Factors That Hinders The Women’s Representation At Top Management

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Abstract:
Management is an occupational area where women are severely underrepresented. The lack of women in top management position has been the subject of much debate in developed countries. It is clear that women all over the world are underrepresented and face discrimination on the basis of gender. There are some stereotypes about women managers that undermine their representation at top management position.

The study explores the factors that undermine the women’s representation at top management positions in universities of Pakistan. The objectives of the study are to overview the existing situation of women in management of universities and to identify the factors that cause the underrepresentation of women. Both primary and secondary data was used in the study. Data was collected through five point Likert scale. The analyses were done through SPSS applying correlation and chi-square test. Findings show that socio-cultural factors such as Mobility, lack of family support, domestic responsibilities, stereotyping and gender discrimination undermine the women’s representation at top management position. Unbiased representation of women in management is an important issue of human resource management. Gender equity policy, gender mainstreaming, awareness and sensitization at all level to increase the representation of women at top management positions to reduce the gender gap in universities

Key words- Higher Education, Management, Stereotype, Gender equity, Gender Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Universities all over the world are facing vital challenges and some appealing opportunities in a progressively competitive worldwide context. Women as managers and their roles in management has become a focus of special attention and got importance in this era. Career advancement of women managers, in recent years, has emerged as an important area of research in the field of gender and management. The continuous underrepresentation of women at more high-ranking and management echelons of the global higher education sector is being paid attention with the recognition that universities as well as countries cannot afford to neglect women’s management capabilities as well as their leadership potential (Ramsay, 2000). Gender imbalance in universities seems to be a global phenomenon (Benschop & Brounds, 2003 & Foster, 2001).

It is clear that women all over the world are underrepresented and generally they face discrimination and marginalization on the basis of their gender. The promotion of gender equality and women empowerment is the Goal 3 of the eight millennium Development goals. It has been realized that gender equality is necessary for the meaningful economic, political and social development of any society. Hence, recently, the need for incorporating systemic element into theoretical discourse as well as empirical research on managerial advancement of women has been acknowledged to explore this phenomenon across cultures. The percentage of women faculty in the universities has increased over the past few years but they remain underrepresented at professorial and senior management level.

Discrimination on the ground of gender is not only a problem of legislation, policy or projects but also of attitudes that women are not as capable or intelligent or as economically able like men. Women’s contribution is ignored or undervalued in national statistics as well as in society (Chris, 2004). In order to reduce gender inequality and inequity common wealth Secretariat defined three key elements of Gender Mainstreaming such as ‘Empowerment, accountability and integration. Empowerment means “having representation in decision-making bodies and control over the delivery of the resources. When women have low representation in decision-making fora, deliberate action should be taken to redress the inequity.

Women are new comers to administrative positions in all organizations as well as in universities. Women have accomplished specialized and administrative decision making positions at lower and middle levels of organizational ladder. It is still challenging for women to get executive positions in the universities (Denton & Zeytinoglu, 1993). Management and leadership has traditionally been predominantly male domain. Gender, tertiary education and development have hardly been intersected, leading to quietness in term of policy, research and literature (www.leadershipforwomen.com.au & More, 2003).

Women’s low number in certain disciplinary areas and specially at professorial grades and in position of authority and administrative position is a recurring theme in higher education research (Jackson,2002, Brink, et al., 2010 & Gunawardena,2006). Gender still has great importance as a category for analysis in the organizational study.
Women and men are equal and have equal rights as well as equal access to and equal representation in public life. Gender equality theory focused on the equal opportunity or equal treatment perspectives. Gender equality focused to enable women and men to compete as equal in the workplace and the labor market and to create equal opportunities by eliminating structural barriers to women’s success (Calas and Smircich, 2006). With hardly exception, “the global picture is one of men outnumbering women at about five to one at middle level management level and at about twenty to one at senior management level” (miror-us.unesco.org Dines, 1998). According to commonwealth Higher Education Management Report (Lund, 1998) “No visible difference to be seen between advanced countries of commonwealth and their counterparts developing countries” (Onsongo, 2002 www.makerer.ac.ug). In the top positions women consist of only 6.9% of the executive heads. In less developed countries as Pakistan women lecturers were 16% while 8.5% were women professors as well as 8.6% were associate professors” (Lund, 1998). “Glass ceiling term was coined more than twenty years ago by wall street journal to define the obstacles that women face in the place of work”. The word “ceiling suggests that women are obstructed from progressing in their career and the word glass is use because the ceiling is not always visible. Glass ceiling is distinguished from formal barriers to advancement” (EEC, 2004). Glass ceiling and sticky floor is a great barrier for women. There are individual, institutional and societal obstacles to women seeking top educational management and leadership position (Amondi, 2011). Artificial barriers based on social or institutional discriminatory practices that halt capable individuals from progressing upward in their organization into management positions (Ruth, 2007).

**THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ARE**

1. To identify the women’s representation in universities of Pakistan
2. To identify the socio-cultural factors that undermines the women’s representation at top management position

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Existing situation of women in universities**

A study of women in the professoriate indicated that they had learnt to give preference to research to tackle the male –dominated culture head on and to some extent reaped the rewards. (White, 2011).

(Lund, 1998) made the distribution of men and women by professional ranks in commonwealth universities the percentage of women professors in Bangladesh is 84(10.4%) and 722(89.6%) men professors while 10(8.5%) women professors and 107(91.5%) men professors in Pakistan as well as 274(10.5%) women in India and 2341(89.5%) men professors. The percentage of women in Pakistan is lower than Bangladesh and India.

In Pakistan total associate professors/readers/principal lecturers are 244 out of which the percentage of women associate professors are 21(8.6%) women and 223(91.4%) men while in India total associate professors/reader/principal lecturers are 2891 out of which 588 (20.3%) women and 2303(79.7%) men and in Bangladesh total associate professors/readers /principal lecturers are 498 out of which 99(19.9%) are women and 399(80.1%) were men. The percentage of women associate professors in Pakistan is lower than the Bangladesh and India (Lund Survey, 1998).

There is a big difference between the status of women and men in Pakistan. But these differences remain without any major change. According to global gender gap report (UNESCO, 2011) Pakistan is ranked 134 out of 135 in the economic opportunities participation and 127 in educational attainments. The Beijing report also noted that Pakistani women continued to face patriarchal structure.

Socio-cultural norms and religious interpretation are creating insecurity for the rights of women. Gender stereotypes are main factor that impact on the career advancement of the women in management (Baig & Jabeen, 2011) the laws which exist are not implemented. Women are still continued to face gender biases. These socio-cultural norms prescribe a different roles and responsibilities for women.

In the world as whole women offer almost 40% of professional and technical workers but less than 15% of administrative managers. Beijing platform guarantee women’s equal entrance to and full participation in authority and decision-making. Women held more than 15% of ministerial positions in only 16 countries( UNIFEM, 1997). Women hold only 17% of the world’s parliament seats, 9% of top management jobs are held by women and 12 women head of states out of 180.
In Pakistan, the percentage of women in ministerial position is 6% women and 94% men. The percentage of women in labor force is 34% and 80% of men. The percentage of women legislators, senior officials and legislators is 2% and percentage of men is 98%. The percentage of women as professional and technical worker is 26% and men are 74% and women bear 70% of poverty burden (Baig & Jabeen, 2011).

In Pakistan 13.2% women were in senior management teams while 86.8% men, 14.6% deans were women while 85.4% were men. 100% men were finance officers and personnel officers while no women. 10% women were International officers while 90% men. 23% women were professors while 77% men were professors. 22% women were head and directors as well as 78% men were head and directors. No women were head of administration. 100% men were vice chancellor (ACU updating Lund survey by Singh, 2002).

There are 29 public sector general universities of Pakistan. There are only 3 vice chancellors out of which one from Fatima Jinnah Women University, one vice-chancellor women in University of Gilgit and one women vice-chancellor in Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur Sindh. There are only one woman pro-vice-chancellor as well as one registrar, one treasurer, one controller, one additional controller. The registrar, treasurer and controller are only in FJWU not in co-education universities. There are 8 directors and 14 deans in 29 public sector general universities of Pakistan (selected university’s website, 2012). This shows that women are low numbers in top management positions, hence need for this research.

(Broughton & Miller, 2009) identified that barriers to progression into senior management positions included perceptions about women’s management style, difficulties with masculine organizational culture, general experience of discrimination and difficulties in gaining the right experience in order to be able to advance and confidence problem and difficulties caused by having non-linear careers and problems of family commitments.

(Ronald and Susan, 2006) identified the barriers women faced in getting higher positions are organizational policies, self-imposed glass ceiling, gender biased promotion policy, long working hours, lack of family support and unsupportive working environment. These are obstacles for women to participating in managerial network.

(Amondi, 2011) indicated the personal, structural and societal obstacles to women seeking top educational management positions. The strongest barriers are institutional followed by socio-cultural while the individual barriers were least. No individual factor was found to have influence on career progression of women academics (Hadrian & Terry, 2007).

Socio-Cultural Factors
Mostly the women adopt the profession of teaching and health. But their representation in management of these departments is low. Social and cultural barriers prevent women to take part in managerial positions. Cultural factors affect the women’s career progression (Luke, 2002 & Ilo, 2010). (Fagenson, 1993) indicated that an individual and his organization cannot be understood separate from the culture/society in which he or she works and when the individual, the organization and the system in which they are embedded changes, the other factors change as well. In spite of the remarkable increase in women workforce, they continued to be low number in managerial positions of universities. Few exceptional women have broken the glass ceiling and got executive level positions (Wentling & Thomas, 2007).

Work/Family conflict continues to be the main limiting element for women when they move toward the position of authority (Oplatka, 2006). Due to family commitments, women put their career on hold (Foster, 2001). Family Support, Parental encouragement and spouse support facilitate women administrators (Jabeen, 2000). According to (Foster, 2001) women academics have to face work/family conflict. Women continue to take home obligations and this reduces or even disruptions in their careers. There was slight proof that their husband has disrupted their career as the women have. The findings confirm that women still to reduce deeply rooted societal and organizational obstacles if they want to get equal opportunity with men. Structural and cultural barriers as domestic and family responsibilities restrict promotion opportunities for women.

The great difficulty is work/family conflict. Women are trying to make the demands of an academic position as well as the demands of family is a great effort (Marina, et al 2010). The work/family responsibilities can cause a problem for women as they try creative ways to maintain both their work/family obligations (Rose & Steven, 2007, Catalyst, 2000).
Dual obligations of domestic responsibilities and job are excessively challenging; society classified women as wives and mothers and imitate to not appropriate for top management and leadership positions (Amondi, 2011). Stereotyping is a “certain beliefs associated with the gender such as women are less ambitious” (Fischer 2000) and lack of leadership skill (Schein, 2001) to occupy the leadership position. Gender discrimination/Patriarchy-“Men are given preference for leadership positions in Pakistan” (Sales, 1999).

Armenti (2004) explored the interconnections between the women’s domestic and professional lives. The study focused on the child related obstacles and career related obstacles. The impact of these obstacles are the problems the women encountered child rearing/bearing problems, research dilemmas, inclination to leave the academy and refusal of position and promotion. All served to act as determinants to their career progression. Women encountered gender-related obstacles that prevent them from gaining equality in the academy, other hindrances are based on gender perception that research is meant for males and women have to deal with teaching and service (Park, 1998). Women are tolerated rather than accepted in the academy (Armenti, 2011). There is likely to be little change in women’s disadvantaged positions until women reach the decision-making positions in university in sufficient number.

(Oplatka, 2006) identified that specific obstacles to women’s job progression in educational systems in the developing countries are strong household responsibilities, low quality of govt. education, unique career experiences and adoption of androgynous leadership style. (Acker & Armenti, 2004) indicated that the old norms associated with women having family and child care is still working in a way that makes it difficult to be both mother and a faculty member.

Women are hindered by internal as well as external barriers which stepped them away from career advancing. The internal barriers such as sex-stereotyping, rigid structures negative behavior of workforce in general limit the progress of women because they are stuck in powerlessness, less visibility dead end jobs. Their advancement is further hindered by the cultural restrictions of male-dominance and suppression. The existence of both internal and external barriers appear as a change resistant element that promotes an environment dominated by male values and justifies most women’s exclusion from university administration (Angela Coyle, 1989, Ozkanli, 2008, Marina, et al. 2002).

Under patriarchal practice, any men regardless of his status, age and achievement is considered superior to any women, no matter if she may surpass the men in status, age and achievement. Patriarchy is dominated by male privilege and dominance where women play the subordinate role in public as well as private (Rose M, et al. 2011). Women barriers to promotion arise from cultural stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs. Gender stereotype prevent women from realizing their full potential because of the societal barriers.

(Thomas, 2010, Silovali, 2010, Ramsay, 2010 & White, 2008) noted that exclusion of women in management position is due to, attention to family and home, female stereotypes, lack of confidence and lack of family support.

(Veronica 2000) identified that working women with young children particularly in managerial positions also face problems of long and irregular working hours. Women have to manage with double duties.

(Ozkanli & White, 2008) found that issues in relation to dual work/family roles remain a hurdle for senior women in Turkey, they usually follow strategic choices instead of those available in academic context for women in Australia. Limited choice restricts experimentation with leadership styles. Women are discriminated because of their gender; they are capable of performing any leadership role. Society in general discriminates against women because of their sex. (Rose, M. et al. 2011).

(Dhar 2008) provided proof of inner and outer challenges encountered by the women directors. The study uncovers some of the realistic aspects distressing women leaders which emphasis that women directors faced some leadership challenges. A very small percentage want to make it a career and move towards leadership for which they are agree to face challenges to expose their hidden potential. Women administrators with children had a difficulty to keep balance in their domestic and professional lives.

It is not the personal or individual barriers that discouraged women teachers and principals to apply to principal positions but external factors related to institutions and socio-cultures. Another barrier women face is performance in the organization where performance and worth are judged according to male standards (Marina, et al 2010).

Gender stereotype apprehended by coworkers, departmental and college administrators and students contribute to the problems faced by women in the reappointment, contract and promotion practice (Winkler 2000). Gender stereotype undermine women’s representation at top management positions (Baig & Jabeen, 2011).
(Ozkanli, 2007) examined that in Turkey there are dissimilarities by discipline, women give importance to language based studies and poor in engineering and technology. In natural science medicine and engineering, they are usually in low numbers all around the globe. Women in academia are not entirely focused in areas mostly suitable for female personality. “Turkey has maximum percentage of professors in Europe (27%)”. The proportion of Turkish women academics is greater than many countries of the world but fewer women are likely to be hired as deans or rectors at the universities. Household related to career barriers not merely limit academic women initiating or progressing their careers but also leads toward downward in the career hierarchy women are increasing in subordinate level job positions and declining number of women managers in Turkish universities, all of which are facing work/family conflict as a main problem.

(Flechl 2009) identified that how women manage their work-life balance. The findings indicated that there are some historical and cultural issues as well as individual conditions which make it hard to combine work /life. Women manage their time efficiently, but managing several roles is a big challenge which needs sophisticated solutions. Women require support and help from their family, partners and companies.

Factors that cause the underrepresentation of women are stereotype attitudes and stress created by role conflict. Working women are socially isolated especially for higher ranking positions. The feelings of social isolation can negatively affect the women seeking to advance professionally (Schain, 2005).

(Beninger 2010) indicated that female academics faced a series of worldwide challenges to job and their personal life in spite of fundamentally different Govt. strategies and cultural behavior toward work. These obstacles arise from institutional structure of academia and beliefs related to the role of are thought to perform in society. Gender norms for women that exists across cultures dictate that the time women spend outside of domestic responsibility is not perceived well by the society. The imbalance in personal and professional life has negative effects on organizations, overall economy, women and their families (Jacobs, Thanacoody, 2006).

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data was used to explore the factors that restrict the women’s career progression in the university. The primary source includes the questionnaire while secondary source included a review of documents, reports and websites. Participants were selected on the basis of their positions. The sample was selected on the basis of HEC recognized public sector general universities of Pakistan and one third of target population.

A five point liker scale was used ranging from strongly disagree to Strongly Agree that indicate the strengths of respondents against each statement.
Strongly Disagree-1, Disagree-2, Undecided-3, Agree-4 and strongly Agree-5. The data was analyzed through, chi square test. SPSS was used to analyse the data.

Theoretical Framework

- Lack of family support
- stereotype
- Domestic responsibilities
- Gender Discrimination
- Mobility

Academic Rank/Position
To identify the factor that undermines the women’s representation at top management positions, the study puts academic rank of women academics (AR) as the dependent variable and relate it with its four independent variables: lack of family support, stereotype, domestic responsibilities, gender discrimination and mobility. These variables are developed from various prior works of Foster (2001), Djajadikerta and Trireksani (2007), Easterly Pemberton(2008), UNESCO (1998).

**Result and Discussion**

These barriers include women mobility, stereotype, domestic responsibilities, gender discrimination, and lack of family support. Findings showed that socio-cultural barriers have greater effect on the career progression of women. Women’s recognition and role have related to child bearing and rearing the result was supported by Neidhart & Carlin (2003). The society assigned them different roles and responsibilities. The process of managing the roles and responsibilities of wife, mother and career women is demanding supported by Williams (2000). The result of the study confirms that home and work responsibilities are one of the main barriers women encounters. Girls learn to be feminine and boys as masculine supported by Amondi (2011).

**Women mobility**

H1a Mobility of women academicians is negatively related to career advancement of women.

The hypothesis is accepted that mobility of women is negatively affecting the career advancement of women. The result indicates that women are not willing to move geographically far from areas. The chi-square value is .024. WM is negatively related to the position/rank. Organizations often cite lack of qualified women or women’s refusal to relocate as reason for not hiring women in management positions. The result is contradicted with the result of Margarett & Isik, 1993, and O, Keefe, 1991).

**Domestic Responsibilities**

H1b Family responsibilities are negatively related to the career advancement of women

The result shows that Family responsibilities such as child care, household chores are the barriers. The result concludes that family responsibilities have negative association with the career advancement of women. FR has interfered the women’s career. The result is contradict with the study of Isik & Margarett, 1991 and Hadrian & Terry, 2007.

The result shows that career effect family so that women have to sacrifice their personal and social time. The result of the study confirms that home and work responsibilities are one of the main barrier women encounters for their career progression. The result is supported by (Pirola, 2007, Amondi, 2011, Wilking, 2001, lowry & Arnold, 2002, White, 2003, White & Ozkanli, 2008, Thanacoody, et al. 2006).

**Gender stereotype**

H2a Stereotype are negatively associated with the advancement of women’s career

The result showed that gender stereotyping is also a barrier because gender stereotypical behavior is practiced in the organizations as well as in the society that women are not suitable for leadership position. Women agreed that gender stereotyping is a barrier to their advancement. Stereotyping is a pervasive social phenomenon, Think manager think male. It is an image about the women. Women having minority status are pushed towards tasks that are stereotypically feminine. Stereotyping is a significant barrier to the women at the upward ladder in the organization. The result is supported by Baig & Jabeen, 2011. The result is contradicted with the study of Hadrian & Terry, 2007.

**Gender discrimination**

H2b patriarchal society is negatively associated with the career progression of women

We conclude that PS has significant association with the rank. This hypothesis was accepted. The result was contradict with the prior study of Hadrian & Terry, 2007.

The result showed that women are discriminated because of their gender. Due to patriarchal social system there is mindset that women cannot become an efficient leader. Pakistan is a patriarchal society and Gender discrimination limiting the women’s access to and control over the resources and opportunities.
The study concluded the factors that undermine women’s representation at top educational leadership and administrative ranks in the general public sector universities of Pakistan. Higher education commission determines the policies concerning selection and promotion in academic employment. Higher education commission (HEC) has taken measures to make the recruitment & selection as well as promotion policy fair. Academic selection and promotion policies of public sector universities are similar. But administrative positions even professoriate position are occupied by men. The women reported that more men are in academic board and they want status quo and masculine culture of institutions restricts women. Lack of transparency in selection and promotion processes is an obstacle. Women in spite of fulfilling criteria are not being promoted.

Conclusion

The study concluded the factors that undermine the women’s representation at top educational leadership and administrative ranks in the public sector general universities of Pakistan. Research has shown that women do not progress to the top management positions even the rank of professor as quickly as men. The study found that overall socio-cultural barriers (women mobility, Domestic responsibilities, Gender discrimination, stereotypes) were the leading factors that undermine the women’s representation at top management positions/career progression. Child care, career and family, gender discrimination and stereotype are the barriers for women that undermine their competitiveness in promotion and slow down their career. The women reported that family consideration affects their career such as women do not apply for senior management positions. The women reported that they have to sacrifice their personal and social time due to their dual responsibilities. The concepts of women being not suitable for management positions weaken the women’s ability to be promoted to top management positions. Due to domestic responsibilities women are reluctant to applying for top management positions and refused to relocate for getting promotion.

References


