

Women in Management and Policy Making: A Youth's Perspective

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Abstract—*The proportion of women in senior positions in the Indian workforce fell from 19 per cent in 2013 to 14 per cent in 2014 [14]. In a patriarchal society such as India, working women have faced many challenges to reach the higher steps of the corporate ladder. On one hand, India features as one of the lowest ranking nations in terms of overall women participation in an organization whereas, on the other hand, India ranks high in dropout cases as well. But, times are changing. Be it Chanda Kochhar or Kiran Mazumdar Shaw or Shobhana Bhartia, women are becoming the faces of organizations. The latest Companies Act 2013 has also made it compulsory for all public and private registered companies with a given yearly turnover to have at least one woman director. The youth of India is waking upto the possibility of having women driven organizations. The aim of this paper is to understand the awareness and perspective of the growing Indian youth towards the mandatory inclusion of women in organizations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be."- Mahatma Gandhi in a 1930 speech

In a patriarchal society such as the one that exists in India, women, for long have been victims of gender bias and discrimination, whether in their homes or at workplaces. However, the present times have seen a large number of changes in the way the population perceives women at work and in top managerial and decision making positions.

Amartya Sen, Indian author and winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, while discussing gender inequality in his book 'The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity', rightly says, "Women are not passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help brought about by society, but are active promoters and facilitators of social transformations" [27]

Working at par with their male counterparts and becoming a manager or holding a position of strategic importance should no longer remain something that only a few elite women can enjoy. Female students are putting in a lot of hard work and

efforts to graduate with honors from excellent business and engineering schools. But, somehow the majority of top positions in Indian corporations and multinational companies are still held by men [15].

It may come as a moment of surprise for few and a moment of pride for others that both Chanda Kochhar and Arundhati Bhattacharya have been given the first and second ranks respectively in a Fortune prepared list of the most powerful women in Asia Pacific [7, 18, 19]. Both the bankers occupy the top managerial positions in the largest private (Kochhar – ICICI) and public sector (Bhattacharya – SBI) banking units respectively. State-run oil marketing company Hindustan Petroleum Corporation's chairman and managing director Nishi Vasudeva has also made it to the list at 5th rank. Nation's third largest Bank, Axis's Bank's MD Shikha Sharma is also featured in the list at the 9th Spot.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A proper review of existing literature is essential and of high importance to have a proper bird's eye view of the views and studies of the academics and researchers of the present times.

A study highlights that it is not the personal reasons that hinder a woman's career growth but rather the organisational policies and processes [20]. The "Queen Bee Syndrome" has often been used to describe and define the women who have dared to break the proverbial "Glass Ceiling" and moved ahead and made a mark in their careers. These women then go further to adopt a "counter militancy approach" based on their own personal and workplace successes. [26]

It is a well-documented fact that women managers and leaders have to perform better than their male counterparts in order to prove themselves worthy. [8, 9, 16, 17, 23, 25]

According to a report by Grand Thornton Inc. [14] on a global level, approximately one fourth (24%) of the senior management roles are currently filled by women. However, the same statistics in India stands at a disappointing 19% only. Though the number of females enrolling in management based courses such as BBAs and MBAs is increasing with every passing academic year, the same increase is not reflected in

the number of women at managerial positions. The report additionally mentioned that globally 35 percent of employees are women; however, in India the proportion is significantly low at 15 percent.

There can be various possible reasons for the above mentioned anomaly. There exist no strong measures in the Indian Business environment that help Indian women strike a proper work-life balance. Women are seen to be struggling as they juggle both, their personal and professional lives.

Even though women account for nearly 40 percent of the total workforce of India Inc., their presence is less than seven percent (approximately 6.91%) when it comes to board-level positions, according to a survey by Women On Board 2013 [34].

According to the Defining Success 2013 survey [10], conducted by Accenture, approximately 68 percent women ranked a proper and satisfactory work-life balance as the most important factor in engaging female employees. *As per the survey, these are the top six reasons for leaving a job:* Poor work culture (68%), gossip (66%), Lack of acknowledgement for their work (58%), Long working hours or heavy workload (31%), Due to the feeling of being trapped in their current position (19%) and Did not like the work (27%).

The Global Women Entrepreneur Leaders Scorecard 2015[13] by Dell stresses on the surprising fact that the existence of a wide gender gap is limiting economic potential of women entrepreneurs in India. According to the report, in terms of opportunities for women to start entrepreneurial initiatives, India ranks in the bottom three among surveyed 31 countries due to lack of equal rights. India was ranked at 29th position out of a total of 31, ahead of only Pakistan (30th) and Bangladesh (31st). Additionally, the report also mentioned that only 4% of Indian Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are women, while one in 10 board members are female.

This paper aims to present the changing scenario in the India Corporate world and the growing role of women managers and women leaders in it. Additionally, the paper seeks to highlight the viewpoint and perception of the Indian youth towards this change and analyses whether the Indian youth is ready and comfortable with the idea of working under a woman.

3. WOMEN MANAGERS: SUCCESS STORIES

Case 1: Banking Industry

The ICICI bank CEO, Chanda Kochhar is a woman who has inspired many. She is often called as the woman who revolutionized the Indian Banking world. She features among three Indians selected for the year 2015's Asia Game Changer awards. These awards are given by the Asia Society with the aim of honoring "true leaders making a positive contribution to the future of Asia." The awards will be conferred upon the awardees at a special dinner and celebration at the UN in October. The organization has credited Kochhar with "no only

making history" but also restructuring and reforming the Indian Retail Banking Industry, as we see it in present times.



Fig. 1: Ms. Chanda Kochhar Profile

The organization believes that Ms Kochhar is a true inspiration to many young women and has successfully "shattered the proverbial glass ceiling" [6].

Ms. Kochhar has been a constant feature in the Fortune's list of "Most Powerful Women in Business" since the year 2005. She has also been awarded the third highest civilian award, Padma Bhushan Award, by the Government of India for the year 2010 [24].

Chanda Kochhar is a firm believer in growth by merit and leads by example. She is a mother of two, a homemaker and the CEO of the largest private sector bank in India. She dons many capes, and does so with elegance and optimism. She never expects any privileges or exceptions for just being the fairer sex and never turns her back to challenges [2].

Case 2: Biotechnology Industry

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is an Indian entrepreneur, Chairman and MD of Biocon Limited, a biotechnology company based in Bangalore, India and the current chairperson of IIM-Bangalore. An inspiration for many, she started her journey as Master Brewer in 1975 [12, 21, 22]. The penultimate career achievement for her has been receiving the Othmer Gold Medal, for outstanding contributions to the progress of science and chemistry. She is the first Indian to receive the honour [4, 11, 33]. As of 2015, she is listed as the 85th most powerful woman in the world by Forbes [31].



Fig. 2: Ms. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw: Profile

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw has just made it to the world's top 100 "effective and talented" in biotechnology as part of the US-based Scientific American magazine's "The Worldview 100": The visionaries who continue to reshape biotechnology [32].

Ms Shaw has also faced her parent's concerns with her security being a lone traveller. But that never stopped her. She has always believed the spirit wins all. A firm believer in the value of ethics at workplace, she does not vote for shortcuts to success. She has always believed she could match "one for one with men and male colleagues".

She believes that being a woman is neither a "handicap nor a disadvantage", instead, it paves way to gain confidence. She always tells women "it's all in the mind". She suggests to work on your strengths and make advantage of them rather than getting affected by criticism based on gender.

"It's a great advantage being a woman. We just need to see it differently", she says. [30]

Case 3: Media Industry

Ms. Shobhana Bhartia is the Chairperson and Editorial Director of HT Media, one of India's largest publicly listed media companies. She is also currently serving, as the Pro-Chancellor of the Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences. She was the first woman chief executive of a national newspaper and probably one of the youngest [1]

She is affiliated with the Congress Political Party and has served as a member of the Upper House, Rajya Sabha as well. Additionally, Ms. Bhartia has also served as a member of the Committees in Parliament on Energy, Women Empowerment, and Human Resource Development. She is also decorated with a Padma Shri, the third highest civilian award by the Government of India for her contribution in the field of journalism.



Fig. 3: Ms. Shobhana Bhartia : Profile

Ms. Bhartia has been the recipient of many other awards and recognitions. She was awarded the Global Leader of Tomorrow from the World Economic Forum, Davos 1996. She is also the recipient of the Outstanding Business Woman of the Year, 2001, by PHD Chamber of Commerce &

Industry; National Press India Award, 1992. and Entrepreneur of the Year, 2005, from Ernst and Young. She was also awarded as the Businesswomen of the Year, 2007 by The Economic Times. [28]

Pushing a daughter into any business was a rarity in the '80s, especially in a Marwari family. It created ripples in the community, but that never bothered Mr.KK Birla, Ms. Bhartia's father. At a time when "profit" was an uncomfortable word at the HT office, Ms. Bhartia turns the tables and introduced innovation in the business of news. [29]

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to understand and investigate the Indian youth's perception with respect to the growing role and importance of women in an organization. The study aims to identify whether today's youth is ready for the idea of working under a female yes. If yes, how comfortable would that situation make them feel.

The impact of various factors was studied using an exploratory-descriptive approach. A few interviews were done with working professionals and some educational lecturers. A pilot survey was made which was then floated amongst a small sample of 50 respondents. Out of the 50, responses from 43 were received. These responses then helped in shaping the final questionnaire.

The study is based upon the analysis of primary data collected through floatation of an Online Questionnaire The questionnaire is a prominent tool for primary data collection which consists of a set of questions used for collecting information and data from individuals. [5]

The final questionnaire was divided into three parts : Demographics, Women in Working Positions and Women in Managerial Positions. Each part consisted of a set of 5 questions. The Questionnaire made use of the Likert Scale, which is a very common format used for surveys in which the respondents rank the quality of their responses either from high to low or from low to high [3]. A 5-point Likert scale was chosen for better understanding of the responses of individuals by attaching the labels to each point in the scale and the mid-point of the scale was set as the neutral response point. The Likert Scale used was as follows:

(1- Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree)

The questionnaire was then distributed via Online Google Form to a total of 250+ respondents. The final responses were recorded from a total of 214 respondents.

5. DATA REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

In the surveyed 214 respondents, about 56.07% of respondents were male (120 in number) and 43.92% were female (94 in number). Age Division is as follows:

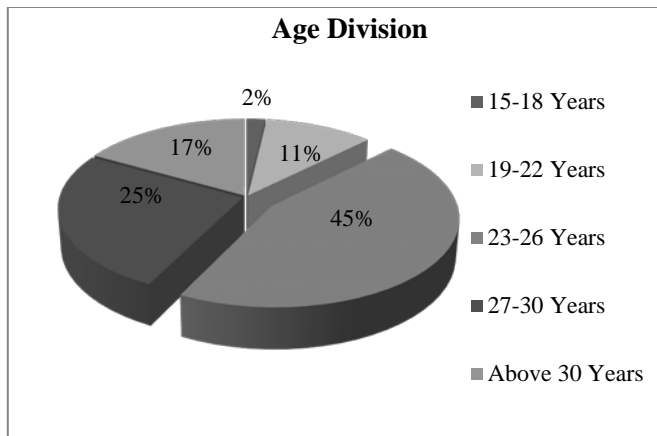


Fig. 4: Age Division Statistics

There were no 10th or 12th Pass in the respondents; there were 52 Graduates, 142 Post Graduates and 20 others. Out of the said respondents, 112 were Students (52.33%), 2 were Freelancers (0.9%), 21 were Self Employed (9.8%), 60 were Private Sector Employee (28%) and 19 were Government Sector employees(8.8%).

In the respondent family annual income profile, 32 reported family income of less than 2 lacs per annum (14.9%), 47 reported annual family income in the range of 2 – 5 Lacs (21.96%), 66 reported annual family income in the range of 5 - 10 Lacs (30.8%), 41 reported annual family income in the range of 10 - 15 Lacs(19.15%) and 28 reported annual family income greater than 15 Lacs (13.08%).

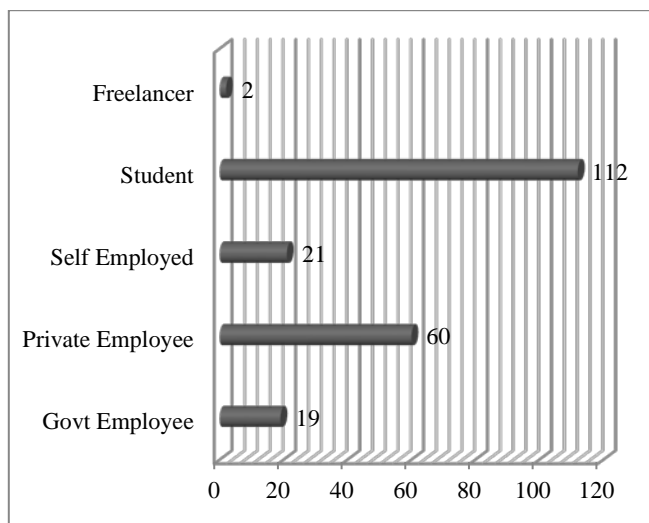


Fig. 5 : Educational Qualifications of Respondents

6. FINDINGS

The Survey done as a part of the study was analysed qualitatively. The findings highlight that though there has been a slow pace at which women have been introduced to the working and managerial environment, the times are changing. Today's youth is waking up to the possibility of a work

environment where males have to work under women. Women, in present times, are strong, firm and hard decision and task masters. At the same time, presence of women brings about a positive influence at the workplace and a humane touch in the organization. The youth today, males as well as females, believe that women sure have a sense of time management that is better than males and given a chance, women will be able to perform both, their professional and personal duties and responsibilities properly.

7. CONCLUSION

There are varied reasons for the non existent growth of women in the corporate ladder. It may be due to the additional responsibilities that women carry, or a dominant masculine work culture, there are fewer women in the organizational setup than what equality demands. Women face a lot of challenges and stereotypes when they step out of their homes to work. And the lack of flexible work solutions and company policies do not help the cause. Today's organizations need women. It is a proven fact that women make better managers. Better leaders. Their working style is more reward oriented, team centric and participative. But they can be as strict and firm as any male at the time of decision making. India needs to wake up to the growing importance of having women workforce. It needs to provide a supportive environment, child care programs, safety measures, sponsorships and training and education to encourage greater participation of women in workforce.

8. FUTURE SCOPE

The study was done at a highly elementary level to gain the viewpoints of today's youth towards working women and women managers and leaders. Further studies can focus on the subject in a deeper manner. Various existent research models can be used or new can be formulated as well. Future studies can also focus on gaining a new viewpoint related to change in performance measures of organizations (profit, sales, equity, brand value, etc.) with inclusion of women in the workforce.

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