

Barriers And Challenges Faced by Women in Leadership

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Abstract

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men according to their respective needs. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures are needed to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Diversity in the workplace means having a workforce inclusive of different backgrounds and national origins. It means gender, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity and beyond. It also means that the organization fosters a sense of belonging that makes everyone feel like they are part of the team. Addressing workplace diversity is a crucial role in fostering organizational growth. On the other hand, fostering diversity within organizations and promote equal opportunities involves evaluating the role of leadership in establishing diverse workplaces. In this paper authors have tried capture the issues and challenges women face in executing leadership role.

Keywords: *Bullying, harassment, equal opportunities.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is about fairness and giving women and men what they need to succeed. Gender equity acknowledges the fact that women historically and contemporaneously have not been afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts, thus they may need some extra help to compete on the same level with men. Where gender equality treats all people equally, gender equity refers to the special concessions made to women to allow them a fair chance against their male counterparts. It is about making sure that both sexes have equitable opportunities to succeed.

Workplace diversity describes inclusive approaches to work that comprise people who slightly or completely differ from one another on various metrics of difference, including race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities, and life experience. It aims to construct a workforce wherein diverse perspectives are appreciated and foster creativity and innovation.

Gender equity and diversity in leadership are essential components for achieving organizational success and fostering societal progress. By embracing a range of perspectives, gender equity in leadership enhances decision-making processes, leading to more innovative and creative outcomes.

Likewise, gender diversity improves problem-solving abilities by integrating varied viewpoints, which can contribute to enhanced financial performance for organizations.

Workplace harassment occurs when an employee or group of employees experience, on an ongoing basis, an irrational behaviour that causes them to feel threatened, belittled, or unsafe-impaired in their health as well as security. There are various forms of maltreatment, from mobbing, bullying. Harassment could be verbal, physical, emotional, or psychological in its elements. Some examples would be offensive jokes, slurs, threats, physical assaults, and interference with work performance.

Bullying is defined as continuous, unsolicited behaviour meant to cause harm to someone and instil a sense of helplessness. Its repetition defines it over time, with manifestations in verbal, physical, which include teasing, stalking, and threats. Bullying in the workplace encompasses the same abusive behaviour in the workplace. While the bullying may prove damaging, it is typically not legally actionable unless the conduct rises to discrimination where one or more of the protected categories exist, such as race or sex.

Effective leadership forms the basis of programs that address workplace bullying and harassment. Leaders should implement clear anti-bullying policies which should respect and train unacceptable behaviours and recourse procedures, so that each employee is aware of these clearly. A good leadership should provide training on the prevention of harassment, commercial conflict resolution skills, and emotional skills contribute to allow employees to spot and handle conflict in a positive way. Channels of communication must remain open so as to encourage employees to raise their concern without the fear of retaliation. Leaders should model respectfulness and listen attentively to all employees' concerns and set an example for the organization. Further, support to those who happen to be victims of bullying or harassment should come from support systems such as counselling and employees should be encouraged to intervene safely for others when inappropriate behaviour is witnessed. This would, therefore, facilitate the creation of an environment within which workplace bullying or harassment is effectively curtailed.

Review of Literature

“Workplace Harassment among Employees: An Explorative Study by Asha P. Shetty, B. V. Nithyashree” Workplace harassment is found to be a thriving issue, with national surveys in the US and Bangladesh reporting high prevalence rates. The cross-sectional, exploratory survey utilized in the current study yielded information that most employees (63.3%) experienced occasional workplace harassment, with the highest harassment occurring in the psychological domain. Factors such as gender, age, marital status, job type, and work experience were found to influence the experience of harassment.

“The Challenges for Gender Equity and Women in Leadership in a Distributed University in Regional Australia by Janelle Thomas” explores the additional barriers to gender equity and women's career progression in a distributed regional university. Previous studies have highlighted key challenges for women in academia, such as the impact of career breaks and self-perception. The interplay of gender and location has been identified as an important factor, with geographical isolation and the need for extensive travel creating additional barriers. This study enhances to this body of research by providing rich insights into the personal experiences of women in a distributed university setting. The auto-ISBN code 978-93-83302-72-7

ethnographic methodology highlights the need for universities to address these intersectional issues through policy to support women's advancement.

The paper “Diversity and Inclusion in Leadership: Understanding the Benefits and Challenges by Saif Khameis Saif Alshamsi” discusses the role of diversity and inclusion in leadership, highlighting the advantages and obstacles of leading a diverse team. It addresses the challenges managers of multicultural team’s face, such as prejudice, resistance to change, and communication problems. The paper suggests that a multifaceted strategy is required to overcome obstacles and integrate diversity objectives into business strategies. It emphasizes the significance of diversity and inclusion in leadership for organizations aspiring to thrive in today's globalized society.

The paper “Cultural Diversity in Workplace and the Role of Management by Santana N. Morris” examines the significance of management in addressing cultural diversity in the workplace. It finds that cultural diversity can have both positive and negative impacts on a firm's performance, depending on how it is managed. Effective management strategies, such as promoting tolerance, acceptance and respect for diverse cultures, are crucial to leveraging the benefits of diversity and creating an inclusive work environment. The study highlights the need for qualitative studies on specific management practices and strategies for effectively managing cultural diversity in the workplace.

“GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF USA AND AFRICAN PRACTICES by Adekunle Oyeyemi Adeniyi” presents a comparative analysis of gender equality practices in the workplace, focusing on the United States (USA) and various African countries. It investigates the various approaches, challenges, and advancements in promoting gender equality within organizational settings, highlighting legislative measures, advocacy efforts, and cultural shifts in the USA, as well as diverse African practices shaped by regional variations in cultures, economies, and regulatory frameworks. The review underscores shared challenges faced by both the USA and African nations, including gender-based discrimination, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and the impact of intersectionality on women's experiences in the workplace. Through this comparison, the review seeks to draw attention to successful strategies, lessons learned, and areas for improvement in advancing gender equality globally.

Research Methodology: This study is descriptive in nature. The research is based on secondary sources of information. Published journals, research papers, books, websites, and articles were used to compile the data.

Objectives Of the Study

Highlighting the barriers and challenges faced by women in leadership.

Effective leadership: An effective leader is one that others rely on. Effective leaders are trustworthy, understanding, and communicative. When leadership performs well and correctly, the leader is the person that individuals feel comfortable coming to when they have problems that need resolving or want to talk through a specific situation. Diversity in leadership improves an organization's capacity to recognize and react to emerging trends, thereby granting them a competitive advantage. Female

leaders are pivotal in influencing organizational achievements and fostering societal transformation. They offer distinct viewpoints and compassionate leadership approaches that promote inclusivity and creativity. Notable figures such as Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo, and Falguni Nayar, the founder of Nykaa, illustrate the capacity of women to overcome obstacles in sectors traditionally dominated by men. Their successes not only motivate upcoming generations of female leaders but also underscore the significance of gender diversity in decision-making frameworks.

Significant challenges encountered by women in leadership roles

Gender Bias and Stereotyping: Women leaders frequently confront enduring gender biases and stereotypes, which may lead to perceptions of them as overly emotional or insufficiently assertive. This "double bind" complicates their ability to navigate workplace dynamics, particularly in male-dominated sectors.

Unequal Pay: Despite advancements, women in leadership positions continue to experience a considerable pay disparity compared to their male peers, even when occupying similar roles. Women are often directed towards lower-paying leadership positions, such as those in human resources and marketing, which diminishes their chances of accessing higher-paying executive roles.

Limited Career Advancement Opportunities: Women are often overlooked for promotions and encounter greater challenges in progressing beyond middle management. They are less frequently considered for C-suite positions or other senior leadership roles, which restricts their professional development.

Work-Life Balance: Women in leadership positions often struggle to reconcile demanding professional obligations with caregiving responsibilities. This pressure can lead to burnout and impede their ability to thrive in both personal and professional spheres.

Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment: Women in leadership roles continue to face instances of sexual or gender-based harassment in the workplace, which can result in increased stress, job dissatisfaction, or even necessitate career changes, thereby obstructing their professional growth.

The various structural and cultural obstacles that hinder the advancement of women in leadership roles within the workplace are:

Structural barriers

Inaccessibility of Key Experiences: Women frequently miss critical high-visibility projects that are essential for career advancement. Organizations should create specific opportunities for women, such as leadership positions in product revamps or new initiatives.

The ‘Trailing Spouse’ Phenomenon: Family responsibilities often impede women from accepting international assignments. Companies should explore alternatives such as virtual global leadership roles or shorter-term assignments.

Absence of Role Models: The presence of positive female role models enhances commitment and job satisfaction. Companies should recognize female talent and establish mentorship programs for junior employees.

Cultural barriers

'Always Available' Culture: The expectation for constant geographic mobility and round-the-clock availability, combined with the disproportionate domestic responsibilities shouldered by women, presents a significant obstacle. Organizations ought to reconsider these workplace expectations.

Micro-Aggressions and Everyday Sexism: Routine behaviors, such as undervaluing women's contributions, can discourage them from pursuing career advancement. It is crucial to address these behaviors through education and accountability measures.

Male Competence Assumptions: Men are often unconsciously viewed as more capable in leadership positions. Increasing awareness and implementing unbiased promotion processes are vital steps.

Conclusion

Gender equity and diversity in leadership are crucial for organizational success and societal progress. By incorporating variety of perspectives, gender-balanced leadership enhances decision-making processes, leading to more innovative and creative outcomes. Furthermore, diversity in leadership improves problem-solving abilities by bringing together different viewpoints, which can lead to improved financial performance for organizations. Nevertheless, women in leadership roles continue to face significant challenges, including gender bias, unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, work-life balance issues, and instances of sexual and gender-based harassment. These structural and cultural barriers must be addressed to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace environment. Leaders should establish clear anti-bullying policies, offer training on conflict resolution and create open communication channels that encourage employees to voice their concerns without fear of retaliation.

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on 19 and 20 December 2024**

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