



IJMRBS

ISSN 2319 - 345X

Vol. 2, No. 4, October 2013

International Journal of
Management Research and
Business Strategy



www.ijmrbs.com

AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER DIVERSITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GLASS CEILING, WORK LIFE BALANCE AND JOB STRESS

Monika Khemani^{1*}

*Corresponding Author: **Monika Khemani** ✉ khemanimonika@yahoo.in

Human Resource Management is a very essential tool of the organizations. Recently its importance has increased because of the heterogeneous workforce. A diverse workforce, with respect to education, experience or gender, is often needed due to the variety of tasks that have to be performed within firms. Diversity management benefits associates by creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and challenges. Gender and diversity analysis promotes the effective use of the skills and talents of all members of the organization's workforce. Research on gender as a dimension of diversity has mostly evolved independently. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to address glass ceiling, work life balance and job stress as three constructs of gender diversity and then will offer suggestions for improving organizational capability to manage this diversity.

Keywords: Gender Diversity, Glass Ceiling, Work Life Balance, Job Stress

INTRODUCTION

Efficient management of human resources is a key issue for firm's economic success. It does not only consist in dealing appropriately with single worker's demands, bureaucratic procedures or institutional settings. Properly managing Human Resource also implies finding the right workforce mix and to make the most of worker's skills. A diverse workforce, with respect to education, experience or physical stamina, is often needed due to the variety of tasks that have to be performed within firms. Diverse work teams bring high value to organizations. Respecting individual

differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. Diversity management benefits associates by creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and challenges.

Workplace diversity strategies help to build the department's relationship with the community, enhance the contribution of its employees and improve the quality of its programs, products and services. It creates a more inclusive and supportive work environment, better team work and more effective client service delivery. It

¹ Shyam Lal College, Department of Commerce, Delhi University, New Delhi- 110032.

increases productivity, encourages greater creativity and different ways of thinking for improved decision making. Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status (Katharine *et al.*, 1995). Mixed gender groups are found to foster the impact of group efficacy on performance (Lee and Farh, 2004). The argument is that gender diversity is likely to increase the heterogeneity in the values, beliefs and attitudes of the members of a group, which in turn may stimulate critical thinking and prevent the escalation of commitment.

The need to understand diversity is also driven by women in the workplace. Today's workforce has the highest levels of employment participation ever by women. In this research we will examine important constructs of gender diversity to assess the current status of the literature, and to make some suggestions going forward.

Therefore, in the present research gender diversity will be seen in relation to three variables, i.e., Glass Ceiling Effect, Work Life Balance and Job Stress

Glass Ceiling Effect

The glass ceiling is a concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, or aspire to attain senior positions in corporations, government, education, and non-profit organizations. It can also refer to racial and ethnic minorities and men when they experience barriers to advancement. Female employees face the hurdle in their career progression and experience a barrier that hinders their way to progress. Their career advancement to the top level position

suffers because of the presence of the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling as a term first appeared in a 1986 article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled "The glass ceiling: why women can't break the invisible barrier that blocks them from top jobs" (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). Since then this term denotes an artificial and transparent barrier that kept women from rising above a certain level in corporations.

Glass Ceiling and Gender Diversity

Glass ceiling is present at the workplace and it is also affecting the workforce diversity especially at the international assignments. Today is the era of competition and companies can survive only if they are proactive and are favoring the diversity at the workplace and essentially the workforce diversity. There must be equal employment opportunities for employees to help minimize the concept of glass ceiling. At the level of firm performance, the glass ceiling phenomenon presents problems for at least three reasons and thus deserves further research attention. First, if lower level female managers perceive that the opportunity to reach senior management is limited because of gender; this may dampen their desire and motivation to compete at this level. A belief that hard work and perseverance will not pay off, among a large segment of the workforce, would be likely to have negative productivity effects at all levels of the organization. A second reason for concern relates to a lack of diversity among members of top management teams – too much homogeneity may lead to poor and costly decisions (Elsass and Laura, 1997). Finally, under tight labor market conditions, gender based barriers can further reduce the supply of needed talent and resources. Resource dependence theory suggests that it is to the firm's advantage to eliminate barriers to needed resources, and in

some cases to focus on moving women into key management positions because they may better match the demographic characteristics of significant customer segments (Jacobs, 1992; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

Work Life Balance

In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work life balance has become a predominant issue in the workplace. Three major factors contribute to the interest in, and the importance of, serious consideration of work life balance. These are global competition, renewed interest in personal lives/ family values and an ageing workforce. The current research would attempt to ascertain gender differences, if any, on the work life balance issues and will direct at narrowing the existing research gap in this context. Family to work conflict occurs when experiences in the family interfere with work life like presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elder care responsibilities, interpersonal conflict within the family unit, unsupportive family members. Burke and Moffet (1988) noted that when work interferes with family life, this conflict is often released on the family, causing poor marital adjustment, which further contributes to lower level of life satisfaction. Fisher and Layte (2003) consider three distinct sets of measures of work-life balance, viz., proportion of free time, the overlap of work and other dimensions of life, and the time spent with other people.

Work Life Balance and Gender Diversity

Women are typically the primary family care givers for children and/or the elderly. Assumptions are often made regarding women's availability to do a job without interference from family responsibilities. Further, some organizations may

not offer work/life programs that support outside commitments, particularly for senior level positions. As a possible solution, perhaps, women could choose to work fewer hours than men in order to spend more time with their families. Having children brings a lot of responsibilities to a family life and this is the reason why many women decide to leave their careers prematurely so as to raise their children sufficiently. For this reason, employers occasionally hesitate to promote women because they are afraid that women will choose their families first. The business case for work life balance practices relies on their ability to enhance recruitment and retention, and reduce work life conflict among employees. It makes intuitive sense that offering work life balance practices would attract individuals to an organization, and that using these practices would result in improved employee attitudes and behaviors within the organization.

Work Life Balance and Glass Ceiling

Work and life balance challenges can impact women's advancement and, if not dealt with, may contribute to the glass-ceiling phenomenon. On the other hand one of the most common causes of the glass ceiling for women is a conflict between work and family. Women with work centered preferences are more likely to work the long hours necessary for promotion into management jobs, as job demands expand at each successive level in the hierarchy. The demands associated with management positions create work family conflicts for women especially, because men in paid employment are considerably more likely to have an adult partner who takes on the bulk of family responsibilities (Lincoln, 2008).

Job Stress

Today, workplace stress is becoming a major issue of increasing concern to employees and organizations. It has become a part of life for employees, as life today has become so complex at home as well as outside that it is impossible to avoid stress. Experts opine that stress is the main cause for all the problems of the modern world and that it affects both the individual and the organizational health. Job stress refers to work related psychological stress, as well as an individual's ability to handle a particular situation or work environment (Jamal, 1999). It can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur within a human being when the requirements of the job do not match his capabilities, resources, or even needs.

Job Stress and Gender Diversity

Gender is another factor that is important in determining susceptibility to workplace stress. Research indicates that women are more likely than men to experience the negative effects of stress. A general tendency exists in the literature according to which females experience higher level of organizational stress regarding gender-specific stressors and have different ways of interpreting and dealing with problems related to their work environment (Offerman and Armitage, 1993). Also important to note is that there may be differences in the coping mechanisms men and women use to deal with stress.

The two primary factors that are responsible for women's job stress are Glass Ceiling and Work Life Balance which are explained as follows:

Job Stress and Glass Ceiling

Glass Ceiling acts as a stress generator. Marriage, family, children, relocation and other personal

reasons diminish women's ability to reach the top. Support systems are required for women at work. Current measures such as crèches, flexi time, refresher programs, and orientation on company policies only scratch the surface of the real problems. However, there is requirement of increased awareness for the contribution of women and the need to nurture their talent at the workplace as leadership paradigms are changing in the 21st century.

Job Stress and Work Life Balance

Work life Balance acts as a stress generator. Despite gaining higher education, historically, Indian women have faced a stressful situation owing to issues of family support for working women, raising children, and home responsibilities. Also due to late working hours women face difficulties in managing balance between work and their personal lives. In recent times, this has changed with families being more supportive and the concept of external child-care centers becoming increasingly popular, in a growing consumer economy.

RATIONALE

A diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and marketplace. Diverse work teams in terms of gender bring high value to organizations. In today's business world, men and women work side by side in careers of all kinds. Workplace diversity strategies help to build the department's relationship with the community, enhance the contribution of its employees and improve the quality of its programs, products and services. It creates a more inclusive and supportive work environment, better team work and more effective client service delivery.

Work and life balance challenges can impact women's advancement and, if not dealt with, may

contribute to the glass-ceiling phenomenon which may further result in job stress. Effective application of gender and diversity analysis requires basic knowledge of the diverse composition of workforces, social and cultural differences, historic and current barriers, as well as legal and social relationships.

A great deal of research has focused on workforce diversity. The management literature has suggested that organizations should value diversity to enhance organizational effectiveness. Despite an increasing number of studies, few consistent conclusions have yet to be reached about the antecedents and outcomes of diversity. Likewise, research on gender as a dimension of diversity has mostly evolved independently. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to address glass ceiling, work life balance and job stress as three constructs of gender diversity and then will offer suggestions for improving organizational capability to manage this diversity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Purvanova and Muros (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between gender and burnout using 409 effect sizes from 183 studies. The findings contradicted the common belief that female employees tend to experience burnout more than male employees. Moderator analyzes further revealed some intriguing nuances to the general trends, such as larger gender differences in the USA compared to the European Union. In contrast, gender differences did not vary significantly in male typed vs. female typed occupations. Our analyses also suggest discontinuation of the use of overall burnout measures because they are highly consistent with the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout only.

Lyness and Heilman (2006) examined relationships of gender and type of position (i.e., line or staff) to performance evaluations of 448 upper-level managers, and relationships of performance evaluations to promotions during the subsequent 2 years. According to them, promoted women had received higher performance ratings than promoted men and performance ratings were more strongly related to promotions for women than men, suggesting that women were held to stricter standards for promotion. This suggests that women had to be highly impressive to be considered eligible for leadership roles, whereas this was not the case for men.

Mesmer Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005) noted that workers face challenges of managing their work and family roles, and importantly, these challenges have become more numerous and complex. The focus towards work-family issues and work-family practices in particular, has been driven by a number of major demographic changes which include the increased participation rates of working women and mothers (Milliken *et al.*, 1998).

Jeavons and Sevastos (2002) found that female employees think that compared to male managers, female managers must continually prove themselves in order to be taken seriously and get promoted. Whereas male managers think that male and female managers are treated equally and in the same fashion as those of male managers. They supported that the existence of a strong glass ceiling effect prevents women to progress in the organizations. This existence of a strong glass ceiling effect prevents women to progress in the organizations.

Chenevert and Tremblay (2002) also stated that even if female managers have a high level of education and the desire to progress in their careers, it remains the case that few achieve the same status or salary as their male counterparts and that one of the reasons for this is the so-called 'glass ceiling'.

Lyness and Thompson (2000) were curious about whether women and men executives followed similar routes in climbing the corporate ladder. This study compares the careers of matched samples of 69 female executives and 69 male executives by examining perceived barriers and facilitators of advancement, self-reported developmental experiences, and career histories. Consistent with tokenism theory, women reported greater barriers, such as lack of culture fit and being excluded from informal networks, and greater importance of having a good track record and developing relationships to facilitate advancement than did men.

Baxter and Wright (2000) stated that the glass ceiling hypothesis states that not only is it more difficult for women than for men to be promoted up levels of authority hierarchies within workplaces but also that the obstacles women face relative to men become greater as they move up the hierarchy. Gender based discrimination in promotions is not simply present across levels of hierarchy but is more intense at higher levels. Empirically, this implies that the relative rates of women being promoted to higher levels compared to men should decline with the level of the hierarchy.

Phillips and Imhoff (1997) confirmed the glass ceiling hypothesis and indicated that women in their early lives experienced a number of barriers during their decision of their career path. His

research on women's careers is predicated on the assumption that bias and stereotyping in organizations disadvantage women. He suggested that wage differences exist more for technical rather than managerial occupations.

Duxbury and Higgins (1991) have found that family work conflict is a source of stress that can affect an individual's work productivity, emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as parenting performance. Even though more women are working full time and there is a sharp increase in dual earning couples today, society still holds traditional gender specific perceptions of work and family responsibilities.

Foot and Venne (1990) discovered a positive relationship between barriers to career advancement and job stress. When employees perceived a lack of career opportunities, they are likely to feel uncertain about their future in the organization, which in turn, are likely to induce stress. Alienation at the work place can also lead to stress. Also when employees are required to fulfil conflicting role requirements, they are likely to experience job stress. This is because role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to satisfy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research paper focuses on the theoretical framework behind gender diversity and its constructs which has contributed to the functioning of the organizations worldwide. Following recommendations can enhance the efficacy of gender diversity and its related constructs:

1. Ensure opportunities for assignments to the most challenging projects and job tasks which

are equally available to all qualified persons.

2. Change work schedules to be more flexible and to recognize differential needs of career oriented women, thereby minimizing individual conflict between work and family roles.
3. Assign jobs and committees to ensure cultural diversity of employees involved in developing marketing strategy.
4. Identify elements in the organization culture and management systems which may contribute to unwanted turnover or lower productivity by members of underrepresented women groups, and then create action plans to address these elements.
5. Create a supportive mentoring program to develop leadership capability in women and encourage women to access networking and development opportunities.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, respecting individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. The present research paper suggests the importance of the role of gender diversity in Indian organizations. Various researchers have suggested that gender diversity plays an important role in enhancing work productivity and creativity at organizational level. The author suggests ensuring equal job opportunities and benefits to women employees so that they are ultimately able to contribute more in their organization. Moreover, the Indian organizations need to respect the cultural diversity and also mentor the women employees so that they can contribute themselves in playing leadership roles which could take Indian organizations to a great level.

REFERENCES

1. Baxter J and Wright E O (2000), "The Glass Ceiling Hypothesis: A Comparative Study of the United States, Sweden and Australia", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 14, pp. 275-294.
2. Burke and Moffett (1988), "Outcomes of work family conflict among married male and female professionals", *Journal of management*, Vol. 14, pp. 475-492.
3. Chenevert D and Tremblay M (2002), "Managerial career success in Canadian organizations: Is gender a determinant?", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 13, No. 6, pp. 920-941.
4. Duxbury L E and Higgins C A (1991), "Gender Differences in Work-Family Conflict", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 76, pp. 60-74.
5. Elsass P M and Laura M G (1997), "Demographic Diversity in Decision-Making Groups: The Experiences of Women and People of Colour", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 22, pp. 946-973.
6. Fisher K and Layte R (2003), "Measuring work-life balance and degrees of sociability: A focus on the value of time use data in the assessment of quality of life", *European Panel Analysis Group Working Paper*, Vol. 32, pp. 2003-2032.
7. Foot D K and Venne R (1990), "Population, Pyramids and Promotional Prospects", *Canadian Public Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 387-398.
8. Hymowitz C and Schellhardt T D (1986), "The glass-ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks

- them from top jobs”, *The Wall Street Journal*, D1, D4.
9. Jacobs J A (1992), “Women’s entry into management: Trends in earnings, authority, and values among salaried managers”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37, 282–301.
 10. Jamal M (1999), “Job stress, Type-A behaviour, and wellbeing: A cross-cultural examination”, *International Journal of Stress Management*, Vol. 6, pp. 57–67.
 11. Jeavons S and Sevastos P (2002), “Glass Ceiling Effect or Sticky Floors? A Matched Cohort Study of Career Progression”.
 12. Katharine E, Griffin R and Schorr-Hirsh M (1995), *Workplace Diversity: A manager’s guide to solving problems and turning diversity into a competitive advantage*, Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation.
 13. Lee C and Farh J L (2004), “Joint Effects of Group Efficacy and Gender Diversity on Group Cohesion and Performance”, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 136-154.
 14. Lincoln AE (2008), “Gender, Productivity and the Marital Wage Premium”, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 806–814.
 15. Lyness K S and Heilman M E (2006), “When fit is fundamental: Performance evaluations and promotions of upper level female and male managers”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 91, No. 4, pp. 777-785.
 16. Lyness K and Thompson D (2000), “Climbing the corporate ladder: Do female male executives follow the same route?”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 85, No. 1, pp. 86-101.
 17. Mesmer-Magnus J R and Viswesvaran C (2005), “Convergence between measures of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict: A meta-analytic examination”, *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 67, pp. 215–232.
 18. Milliken F J, Martins L and Morgan H (1998), “Determinants of an organization’s responsiveness to work-family issues: An integration of competing theories”, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 41, pp. 580-592.
 19. Offermann L R and Armitage M (1993), “Stress and the woman manager: Sources, health outcomes, and interventions”, In E A Fagenson (Ed.), *Women and work (5): Women in management: Trends, issues, and challenges in managerial diversity*, pp. 131-161, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
 20. Pfeffer J and Salancik G R (1978), *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*, New York, NY, Harper and Row.
 21. Phillips S D and Imhoff A R (1997), “Women and career development: A decade of research”, *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 48, pp. 31-59.
 22. Purvanova R K and Muros J P (2010), “Gender differences in burnout: A meta-analysis”, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 77, No. 2, pp. 168-185.



International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy

Hyderabad, INDIA. Ph: +91-09441351700, 09059645577

E-mail: editorijmrbs@gmail.com or editor@ijmrbs.com

Website: www.ijmrbs.com

