The Leadership Challenges - Women at work place

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Abstract : The aim of this paper is to explore the challenges faced by the women workforce to climb the career ladder in an organization. This paper discusses on the solutions to overcome these challenges to move towards VPs or C-Suite Executives. Beside, this paper highlights the barriers faced by the women to step into the competitive job market. The solutions provided in the paper will help the women workforce to achieve significant career growth and it provides suggestions to the organizations to create inclusive gender-diversed workforce.

Keywords : Challenges, Issues, Leadership, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women make up one half of the global human population. The sex ratio for the global human population is 100 females to 101 males. While the demography shows equality in population, Women as a whole still reel under some form of oppression in each and every corner of the globe. Women as a gender face life endangering to nuanced challenges every day and intellectual minds across the spectrum continue to device ways to achieve total liberation.

II. BARRIERS IN THE SOCIETY FOR WOMEN

Sometimes we want to be retold about things that we already know. "I think women are foolish to pretend they are equal to men; they are far superior and always have been" - William Golding. The fundamental principle of any problem is to find solutions. Based on thorough analysis of the past and current scenarios, I have turned to present the six barriers that revolve around women.

1. Stereotype: 'A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing'. Gender Stereotypes results in unequal and unfair treatment. We can highly categorize the kinds of gender stereotypes:

Physical appearance — Say, men wearing pants and short hairstyles, women wearing dresses and make-up. Women are expected to be slim and sophisticated, while men are expected to be tall and muscular.
Personality traits —Women are often expected to be accommodating and emotional, while men are usually expected to be self-confident and aggressive.
Domestic behaviors — Some people expect that women should take care of the children, cook, and clean the home, while men take care of finances, work on the car, and do the home repairs.
Occupations — It is in nature of the society to assume that teachers and nurses are women, and that of pilots, marketing-jobs, sports and military are men.

The researchers 'Elizabeth L. Haines, Kay Deaux and Nicole Lofaro' conducted study on basic social category of gender; they compared data from 195 college students in 1983 to data from 191 adults in 2014. The study participants from each time period rated the likelihood that a typical man or woman has a set of gendered characteristics. The researchers found that despite greater diversity in the 2014 sample, people continue to strongly stereotype men and women on personality traits (e.g. kindness, competitiveness), gender role behaviors (e.g. tending the house, upholding moral and religious values), occupations (e.g. registered nurse, engineer) and physical characteristics (e.g. delicate, deep voice).

Table 2.1 – Stereotype Bias

	1983					2014					
	Man	Person	Woman	M-W	1983 R	Man	Person	Woman	M-W	2014 R	R Change 1983–2014	p Value (two-tailed)
Agentic traits	75.3 (14.3)	64.5 (13.5)	61.3 (16.3)	14.0	+.42	67.7 (11.4)	51.8 (11.7)	60.2 (14.7)	7.5	+.27	−.15	.23
Communal traits	62.3 (15.1)	64.4 (14.5)	76.7 (15.2)	−14.4	−.43	51.6 (16.5)	53.7 (14.4)	72.6 (13.0)	−20.9	−.57	+.14	.19
Male gender roles	76.8 (16.9)	69.5 (17.8)	53.7 (19.8)	23.1	+.53	69.3 (11.4)	54.2 (11.0)	51.9 (14.4)	14.8	+.56	+.03	.75
Female gender roles	51.6 (21.5)	71.4 (18.1)	77.22 (16.0)	−25.6	−.56	47.4 (14.4)	57.5 (11.7)	75.1 (9.7)	−27.7	−.75	+.19*	.01**
Male-typed occupations	69.7 (25.1)	31.3 (23.2)	34.2 (20.2)	35.5	+.61	59.6 (26.4)	23.6 (20.7)	27.2 (18.2)	32.5	+.58	−.03	.45
Female-typed occupations	35.3 (22.3)	30.0 (24.0)	69.8 (24.0)	−34.4	−.60	28.0 (15.7)	22.8 (20.2)	57.9 (27.7)	−30.0	−.55	−0.05	.58
Male physical characteristics	65.0 (15.4)	51.2 (14.0)	44.9 (16.7)	20.0	+.53	60.7 (13.5)	42.4 (11.5)	39.5 (12.7)	21.2	+.63	+.10	.15
Female physical characteristics	47.4 (16.8)	51.4 (13.4)	65.6 (16.1)	−18.3	−.48	37.5 (12.1)	39.9 (10.6)	56.0 (12.7)	−18.5	−.60	+.12	.25

Note. The p values that represent the r to z transformation (Preacher, 2002) are two-tailed. Ns for 1983 M-W comparisons are 105 for agentic and communal traits. Ns for 2014 M-W comparisons are 121. M-W = man-woman.
*p < .05, two tailed. **p < .01, two tailed.

They also found that:

- In the 2014 sample, men and women were showed similar stereotyping on psychological traits and occupations for both genders and

on physical characteristics for males.
- Women and men were believed to be more equally engaged in financial roles in 2014 than in 1982. For example, in 2014, both genders were equally believed to assume financial obligations, make major decisions, and handle financial matters.
- The 2014 data also showed that men were more likely to believe gender stereotypes about male gender role behaviors, while women towards female gender role behaviors.

2. Societal challenges

In early nineteenth century women were facing problems like Child Marriage, Sati, restriction to widow remarriage, Devadasi system, etc. In recent decades the old conventional glitches have disappeared gradually from our society but other new obstacles have risen. Women irrespective of their self-confidence, knowledge and proficiency are continuously facing many problems. Women are real victims of the discrimination. The areas like education, health-care, job etc.

- Morality and Inequality: Due to gender bias in health and nutrition and Female Infanticide. There is unusually high mortality rate in women, reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa and china.
- Education: The gender bias is in higher education, specialized professional trainings affects women very hard in employment and attaining top leadership in any field.
- Absence of ambition for the achievement due to inability to bear risk in fear of public opinion.
- Professional Inequality: Women face exploitation and harassment in male customized and dominated Government Offices and Private enterprises.
- Household Inequality: Gender bias is significant in household works manners all across the globe childcare and domestic works are tagged to 'Wife'.
- Domestic Violence still exists in our society.

3. Support system

Neither man nor woman is perfect or complete without the other. Thus, no marriage or family, no ward or stake is likely to reach its full potential until husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, men and women work together in unity of purpose, respecting and relying upon each other's strengths. - Sheri L. Dew

Increasing work pressure combined with frigid workplace environment seems to be another main factor that troubles women at workplace. A personally fulfilling job and a handsome salary alone won't make a woman employee satisfied if there is unsupportive family and unhealthy work - environment. Work-place with a group of understanding colleagues can't be overstated. Lack of family support for household responsibilities is another major reason that leads to conflicts for woman workers who struggle to balance both job and family. This isolated feeling leads to boredom and stress, gradually losing her efficiency and confidence.

The personal social support can be further conceptualized as emotional and instrumental support (Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006). Instrumental support refers to behaviours and attitudes of family members aimed at assisting day-to-day household activities, such as relieving the employee of household tasks or otherwise accommodating the employee's work requirements (King, 1997). This allows the family member to focus his/her time and preserve energy for work when it might otherwise be scarce; suggesting that it positively influences the individual's functioning at work. Emotional support refers to the expression of feelings to enhance others' affect or behaviour (Erickson, 1993). Emotional support contributes to positive affect that helps the individual in the work domain (Wayne et al., 2006).

4. Salary imparity

The first thing to know is that no matter how you slice the pie, there is biased pay gap for men vs. women across the globe. According to 'The state of the gender pay gap" white paper in 2018 by Payscale; women earn 77.9 cents for every dollar earned by men. It further states that the median salary for women is 22 percent lower than the median salary for men. But, men and women with the same employment characteristics do similar jobs; the woman only earns 97.8 cents for every dollar earned by the man.

Why the gap?

- Gender discrimination, a culture that doesn't believe women can perform as well as men.
- Gaps in professional and technical trainings.
- Henrik Kleven, an economist at Princeton University says woman after child birth prefer less challenging jobs.
- Lack of defined laws and policies for labor.
- In Hollywood too: "This is totally unacceptable," Amber Tamblyn chimed in, and Mia Farrow added her perspective: "Outrageously unfair- but it's always been like this. I was never, ever paid even a quarter of what the male lead received."

5. Security

One of the major concerns for women in urban areas is safety in public spaces in both the developed and developing world. Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence occur every day for women and girls globally. It happens on streets, in and around schools and workplaces, in parks, in public sanitation facilities, and in neighborhoods. Violence and sexual harassment in public spaces restrict women's freedom of mobility. On other hand, the fact is that how working late hours in office creates security hassles for women. The obvious question here being, why should an effort made to improve your work life, endangering your very own existence? Working late nights has become a prerequisite in many industries. While men burn the midnight oil without such troubles, women tend to do it reluctantly. Be immune to the disease do not cremate your ambition.

III. WHY WOMEN LEADERS?

What we are is the outcome of our choices; we construct ourselves with the resources what society has preserved for us and with those of our own. We have stepped into third millennium with culturally-engineered society packed with ignorance and prejudice. "Woman is not born but becomes one". Though women compete equally with men, they are highly underestimated in managerial fields. But Women have all the

leadership qualities to lead any organization

Here are the top reasons why women make great leaders:

- They have tactical and inspirational leadership skills naturally.
- They are good in negotiations.
- They handle conflicts easily.
- They have high emotional intelligence and collaborate at work.
- They can effortlessly adapt and lead the change.
- They have greater learning ability and strategic thinking.
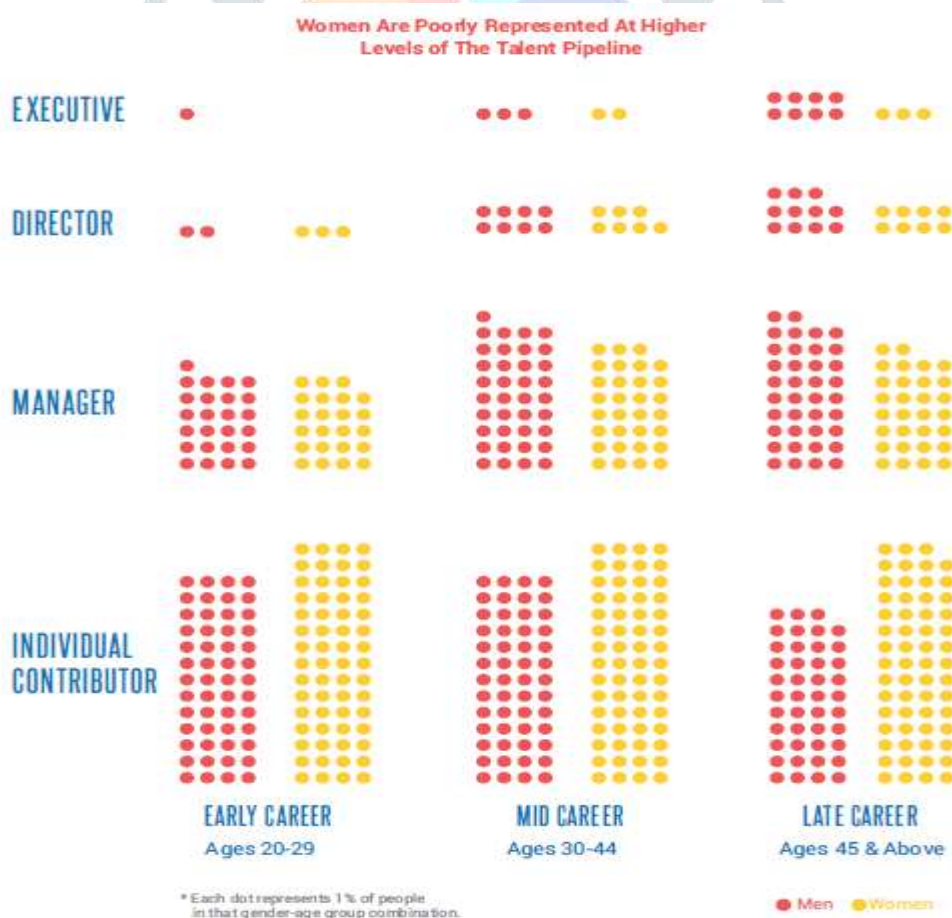- They work towards execution and delivery (driving results).

"We are creative problem solvers motivated by obstacles. The desire to overcome a challenge fuels us to get things accomplished. Leaders don't take 'no' for an answer." – Jackie Zlatanovski, founder, Flik Flops

"Wearing many hats is often a regular occurrence in a women's life. They often balance careers, households and even aging parents, among other things. Women pivot, adjust and focus on solutions. Resting in the doom and gloom can be time-consuming, so many shift to find positive solutions to life and work problems." – Gretchen Halpin, chief strategy officer, Hewins Financial Advisors

IV. WOMEN LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES - THE MISSING BLOCKS

Women are less likely than men to hold management roles. This is stated as "opportunity gap"; men and women tend to work at similar job levels, most often entering the workforce at the individual contributor level. Over the course of their career, both men and women move into manager or supervisor-level roles, and eventually to director and executive-level roles. But men appear to move into these roles at significantly higher rates than women. According to 'The state of the gender pay gap" white paper in 2018 by Payscale; "72 percent of men and 74 percent of women in the age group of 20-29 years are in individual contributor roles at the entry level. But over the course of their career, men move into higher level roles significantly than women. By midcareer (age range 30-44 years), men are 70 percent more likely to be in VP or C-suite roles than women. And by late career (age 45+ years), men are 142 percent more likely to be in these higher paying roles".From the report it can be inferred that, women over the age of 30 years are more likely than men to remain in individual contributor positions. By mid-career, 60 percent of women are still in individual contributor positions whereas only 52 percent of men are in individual contributor positions. By late career, 59 percent of women are in still individual contributor positions while 43 percent of men are in individual contributor positions.

Figure: 4.1 – Opportunity Gap

Women Are Poorly Represented At Higher Levels of The Talent Pipeline

* Each dot represents 1% of people in that gender-age group combination.

Men   Women

i. Biased promotion by supervisors in the organization: Based on 'Women in the Workplace 2017' study by LeanIn.Org and Mckinsey & Company: women are 18 percent less likely to be promoted than their male peers. This gender bias has a dramatic effect on women's career

growth towards higher managerial roles. If women at entry level were promoted at the same rate as their male colleagues, more number of women would be at director and executive-level roles.

ii. Emotional decision on job preference by woman in accordance with the societal pressure: Women after child birth tend to focus more on their family than career growth. Based on 'Women in the Workplace 2017' study by LeanIn.Org and Mckinsey & Company: On average, 54 percent of women do all or most of the household work, compared to 22 percent of men. This gap grows significantly when the couples have children. Women with a partner and children are 5.5 times more likely than their male counterparts to do all or most of the household work. Even when women are primary breadwinners, they do more work at home.

iii. Harassment at job: Harassment in the workplace consists of both sexual harassment and non-sexual harassments like using offensive language regarding the individual's physical or mental disabilities, religion, race, age, gender, or skin color. These harassments will hinder the career growth of women and can affect them psychologically. It is always better to know what constitutes the harassment which will help to spot it, and women should know how to handle it if it happens to them.

iv. Lack of government regulations: Government have not imposed any clear women friendly policies for the private and unorganized sectors where more population of workforce is present. The existing women friendly government policies are not implemented in most of the private and unorganized sectors. Government has to create watch-dog agencies to monitor these sectors.

v. Resistance to change from the conventional ideologies: Women are less likely than men to desire to be a top executive. Women should break the stereotypes imposed on them. In occupation, it is likely that only men can grow in electrical, supply-chain, scientific-research and retail industries. Etc.

V. LET US BUILD THE SOCIETY TOGETHER TO NURTURE WOMEN

1. How can I combat gender stereotypes?

It is the unconscious bias that may mislead the way in which the society perceives.

- Don't be part of it – Don't unconsciously bias your activities. If you want to do something that is not connected with your gender. If you want and if you will, give it a go.
- Point it out – Internet, Magazines and Films are packed with negative gender stereotypes. Sometimes it is hard for people to see unless they're pointed out. Be the ONE!
- Love yourselves - celebrate who you ARE. It is important to emphasis on the positive aspects of being woman, set the attitude and standards that show better ways of conducting.

2. Let the change happen in our society

- Providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Housing.
- Decision making power and access to higher education.
- Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are interested at and pave way for them to make a career.
- Access to employment exposure: Self-employment and self-help group.
- Society should change the mindset towards the word woman.

3. Build your own support system

To bridge the gaps, women need to learn to be tactful, be assertive, and find a way to approach problems by the day-to-day situations. Sitting at home would not have exposed women to the world of opportunities. Having aspiration to grow teaches women to cope with frustration and to solve problems.

4. Significant Career growth towards Leadership positions

- Re-induction: Women get less support to advances in their careers after child birth, due to the increase in house hold responsibilities. Organizations should focus on providing them opportunity to upgrade their skills to grow in their career ladder.
- Change in work patterns / flexible working hours: This will help women to balance their work and their family. The friendly work environment would give women make them more efficient and confident.
- Mentoring by Women leaders: Women are less likely to receive advice from the managers and senior leaders on how to advance in their career. The mentoring sessions by the women leaders' in the same organization will motivate women to learn from them and act as catalyst to break the glass ceiling.
- Gender diversity implementation at workplace: Creating more opportunities for women starts with creating a more inclusive environment in the organization at all levels; this will eventually become a culture and part of the organization.
- Government to impose Laws and monitor the organizations to ensure gender diversity and inclusion are embedded in the organizational policies and strategies.

5. Stop slicing the pie? "Women hold up half the sky." - Mao Zedong

- Create recruitment programs focused on attracting female candidates.
- Mentoring programs for junior-level female to diversify the management tiers.
- Ensuring social accountability—via creating a diversity work force.
- Closing the gender pay and opportunity gaps, so that it benefits everyone in the organization.

6. Safety - Let us together break the ice "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light." – Aristotle

- Adoption of suitable technology to ensure timely interventions.
- Introduction of women friendly public transport systems.
- Strengthening the law and order system.

- Fostering support from the general public by engaging them effectively across various levels and sections of the society including educational institutions, corporates, and other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

The call for the need of more women in the workplace may sound as though any organization has to just try to meet the quota. But the inclusive gender diversity could be the key to any origination's success. Diversified workforce at the director and executive-level roles will drive the organization to utilize their best resources to maximize their potential. This leads the organization towards greater innovation, increased productivity, better products, enhanced decision-making, higher employee retention and better job satisfaction.

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