization but can assist the individuals at top managerial levels to maintain a work life balance

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