

Women in Global Leadership: Status, Perspectives and Opportunities

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Abstract: The present global business landscape is presently witnessing a comparative rise in the status of women at global leadership positions in comparison to the past. However, this growth is not an impressive one if comparisons are drawn in relation to their male counterparts in every field. Whether one talks about global leadership positions, higher managerial designations, pay scales, upward promotional moves, selection for higher and middle level designations, international assignments and status in society, the overall scenario for women is not particularly good. Considering the present situation, the present research paper seeks to explore the present status of women in global leadership positions, reasons for lesser number of females at global leadership positions, factors motivating women for choosing international career avenues, and the challenges/barriers faced by them in their journey of going international. The paper also addressed the futuristic opportunities for women in global leadership positions and determines their perspective to be a global leader. The research paper is based upon the secondary data available in the domain and reflects upon the present status, perspectives and opportunities available to global women leaders. It also throws light upon the several psychological, personal, organisational, social, family-related, as well as economic barriers despite which the capable women leaders escalate their career ladder in senior leadership positions globally.

Index Terms - Global leadership, Internationalism, Female Global Leaders.

I. BACKDROP

Previously majority of seniority and international positions were held by men (Adler, 1984) wherein out of 291 women only 1 woman was sent for an international assignment (Adler, 1984). It is stated that across the globe men have the greatest impact in formulating the national and state level policies and also on structural and behavioural management of corporate HR, as women are less found in the upper echelons of government and business world as well (Abramson & Moran, 2018). However, the recent global trends demonstrate that the number of female leaders has grown significantly (Adler & Osland, 2016). This represent, though, is very small as against their male counterparts. The AA-GW Final Report (2017) indicates that in past 5 years, the level of females assuming seniority roles has increased by 3% worldwide. Similarly, the percent of women handling international work assignments across the globe has also increased but it is still 3% of the total workforce handling international assignments (Linehen, Scullian, & Walsh, 2001; Adler, 1987, 1993, 1994; Brewster, 1991).

Maclachlan (2017) reported that the role and status of women in business and higher positions is increasing worldwide as the decade wise trends reveal raised percentage of women in the international working environment. The percentage of women in international working setup was 5%, 11%, 15% and 25% in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 respectively (Maclachlan, 2017), indicating an uplift in the scenario.

Geiger & Kent (2017) conducted a study that reflected upon the trends for the period 1964-2017 with respect to females serving as heads of State or Government. In 1966, Indira Gandhi became the first female leader as Prime Minister of India. Till 1990, only 20 nations experienced female leadership and the number has reached up to 70 till 2017 (Geiger & Kent, 2017). In 1950's, no women leader was seen in power, while in 1960's, the number raised to 3. In 1970's, the number of women leaders reached 5, in 1980's, it was 8 and in 1990's, the number of female leaders reached up to 21 worldwide (Adler, 1997).

Despite the remarkable improvement in status of women worldwide, still women have to cover a very long twisted journey to match the level of their counterparts. They do not have the rights and authorities similar to men as women are considered unequal or inferior to men both by the law and society as well globally (Abramson & Moran, 2018). In fortune 500 companies, only 10% senior managers are females, less than 4 % of the upper echelons such as CEO, COO, president, vice president are held by women (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2005). Table 1, clearly represents the present global status of women performing senior roles across the globe whereas Table 2, demonstrate senior roles held by women by country (top ten and bottom ten).

Table 1: Global Status of Women Performing Senior Roles across the Globe

S. No.	Region	Proportion of Senior Management Roles held by Women
1	G7	22
2	MINT	24
3	Eurozone	24
4	Southern Europe	28
5	Eastern Europe	35
6	EU	24
7	Africa	27

8	Latin America	18
9	BRIC	26
10	Developed APAC	13
11	Emerging APAC	26
12	ASEAN	34

Source: Grant Thornton IBR Women in Business Report 2016: Based on data drawn from Q3 & Q4, 2015.

Table 2: Senior roles held by women by country (top ten and bottom ten)

Top 10 Countries	Senior roles held by women in percentage	Bottom 10 Countries	Senior roles held by women in percentage
Russia	45	Turkey	20
Philippines	39	Ireland	19
Lithuania	39	New Zealand	19
Estonia	37	Brazil	19
Thailand	37	Mexico	18
Indonesia	36	Netherlands	18
Latvia	35	Argentina	18
Poland	34	India	16
China (mainland)	30	Germany	15
Italy	29	Japan	7

Source: Grant Thornton IBR Women in Business Report 2016: Based on data drawn from Q3 & Q4, 2015.

Findings of Catalyst Survey (2018) reveal that only 24 (4.8%) women are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Harris (2017) indicated that there still exists a huge global pay gap between women and men as in the year 2017 the global average earnings for women were \$12,000 whereas for men it were \$ 21,000.

Worldwide, the historical and present status of women reveals that there exists an enormous difference in representation and compensation of women as compare to their male counterparts in each and every sphere and field (Abramson & Moran, 2018). This gap also exists in the income of a retired women and retired men (Abramson & Moran, 2018).

II. OBJECTIVES

- To explore the present status of women in global leadership.
- To investigate into the reasons for the lesser number of females as global leaders.
- To find out the factors that motivates women for choosing to go international.
- To identify the barriers faced by women in their journey of going international.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Under-representation of women as global leaders:

Although, the worldwide representation of women as global leaders has improved, but still, they have to face numerous obstacles in moving up in their career ladder. Women at the highest echelons are still very rare as 12% of board seats are held by women worldwide (Abramson & Moran, 2018). House (2012) concluded that women are inferior to men as men must be the follower of Allah and obey Allah whereas women must obey men and follow men as well. In Saudi Arabia, driving a car by a Saudi woman was considered a violation of their customs, as they do not allow women to drive (Ahamari, 2013). In United States, women earn 77 cents while men earn 1 dollar for equal work and also it is stated that across the globe only 6% pilots are females (Abramson & Moran, 2018).

Results of a study conducted by Tesfachew, Zahidi, & Ibarra (2010) in the companies of 30 member countries of OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) along with Brazil, Russia, China and India reveal that the placement of female employees is concentrated in entry/lower level to middle level positions. Table 3 demonstrates the selected results of this study with respect to the corporate status of women leadership in the companies of above mentioned countries

Table 3: Corporate status of women

% of female employees	Less than 50% in each nation except US (Min. in India - 23% and Max. in US – 52%)
% of female employees in different industries/sectors	Less than 50% in each industry/sector except Financial Services & Insurance and Professional Services (Min. in Mining & Automotive - 18% each and Max. in Financial Services & Insurance – 60%)
The average number of women holding the upper positions such as CEO or BOD	Less than 15% in all nations except Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, India, Greece, Mexico, Netherlands, Switzerland, US & UK as there were no female CEO's in these countries
Examines any salary gaps between men and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track salary gaps only without implementing any effective measures

women and implements any effective procedures for the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 15% of the companies surveyed (Highest in Italy & Finland) • Track salary gaps only with implementing effective measures – 13% of the companies surveyed (Highest in France & US) • Do not track salary gaps as they believe there are no gaps exist – 54% (Highest in Japan & India) • Do not track salary gaps as it I not the part of their company policy – 72% (Highest in Netherlands & Maxico)
Maternity Leave Facilities	13% of the companies surveyed do not offer any maternity leave (Leave time is minimum in India, Mexico and US whereas highest in Norway and United Kingdom)
Target-setting for participation of women	64% of the surveyed companies do not set any specific Targets for participation of women
Access to training and mentorship programmes	Max. in United States and United Kingdom – 100% and min. in Spain – 21%
Flexible time working options for women for work-life balance	Max. in United States and United Kingdom – 100% and min. in Turkey and Mexico

Source: Tesfachew T., Zahidi, S., & Ibarra, H. (2010). Measuring the corporate gender gap. In S. Zahidi & H. Ibarra (Eds.), *The Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010* (pp. 3-13). Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

3.2 The underlying reasons/barriers

Several reasons attribute towards the under-representation and are generally seen to become more consistent over the years with only minor improvements. The under-representation of females in senior roles are the consequences of several personal reasons such as unwillingness of female (Adler, 1987, 1993, 1994; Hill, & Tillery 1992; Tung 1998); family-related barriers such as early marriage, many children, numerous roles, lack of clear life goals, lack of family support (Huang 2015; Kirai & Kobia, 2012; Thangei, & Doris, 2009); social barriers constituting gender stereotypes, discrimination at both home country and host country (Gerald, 2014; Adler, 2008; Tzeng, 2006); psychological challenges such as conflict between work and family, cross-cultural loneliness and isolation, limited and weak female network (Shortland, 2018; Gerald, 2014); organisational barriers (Mohan & Tabassum, 2017; McNulty, De Cieri, & Hutchings, 2013; Doherty, 2013; Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011; Forstenlechner, 2010; Biemann, & Andresen, 2010; Chen, & Chiu, 2009; Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008; Lee, 2005; Schein, 2001, 1975,1973). Even the perception of “think manager-think male” (Schein, 2001, 1975, 1973) to the prevalence of such situations arising for women at a global level. Along with these traditional barriers, Gupta (2018) explored that “Glass Ceiling” is the main reason for low number of women as global leaders having senior roles in the 21st century where one can see the next level of advanced growth but one can’t reach there.

Global leadership is the ability to motivate and influence the thinking process, attitudes and behavioural patterns of people across the world (Adler, 1997). Hollander, & Offermann, (1990) described global leadership as the process of influencing people across the globe in such a way so that they can perform together and achieve common goals in a synergistic manner. Madsen and Ngunjiri (2015) stated that a woman global leader is the person who holds the capability to influence the attitudes and behavioural outcomes of her followers in the global context for the fulfilment of the common goal through optimally utilising their competencies comprising of global mindset, cultural adaptability, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence and social intelligence in the global context.

However, literature indicates the various challenges or barriers being faced by women that pull them back from their career advancement moves and having global leadership positions. The following studies encompass the several challenges faced by women particularly I the global leadership context.

It is reported that psychological challenges such as conflict between work and family, cross-cultural loneliness and isolation, limited and weak female network restrict women to step forward in the path of their career advancement (Shortland, 2018; Patterson, Damaske, & Sheroff, 2017; Gerald, 2014; Gerstel, & Clawson, 2014; Bass, 2014; Damaske, 2011; Bianchi, & Milkie, 2010; Correll, Bernard & Paik, 2007; Stone, 2007; Tahir, & Ismail, 2007; Blair-Loy, 2003; Hays, 1988).

Even the lack of self-confidence, weak self-perception, non-willingness and disinterest of women in going international reflect some of the major personal challenges that pull them back to stay at home or deny better opportunities towards success (Tharenou, 2008; Sinangil & Ones, 2001; Lowe, Downes & Kroeck, 1999; Tung 1998; Hill, & Tillery 1992; Adler, 1986, 1987, 1993, 1994).

Many studies reveal the role of family-related barriers comprising of early marriage, many children, numerous roles, lack of clear life goals, lack of family support that also inhibit the upward movement of women at seniority positions across the globe (Patterson et al., 2017; Huang 2015; Gerstel, & Clawson, 2014; Bass, 2014; Kirai & Kobia, 2012; Damaske, 2011; Bianchi, & Milkie, 2010; Thangei, & Doris, 2009; Correll et al., 2007; Stone, 2007; Tahir, & Ismail, 2007; Blair-Loy, 2003; Linehan et al., 2001; Linehan, 2000; Hays, 1988).

Another major challenge that women leaders usually face in the journey of towards advancement and growth in global scenarios is the prevalence of organisational barriers. Such barriers constitute the organisational context, organisational commitment, organisational justice, travel opportunities, organisational support, organisational capital, organisational mobility and organisational culture, biased selection criteria and lack of necessary preparation, managerial skills and technical background (Mohan & Tabassum, 2017; McNulty et al., 2013; Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2011; Forstenlechner, 2010; Biemann, & Andresen, 2010; Chen, & Chiu, 2009; Jokinen et al., 2008; Lee, 2005; Caligiuri & Tung, 1999; Schein, 2001, 1975,1973).

Gender stereotypes, discrimination at both home country and host country refer to some of the most predominant type of social challenges that hinder the progress of women globally (Patterson et al., 2017; Gerstel, & Clawson, 2014; Gerald, 2014; Bass, 2014; Damaske, 2011; Bianchi, & Milkie, 2010; Adler, 2008; Correll et al., 2007; Stone, 2007; Tahir, & Ismail, 2007; Tzeng, 2006; Blair-Loy, 2003; Hays, 1988).

Another significant challenge aligned to the functioning of global women leaders is that of cultural sanctions/cultural challenges. These focus upon cross-cultural adjustment and adaptability issues that play a negative role in restricting the growth of women globally (Shortland, 2018; Maclachlan, 2017; Lai & Yang, 2017; Adler, 2008; Tahir, & Ismail, 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2002; Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Fish & Wood, 1996; Westwood & Leung, 1994; Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1985; Church, 1982).

Gupta, (2018); Mohan & Tabassum, (2017); Rathore, 2017; Mehmood, & Masood, (2016); Carlsson, & Marjavaara, (2009); Insch, (2008); Lyness & Heilmen, (2006); Ryan, (2005); Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, (1992) explored that along with all these traditional barriers and challenges women have to face the challenge of “Glass Ceiling” as a consequence of which women are often confronted with serious issues and find difficulties in moving p to the seniority levels.

“Labyrinth of Leadership” is another recently discovered challenge faced by women wherein women leaders often undergo a series of complexities and their upwards movement is full of twists and challenges at each and every level (Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2008; Eagly, & Carli, 2007).

IV. THE CHANGING SCENARIO: CHOOSING TO GO GLOBAL

“If women stop, the world stops”

-Vonberg, J. & Maestro, L.P. (2018)

In recent past, women have started taking initiatives and raising their voice against discrimination faced by them across the globe and for equal rights. Several reasons have led women to take complex decisions, particularly when it comes to moving abroad. Women have started to choose to go abroad for their career advancement, personal and career growth, better career opportunities, for getting the exposure of the world, higher salaries, to develop necessary skills for managerial and leadership positions, to get rid from traditional restrictions, to become self dependent, to acquire high status and recognition and to handle increasing responsibilities of family and children in highly competitive world (Tremethick, 2016; Tulshyan, 2016).

V. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Michelle Obama (First Lady of the United States) stated that “No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself from the contributions of half of its citizens” (Canal, 2016). It has been explored that females are not only equally competent to their counterparts, but in many cases even out power men with respect to leadership and senior management (Folkman, 2015; Al-Shamali, & Al-Khoury, 2015; Zenger, & Folkman, 2012; Caliper Report, 2005). Therefore, as a consequence of organisation support, social and cultural support, family and spouse support along with mentorship, work-life balance, excellent competency skills, language skills, broader perspective, self-confidence, in-dependability, consistent hard work, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence and strong determination, in present times, the new globally advanced career opportunities are paving way for women and the number and status of women in global leadership, senior roles and higher positions in business is raising continuously across the globe as the organisations have started to acknowledge the importance of having female leaders, advantages of female leaders over male leaders and competency of women leaders worldwide (Ament, 2016; House, 2013; Hutchings, Lirio, & Metcalfe, 2012; Carlsson, & Marjavaara, 2009; Caligiuri, & Cascio, 2000; Adler, Brody & Osland, 2000; Caligiuri, Joshi, & Lazarova, 1999; Adler, 1994 & 1985).

VI. GLOBAL WOMEN LEADERS: THEIR PERSPECTIVE

In spite of all such challenges and barriers in the 21st century, women have become aware and educated about their rights. Consequently, they have started to identify their capabilities, calibre, confidence, skills, abilities, and strengths to meet the level of their counterparts and beat the competitive barriers or hurdles that exist in their way to lead globally. Now, women are not restricted to the boundaries of their home, society, culture and nation as well, as they have cut down the traditional ropes that bind them to stay at home. Even they have discovered the alternative routes to move forward and upward in the global context as frequent international travellers and opt for domestic positions with international developments to uplift their status globally (Knobloch, 2017; Hutchings, et al., 2012; van der Boon, 2003).

VII. CONCLUSION

In nut shell, it is concluded that in tremendously competitive, technically advanced, extremely uncertain and increasingly globalized environment of 21st century, women have become more aware and realized their potential too. Also, the entire world has started to realize the significance and potential advantages of having women in senior positions and leadership roles. Hence, the status of women is improving continuously worldwide as women are moving forward and taking initiatives to handle senior and leadership roles with family, social and organisation support and overcoming their psychological and personal barriers as well.

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