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Study on Women representation in Leadership and Decision making roles in India.

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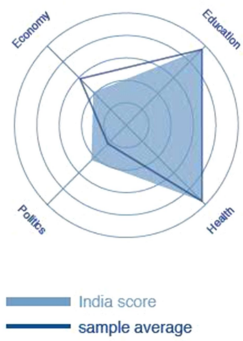
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ABSTRACT

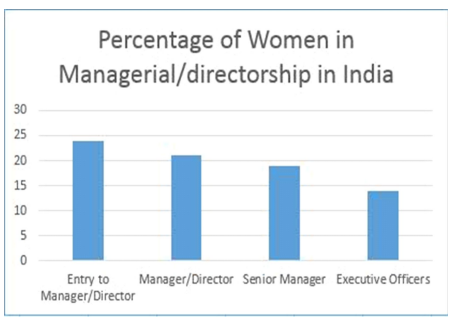
This paper intends to analyze the need for the increase of women representation in leadership and decision making roles. While the number of women entering the labor work force is increasing, their positions are mostly confined to low to mid-level technical/ managerial roles. As we appreciate the increase in the number of working women, we should also study and analyze the reasons for the widening gender gap at the senior or critical positions. In 2015-2016, women comprised 16.2% of all urban workers, a small increase from 13.4% in 1972-73 (1). According to a study conducted by OXFAM India (June 2013), of the 1,159 directorships in 100 companies listed on BSE, women held only 76 of those positions as of December 2012. They represent just 6.6 per cent of the total at the board level. This is a marginal increase from 59 women holding directorships in 2011 (2). World Economic forum global gender gap report of 2016 ranks India at 87 out of 144 countries in the survey. While of the four chosen parameters, we have made a great progress in reducing the gender gap in education and health care we remain far below than the average in economy and politics (3). Automation and AI the buzzword of the technical world is going to automate the existing gender gap too, as it is going to replace less skilled and less challenging jobs of which most of the women labor work force is present (4). Hence it is not just important for women to progress to higher level rather it is essential. Many factors trigger this gender gap like socio – economic, physiological and psychological. At this hour it is more important that women representation should increase, so that those leaders who can better understand the needs of women, would work to bring polices that would help women progress. We women would more than agree that we do not seek special treatment rather an equitable one.

KEYWORDS :

The very fact of women being adequately represented in the work-force, but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been labeled "the glass ceiling", "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up in the management hierarchy"(Morrison & Von Glinow (1990; p. 200)) {The term "glass ceiling" was coined by Hymowitz and Schellhardt in a report on corporate women published in 1986 edition of Wall Street Journal).



Source – WEF Gender gap Report (2016)



Source – Catalyst.org,

Women in Leadership. Of many factors contributing for this situations we can identify some of the major contributors, which can be changed and thus help improve the scenario.

Average age of marriage and hours spent working for family – According to the 2011 census India, average age of women getting married is 22.2 while that of men is 26. This clearly shows the men have more time to concentrate on their career progression before taking the responsibilities of marriage. Adding to this the number of hours worked by a female after marriage is more than 300 minutes and a male is less than 100 minutes (3). This would leave less time for the women to plan their career progression. In this context families should respect and support the career goals of their women and women should stop believing that it is the sole responsibility of a female to do the house hold and parental work.

Economic factors – In a highly turbulent economic time, it would be difficult for a family to provide quality education to all its members and the worst hit in this case would be the females of the family. To eliminate such situations, it is to be educated that regardless of gender children are equal. Family and economic planning is important to meet the needs of everyone.

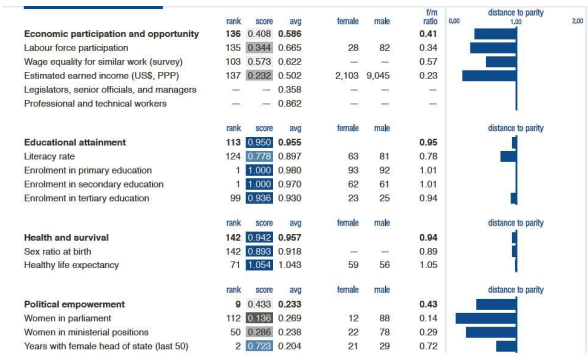
Stereotyping of Women and its impact on Networking - We have a lot of determinants to define an ideal women and in fact it is what is believed by most of the women too. A woman who hangs out after office to increase the networking might be less seen, also because of the dominance of number men around her which makes it more uncomfortable in being not able to socialize in the same way men do. Vimolwan Yukongdi and John Benson in the book, Women in Asian Management have spelled out the factors that inhibit women's growth. They also attribute women's slow growth to mainly individual and societal factors. The traditional and cultural inhibitions acquired by women from childhood, nurtured by parents and reinforced by socialization which are the key hurdles that inhibited their urge to be in the executive or leadership position. This is further supplemented by lack of self-direction, independence and self-motivation. This would change once we stop defining the way women should behave and give her a free and fair role to play as the male counterparts. Starting to impart this from parenting helps a lot in shaping the way women think. Giving them the decision making in their career, relationships and financial matters would giving them more confidence to venture into leadership roles in future.

Safety and Security – This is one of the most deterring factors and a

trick used by perpetrators, who do not want women to be in challenging positions. The best way to counter this is to concentrate on the physical wellbeing and fitness of women along with training them in self-defense. We need to leverage the technological improvements in finding ways to prohibit mental or physical harassment on women. We need more women to voice and venture on this as it is our necessity and should be the cause for new inventions to meet it.

Need for Women mentors and Role Models – A child who grows watching her mother doing all the family work with utmost love and still balancing the work life gives a wrong example. As it cannot be understood regarding the level of stress one goes through in balancing it with minimal or no family support. A study by corporate social research 2009, says the only 1-2 % of female in good positions says that they receive minimal or no support from family. This clearly shows that factors other than skill and intellect affect the progress of women in their career. Hence, we need more women mentors, who have successfully demonstrated to balance their work and personal life to mentor the budding females in their initial stages of career.

Representation of Women in STEM - According to Kelly Global Workforce Insights (KGWI) survey on Women in STEM, Women in India tend to drop out or take a break at key phases in their lives, most notably around childbearing years and later at mid-management levels. The most significant driver is the "double burden syndrome" of women struggling to balance work and family in a culture where both men and women feel the family and household duties are primarily the woman's responsibility. While women represent 46 per cent of all enrolled undergraduate students in STEM, not many continue to pursue careers. 41 per cent of women in technology companies leave after 10 years of experience, compared to 17 per cent of men. Of the 50 companies in the NIFTY index, only five had two female directors. And 53 per cent met this directive by appointing directors that were either wives or sisters of executives and not really independent members.



World Economic Forum – Global Gender Gap Report (2016).

The report above clearly shows that our efforts to include the girl child into education and health care opportunities are reaping benefits. With this positive hope, we need to bring in policies to improve the role of women in economic and political participation.

The larger lessons to learn from this study are regardless of the policies and changes we bring in laws, the mindset of society should change. While we see progress in this context, we need to accelerate this change to be prepared to the ever changing and turbulent world. A simple act of giving freedom in the choice of their attire or the choice of art they want to learn can bring a lot of difference in the mindset of the girl child. As it would make them think what is good for them and help decide, wherein we are imparting the skills required for a leader. It is not just important by necessary to bring the one half of the population to contribute to a better world. Women should also take steps towards entrepreneurship and provide work for more women. The daily chores should be automated leaving room for women to do something more qualitative. With a lot of progress to be made in reducing the gender gap, there seems to be a large avenue for women to play, considering every disadvantage as an opportunity to work on.

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