
PERFORMANCE OF A FIRM IN THE WAKE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN KEY POSITIONS: AN OVERVIEW

N. Srividya

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, NCE Bengal, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal
vnsrividya@gmail.com

Rita Basu

Associate Professor, NCE Bengal, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal,
rita_nce@yahoo.com

DOI: 10.23862/kiit-parikalpana/2017/v13/i1/151267

Article available at: <http://ksom.ac.in/faculty-and-research/research/parikalpana-the-research-journal/>

ABSTRACT

It is well known that the number of women in top positions in corporate world in India is very less or even negligible except one or two cases here and there. We can find many women employees in lower levels and middle levels of the management but as we go up the corporate ladder their number decreases exponentially. Whatever ways the government trying to encourage them to boost their numbers, their number always remained very low at the board levels. This paper studies the reasons and remedies for this. It suggests few recommendations also to follow to increase their number in the top positions.

This paper is based on a research conducted on the women employees in private sector companies about their aspirations and the preferences between the family and career etc. The responses are analysed and presented in the form this paper.

Key Words: *Women at Work, Work-family Conflict, female CEOs, board diversity, gender diversity.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender plays a major important role in the work place of corporate sector in several ways. Most of the work force is men in all levels and howmuch ever the government tries to boost the number of women employee giving them various reservations, facilities etc, their number is

always low especially in top management. Even the corporate governance, human resource management and all other management fields suggest work force diversity to enhance the quality of decisions take in corporate world. Recently Indian government made it legally required having a female board member

in their companies. Such was the importance of female role in the boards.

Though the number of women employees is increasing over years, it is not enough to meet the requirements of corporate world. The HRM itself is very much known for its feminized image and the job role requires mostly females. It is of significance to note that despite HRM being a feminized profession and having a compelling feminized image, till late women did not have the same status, position, authority, or pay as their male counterparts and were relegated to carrying out stereotypical and non strategic functions in this domain (Brandl et al., 2007a; Brandl et al., 2008b; Brandl et al., 2008c). Legge (1987) argues that women in HR confront a paradox, when the function is marginal to strategic management, “women can reach the top” yet when the function is seen as a compelling contributor to the strategic decision-making then women, if not elbowed out are politely pushed aside” (pp.34). Empirical research shows that female HR managers are underrepresented in higher level positions (Canniffe, 1985; Legge 1987; Gooch 1994; Long 1984; Mackay 1986; Monks, 1993; Roos and Manley 1996). These have all lead women to remain clustered in lower level positions in this domain and they were thus unable to occupy top management strategic positions (Legge 1897; Pichler et al, 2008; Simpson and Lenoir 2003). Equal Opportunities legislation has had a limited impact in advancing women in work

generally and little has changed and employers have embraced the legislation and not the spirit of the law (Ross and Schneider, 1992; Kandola and Fullerton, 1994) and women in HRM have been no exception to this norm. Astrid et al (2010) in their latest study on the rise of women in HRM, emphasise that there is a need for universal standards of E.O. and organisations will need to endorse to these principles to legitimate themselves to the public. The study also suggests that the inherent limitations of the E.O. legislation have evidenced the rise of diversity management as the new model for equal opportunities according to which the advancement of women into top management is not only necessary for realizing equal opportunity principles but also to enhance organisational performance (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998), this has thus led organisations to re-interpret the presence of women to top management no longer as an act of compliance to legislation but also as an activity that enhances competitive advantage and is beneficial to organisations. This study proposes with empirical findings that contemporary management of diversity approaches, accompanied by the literatures on sexual stereotypes, enabling social practices such as guaranteed maternity leave and public child-care facilities, gender egalitarianism i.e. better equality between males and females in national contexts, and increasing human capital are factors responsible for the rise of women in this domain in recent times

(Brandl et al., 2007a; Brandl et al., 2008b; Brandl et al., 2008c; and Reichel et al., 2010). (Wajchman, 1998). "It has frequently been noted that personnel management is a traditional stronghold of female employment" (Marshall, 1984 pp, 115). At the very beginning when HRM was viewed as a "typical" female function, with the stereotypes used in that system, it tended to be concerned with taking care of others (Canniffe 1985; Gooch & Ledwith, 1996) and bridging capital and labour (Gooch, 1994) and has been defined as ideal job for women. Scholars justify these developments as the representation of women within HRM depends on the appeal of the occupation to men (e.g., Legge 1987; Roos/Manley 1996). A core argument for why women get ousted is that employers tend to favor men for HRM when the occupation's status is high (Reskin&Roos, 1990). For example, when the upcoming of scientific testing instruments modified the image of HRM from welfare to a professional function, the share of male HR specialists increased (Trudinger, 2004). It is important to note that a close relationship between status decrease and rise of women's representation or vice versa could be observed in the early stages of HRM until the end of the 1980 s (Roos/Manley 1996), Legge (1987, pp.50) argues that "women's position in personnel management will inversely reflect the power of the function". The 1990 s have witnessed a dramatic & complete reversal of this trend with fresh empirical findings

from several European countries which indicates that the increased entry of women is not accompanied by status deprivation of the HRM profession and that the increased feminization in this domain is accompanied by high status of the profession and this essentially forms the essence of this study (Reichel et al., 2010). Gender diversity has become the top most priority to the companies as only 8.7 percent of top managers are women in 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Nearly half of the work force is women and the percentage of women employees in top positions has increased from 5.8 percent in 2000.

Raising Aspirations

To increase the numbers of women employees in organisations first we need to inspire them to achieve the high levels. They need to raise their aspirations to become a part of top management. It is well known that in academics and studies, girls outstand well the boys in the results, but when it comes to the workplace, we find most of the employees are gents. To some extent we can find women who are unmarried in large numbers. But the number of married women decreases. Further, women who are mothers are really in low number in the workplace, forget about the top positions in corporate. In the junior levels the percentage of women employees is 69. Department heads and chief executives are 40 and 24 percent respectively.

1.1 Strategies to improve their numbers

In fact to increase their numbers in

managerial positions, the effort should start early in their life right from their education. They need to inculcate the leadership abilities and the managerial qualities right from their childhood. They need to develop the skills and the talent from the younger age (Lord Hesteltine, 2011). They need to have the confidence and should be aware of the opportunities in their field. We should recognise the talent from the younger age.

The barriers that exist in previous years to reach high do not exist now. But some other barriers are emerging to obstruct the growth of the women employees.

To maintain the number in the top positions we need to feed the pipe line from the bottom to the top. For this we should have sufficient women talent to promote them to each level. However there is a huge gap between the aspirational levels of male counterparts of women. Most of the men aspire to become the board members or directors etc. where as the aspirations of women are quite low compared to them. Most of the women they concentrate on their family, their child's education, studies etc. Many women even they are well qualified or well suited, they do not apply for promotions fearing the greater responsibilities, higher or random schedules of timings in the office etc. Women lack long term ambitions, goals or career aspirations.

Women need to develop and expand their network for better job opportunities. They need to develop the necessary skills

and talent to bridge the gap between their job and their dream career. Developing their skills and the talent boosts their confidence to reach the higher levels and to realise their actual potential.

Allowing flexible timings and work from home can help the women to balance their work and family life. In fact it can be further extended to males also to motivate themselves. This will help the mothers to take care of their babies and the work as well. Many fathers are also now a days opting for the work from home due to their parental obligations of the child birth. 72 percent of women and 60 percent of men are in support for the parental leave. 22 percent of women cite the work life balance as an obstruction to climb the corporate ladder. The flexible timings can bring more enthusiasm and good moral in the work environment which itself is a great motivator for high performance.

But for going for flexible timings, the company has to monitor the performance of the employees very tightly so that the performance should not get affected because the employee is not at the workplace. Child care is the main reason that is cited by many women employees for not growing in their career. The flexible timings can address that issue. The flexible workers should not be treated inferior as they are not quite visible working at the office. Because of this child care factor only they prefer to work as part time employee with flexible timings. Giving them right job after their return after the child birth and employing a mentor for them helps the situation.

Research Methodology

Research Problem

The number of women employees in the organisations that too in the top level management is alarming. The government is taking action to raise the number through various ways. Recently it has passed a resolution that the board should consist of women atleast in single number. Due to this reason, most of the companies adopted their own wives as their board members bypassing the very purpose of the resolution.

It is well known that in the studies and academically also we always find girl students excel academically be it 10th class, graduation or any competition exams. But when it comes to the corporate field their number is critically low, almost negligible in the top management.

This paper studies all these factors and tries to find out some suggestions and ways to improve their number in the management.

Objectives of the Study

In this paper, we study the aspirational level of women employees in their careers, their beliefs, values etc. This paper also suggests various ways to improve the presence of women employees in the corporate world to develop the work force diversity. However, precisely the objectives of this research can as follows:

1. To study whether there is any relationship between the age of the women executives and their desire to aspire the top position in their respective companies.

2. To study the relationship of their level in the management and their choice between their career and family when their children's studies are at stake.
3. To understand whether the family type of women executives really play a role in choosing the career and family.

Scope of the Study

This study concentrates on the women preferences in their career and their family. This study tries to understand the reasons for low number of women executives in all the levels of the management especially in top level.

Collection of Data

This study collects the data both from primary and secondary resources. The primary source is a questionnaire developed and the data is collected by circulating it. Secondary sources are various journal, research papers, magazines and newspapers etc.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to only women executives in lower and middle level management. The access to women executives in top level management is highly restricted. The results of this study cannot be generalised over national level and for everybody. There may be little errors or discrepancies while collecting the data through questionnaire.

Sampling

Sample Size: 104; Sampling technique: Random Sampling

Hypotheses

1. Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the age and the aspiration to reach the top in the women employees in the organisations.
2. Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the level in the organisation and their preference between their career and family.
3. Ho3: There is no significant relationship between their family type and their preferences between their career and family.

Data Tools used for Analysis

Comparison of means, Oneway Anova and t-Test are used to test the hypotheses.

Data Analysis

To verify the null hypothesis, age wise comparison of mean values of aspiration to reach top position was calculated and shown in Table IA. Oneway Anova was conducted to verify the significant variation of aspiration due to variation of age.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the age and the aspiration to reach the top in the women employees in the organisations.

Table I-A : Age wise Comparison of Means value of aspiration to top position

Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
20 - 29	2.600	40	1.0328
30 - 39	2.250	32	1.1072
40 - 49	1.750	32	0.4399
Total	2.231	104	0.9777

Interpretation:

It is showing that the Mean for the ages 20 to 29 is maximum. Means there are many people in that age group who aspire to reach top position in their organisations.

Table I-B : One-way Anova to identify significant variation of aspiration Top_Position due to variation of age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.862	2	6.431	7.588	0.001
Within Groups	85.600	101	0.848		
Total	98.462	103			

One-way Anova is done because age is fallen between three groups.

Interpretation:

The P value is very low (< 0.05) means there is a significant relationship between the age and their aspirations to reach top position.

3.2 To verify the null hypothesis, level wise comparison of mean values of preference between career and family was calculated and shown in Table IA. Oneway Anova was conducted to verify the significant variation of aspiration due to variation of age.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level in the organisation and their preference between their career and family.

Table II-A : Level wise comparison of means for the preference between family and career

Occupation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Middle Management	3.000	32	0.7184
Lower Management	3.000	72	0.9494
Total	3.000	104	0.8813

Interpretation:

It is shown that the Mean value for both middle and lower management is same. There is nobody in the top level management in the data.

This means that the preference between the career and the family that is (tendency of leaving job due to their children studies) is equal for both the groups.

Table II-B : ONEWAY Anova to find out occupation wise differences in their preference to family and career

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.000	1	0.000	0.000	1.000
Within Groups	80.000	102	0.784		
Total	80.000	103			

Interpretation:

The P value is very low (< 0.05), which means that there is a significant relationship between the occupation (i.e., the level in the management) and the preference to leave their jobs for their children studies.

Table II-C : t-Test to find out Occupation wise variations in their preference between family and career

	Occupation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
JobVs Children_Studies	Middle Management	32	3.000	0.7184	0.1270
	Lower Management	72	3.000	0.9494	0.1119

Interpretation:

It is shown that the Mean value for both middle and lower management is same. This means that the preference between the career and the family that is (tendency of leaving job due to their children studies) is equal for both the groups.

Table II-D : Independent Samples Test to find out occupational wise variations in their preference to family and career

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
JobVs Children_ Studies	Equal variances assumed	1.569	0.213	0.000	102	1.000	0.0000	0.1882	-0.3732	0.3732
	Equal variances not assumed			0.000	77.433	1.000	0.0000	0.1693	-0.3370	0.3370

Interpretation:

The P value is very low (< 0.05), which means that there is significant relationship between the occupation (i.e., the level in the management) and the preference to leave their jobs for their children studies.

To verify the null hypothesis, family type wise comparison of mean values of preference between career and family was calculated and shown in Table IIIA. t-Test was conducted to verify the significant variation of aspiration due to variation of age in Table III-B.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between their family type and their preferences between their career and family.

Table III-A : Family wise Comparison of Means of their preference to family and career

Family_Type	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Nuclear	2.857	56	0.9987
Joint	3.167	48	0.6945
Total	3.000	104	0.8813

Interpretation:

The mean for the Joint families is more compared to that of nuclear families. This shows that the preference to leave job due to children's studies is more in joint families compared to nuclear families.

Table III-B : t-Test to find out Family Type wise variations in their preference to career and family

	Family_Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
JobVs Children_ Studies	Nuclear	56	2.857	0.9987	0.1335
	Joint	48	3.167	0.6945	0.1002

Interpretation:

The mean for the Joint families is more compared to that of nuclear families. This shows that the preference to leave job due to childrens' studies is more in joint families compared to nuclear families.

Table III-C : Independent Samples Test to Family Type wise variations in their preference to career and family

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
JobVs Children_ Studies	Equal variances assumed	4.394	0.039	-1.805	102	0.074	-0.3095	0.1715	-0.6497	0.0306
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.854	98.044	0.067	-0.3095	0.1669	-0.6407	0.0217

Interpretation:

As there are only two categories in family type we do t-Test. The P-value (0.039 < 0.05) is very low. Hence we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between the family type and their choice between their career and family.

Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

Findings

From the above analysis it can be easily found that whatever may be the family type and their occupation i.e., their level in the management women prefer family to their job when it comes to their children studies. When it is joint family the tendency is much more and for the nuclear families the tendency is little lower. In addition to it, women employees in their younger age they aspire more to reach top position etc. But when the age grows, that is when their responsibilities grows that aspiration level comes down. That is the main reason for the low number of women employees in the higher levels of the management.

Suggestions

The following suggestions can be made after the analysis to rectify the situation.

- Raising aspirations of the women employees is a right tactic to increase their number in the organisations.
- The management and leadership development techniques should start early so that they develop themselves very early.
- The number of women employees should be maintained at all levels sufficiently so that the pyramid is full all the time.
- The women should be given more career oriented goals so that they stay motivated at all levels.

- If there are any barriers in case of women in promoting them or encouraging them, we should remove them.
- Offering flexible timings of work will definitely increase their number at work.

Recommendations For employers

- Always try to maintain the sufficient number of women employees in your team at all levels.
- Encourage both women and men to balance their work life balance by adopting healthy environment.
- Encourage flexible working hours for all.
- Measure their performance by results not by their mere presence at desk.
- Encourage working flexible, remotely and part time without compromising on the results.
- Create supportive networks for female managers and encourage mentoring opportunities.
- Prepare potential female managers by providing them necessary training and development from the early stage.
- Never give a chance to perceive that women are not given fair chance at par with men.
- Connect with academic institutions to improve aspirations of young girl

students and hire them if they have sufficient talent.

- Design the performance appraisal so that the parental leaves and work family balance is neutralised for women employees.
- Encourage smooth transmission through before, during and after parental leaves.
- Encourage senior talent to nurture young talent.
- Ensure internal skills to create competitive advantage
- Ensure that there is no bias in performance appraisal and training programs.
- Encourage creche's or baby sit outs for female employees in the organisation.
- Provide mobility support for employees who get transfers.

For individual female managers

- Frame your goals what you want to achieve in your career.
- Name them as short term, medium and long term oriented.
- Assess your current situation and compare it with the vision of success.
- Monitor your progress up to date.
- List out the barriers you face in achieving your goal.

- Name your efforts to reach your goals
- If you have to improve your qualifications, skills or talent, list out various avenues to do so.
- Network with your friends and supporters those are both internal and external to your organisation.
- Explore if there is any flexible working options
- Negotiate your salary in a better way
- Engage moderately in social media
- Try to identify your mentor or supporter if any in the organisation to achieve your goals.
- Closely monitor your progress towards your goal and long term needs and if not try to take necessary actions to rectify the problem.
- Help others achieve their goals and balance their work and family life. In turn they would definitely help you.

For Government

- Take audits regularly to find out whether they maintain sufficient gender diversity.
- Focus on the whole talent pipeline not only the board rooms. Unless the talent line is full, board rooms cannot be full.
- Maintain greater transparency and corruption free environment.
- Appreciate and reward the companies

who maintain sufficient gender diversity at all levels.

- Encourage women by providing more options like work from home, flexibility, more number of days for maternity leave, flexibility in working conditions and locations etc.
- Integrate academic and skill system so that young talent gets nice jobs.
- Encourage female networking and mentoring programs
- Design skill building programs for women and support services and facilities to balance their work and family life.

Conclusion

From the above study we can easily conclude that to improve the number of women employees is required commitment from all the sides like government, top management of the companies and from the women themselves.

The gender diversity is most sought after in the corporate world now-a-days to improve their performance as well.

This paper suggested various ways and techniques that can be implemented in their respective levels. By adopting those, the number of women employees in the top levels can be improved gradually.

References

Bell, L. A. (2005), Women-Led Firms and

the Gender Gap in Top Executive Jobs, IZA discussion paper 1689, IZA, Bonn.

Catalyst (2004), The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, www.catalystwomen.org

Du Rietz, A and M. Henrekson (2000), Testing the Female Underperformance Hypothesis, *Small Business Economics*, vol 14(1), 1-10.

Hambrick, D.C., T.S. Cho and M.J. Chen (1996), The influence of top management team heterogeneity on firms' competitive moves, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 41, 659-684.

Shrader, C.B., V.B. Blackburn and P. Iles (1997), Women in Management and firm financial performance: an explorative study, *Journal of Managerial Issues*, fall 1997, vol. 9 (3), 355-372.

Smirlock, M., Gilligan T.W. & W. Marshall (1984), Tobins q and the structure performance relationship, *American Economic Review*, 74, 1051-60.

Vinnicombe, S. and V. Singh (2003), Locks and Keys to the Board-room: A Comparison of UK Male and Female Directors, *Women in Management Review*.

Bilimoria D. 2006. The Relationship between Women Corporate Directors and Women Corporate Officers. *Journal of Managerial Issues* **18** (1): 47-61.

Book EW. 2000. *Why the Best Man for*

- the Job Is a Woman: The Unique Qualities of Leadership*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Bowers C, Pharmed JA, Salas E. 2000. When Member Homogeneity Is Needed in Work Teams: A Meta-Analysis. *Small Group Research* **31** (3): 305-327.
- Bureau of Labor and Statistics. 2007. *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*. Butterfield DA, Grinnell JP.
1999. "Re-Viewing" Gender, Leadership, and Managerial Behavior: Do Three Decades of Research Tell Us Anything? In *Handbook of Gender & Work*, Powell GN (ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Carpenter MA, Geletkanycz MA, Sanders WG. 2004. Upper Echelons Research Revisited: Antecedents, Elements, and Consequences of Top Management Team Composition. *Journal of Management* **30** (6): 749-778.
- Daily CM, Certo TS, Dalton DR. 1999. A Decade of Corporate Women: Some Progress in the Boardroom, None in the Executive Suite. *Strategic Management Journal* **20** (1):93-99.
- Daily CM, Dalton DR. 2003. Women in the Boardroom: A Business Imperative. *Journal of Business Strategy* **24** (5): 8-9.
- Eagly, AH, Johannesen-Schmidt MC, van Engen ML. 2003. Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. *Psychological Bulletin* **129** (4): 569-591.
- Eagly AH, Johnson BT. 1990. Gender and Leadership style: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin* **108** (2): 233-256.
- Helfat CE, Harris D, Wolfson PJ. 2006. Women and Men in the Top Executive Ranks of U.S. Corporations. *Academy of Management Perspectives* **20** (4): 42-64.
- Helgesen S. 1990. *The Female Advantage: Women's Way of Leadership*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Hillman AJ, Dalziel T. 2003. Boards of Directors and Firm Performance: Integrating Agency and Resource Dependence Perspectives. *Academy of Management Review* **28** (3): 383-396.
- Hillman AJ, Shropshire C, Cannella Jr AA. 2007. Organizational Predictors of Women on Corporate Boards. *Strategic Management Journal* **50** (4): 941-952.
- Krishnan HA, Park D. 2005. A Few Good Women – On Top Management Teams. *Journal of Business Research* **58** (12): 1712-1720.
- Noe RA. 1988. Women and Mentoring: A Review and Research Agenda. *Academy of Management Review* **13** (1): 65-78.
- Oakley JG. 2000. Gender-Base Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding the Scarcity of Female CEO's. *Journal of Business Ethics* **27** (4): 321-334.

- Rosener JB. 1995. *America's Competitive Secret: Utilizing Women as a Management Strategy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Shrader CB, Blackburn VB, Iles P. 1997. Women in Management and Firm Financial Performance: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Managerial Issues* **9** (3): 355-372.
- Terjesen S, Sealy R, Singh V. 2009. Women Directors on Corporate Boards: A Review and Research Agenda. *Corporate Governance: An International Review* **17** (3): 320-337.
- Van Knippenberg D, De Dreu CKW, Homan AC. 2004. Work Group Diversity and Group Performance: An Integrative Model and Research Agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology* **89** (6): 1008-1022.
- Zhang X, Bartol KM. 2010. Linking Empowering Leadership and Employee Creativity: The Influence of Psychological Empowerment, Intrinsic Motivation, and Creative Process Management. *Academy of Management Journal* **53** (1): 107-128.

