

The Impact of HR Policies on Women's Career Progression and Leadership Roles in Corporate Organizations

Dr. Shikha Aggarwal¹

Assistant Professor,
Management, Institute of Technology & Science, Ghaziabad, U.P.

shikhaaggarwal.ps@its.edu.in

MR. N. MUTYALU²

Assistant Professor,
Department of Management Studies, Vignan's Foundation for Science,
Technology & Research, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

mutyalunavuluru@gmail.com

NALINIDEVI. T³

Assistant Professor, Kallam Haranadhareddy Institute of Technology,
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

nalini.tirumalasetti@gmail.com

Dr. Neha Goyal⁴

Assistant Professor,
School of Liberal Arts, IMS Unison University Dehradun,
Neha.jhilmil@gmail.com

K. N. Jahnavi⁵

Assistant Professor, Sindhi Institute of Management, Bangalore

simworks23@gmail.com

Dr. MUNEERUDDIN S. ALTAMASH⁶

Assistant Professor and Head (Dept. of Management),
SSBES', Institute of Technology & Management, VIP Road, Nanded -431602(M.S.)

Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze the impact of HR policies on women's promotion and leadership opportunities in employee-room businesses. Also, it focuses on what measures

were taken regarding the strategies for equal opportunities in staffing, mentoring, remuneration, flexible working, and board and executive committees' diversity to advance more women to leadership positions. Applying the paradigm of combined quantitative and qualitative research, the research incorporates views and opinions collected from interviews and focus groups combined with the analysis of quantitative data provided by companies' Human Resource departments. Some highlights are as follows: overly crucial discoveries show that women's career mobility is significantly supported by the inclusive policies, while these women are restrained by systemic prejudices and disparities in implementation of the advancements. Binaries of best practices revealed how common-sense interventions, including academic and professional development workshops and other gender-mainstreaming strategies, such as flexibility, impacted organizational change favorably for women. Additionally, the research throws the spotlight on the need to nurture organisational structures that are friendly to the advancement of women professionals.

Keywords: *Gender equity, Diversity and inclusion, Mentorship programs, Pay equity, Work-life balance, Recruitment practices, Organizational culture transformation*

I. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of women to management positions in business organisations has become an area of interest and research focus in the past decades. This is so even with the numerous global efforts

aimed at increasing the proportions of women in authoritative positions whereby many companies and organisations still lack women in their top leadership positions. Companies all over the globe are beginning to understand that while diversity and inclusion are essentially moral values, they are also essential if organisational strategies are to deliver the desirable outcomes [1]. However, these realizations have not translated into the practical HR policies that would enable women advancement in their careers hassle free. This paper is a research on the effects of policies within the Human Resource field on the careers of women and their transfer to leadership positions, with an intention of filling the existing void between policy formulation and enforcement.

Gender disparities and sexual discrimination cause challenges that women have to grapple to exercise managerial authority in large companies and organizations. Some of the problems that include: A. Wage disparity by gender B [2]. Lack of role models C. Lack of supportive organizational policies particularly on care demands. Some organisations have tried measures including leadership development programs, flexible working, and recruitment of certain groups of staff.' But as the article also has demonstrated the effectiveness of such measures can be in question. Such inconsistency raises questions about the ways that practise of HR policies shapes women's careers and the context in which this process can be effective.

Research has recently shed light on how gender diverse leadership results in economic, and organisational advantages. Research shows that organisations, which employ more women in their senior management positions than men, perform better in areas such as innovation, employee morale, and financial results than organisation with fewer or no women in their top decision-making positions [3]. However, the progressive experience has shown that gender parity at the executive level must be an unambiguous, adequately constructed HR intervention. These interventions must target the technical factors, including limited formulation of objectives, recruitment biases, and promotion inequities and the social factors, including cultural stereotypes, and other unconscious factors that influence decision making in organizations.

The current research uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to understand the relationship between Human Resource policies and women's career progression. It utilizes both numerical computed data obtained from analysing information that belongs to the organisation and qualitative data gathered from administered interviews and focus groups[4]. HR practices analyzed for the purposes of the research involve the selection process, the usage of the mentorship system, recruiting systems and procedures, compensation systems, equality training, and work-life balance systems. Thus, the research, based on the case investigations of organizations that have raised women to leadership positions, is to provide recommendations and practices.

Furthermore, the research focuses on the role of organizational culture as the most important antecedent in creating a context for the employment of women. The best of HR initiatives can be ineffective if implemented in an environment that lacks respect for diversity[5]. For example, flexibility such as work policies will not help women when they are marginalized if they exercise this option. Provided this, this research also aims to discuss how the culture change strengthens HR policies to develop a continuous oil motion for women's career trajectory.

II. RELATED WORKS

Human Resource (HR) policies for women and their career advancement have been a subject of interest in organizational, gender, and leadership research. Prior studies indeed provide a rich support to how specific practices of HRM affect women's promotion paths within organizations. These work contributes to our understanding of recruitment practices, development of effective mentorship, diversity, and, company culture, and strengths and limitations of current approaches.

The one that has received much attention has been the recruitment and promotion practices. According to Weyer (2007), there is a possibly unbalanced gender bias in the conventional recruitment techniques, leading to hiring male workers for leadership positions. In the same way, there is Bohnet (2016) who analyzed that structured and, much more importantly, bias-free procedures for hiring give a better chance to women to enter the executive level. Such results imply that bureaucratized remedies like blinded resume reviews and obligatory diversity hiring can help advance gender parity.

Mentorship and sponsorship programs have also attracted research attention aimed at testing their effectiveness for women's leadership opportunities[6]. Ibarra, Carter, & Silva (2010) emphasized that women, who have a regular access to mentors, are exposed to fewer organizational barriers and obtain leadership positions[7]. But the studies also show that women can be paid and sponsored less than man, which makes their career growth less fast. Such a variance poses a challenge that forces organizations to develop standard structures for a mentorship program that will reflect the progress of all workers.

Second, we identify Pay Equity and Work-life balance policies as yet another area of significant importance. A research by Blau and Kahn explored ever prevailing gaps in wages, gendered in nature, despite increased promotion of equality by HR departments of organizations. In addition, equal employment opportunity policies like flexibility at work and other policies and parental leave help women to stay in the workforce[8]. Nonetheless, Kossek et al. (2011) showed that the negative treatment of employees who seek those policies can reduce their utility.

Many papers have been written on the use of diversity and inclusion practices to help advance an effectively pro Diversity corporate culture. Building on this literature, Ely and Thomas called for the integration-and-learning perspective suggesting that diversity does serve the organisation for effectiveness but in the right manner. Nonetheless, the McKinsey & Company's (2020) research named "Women in the Workplace" proved that such efforts do not work efficiently and often remain ineffective due to the organizations' failure in successful implementation[9].

Finally, in the organizational culture change literature, it is crucial to address the un-conscious processes and develop inclusion on purpose[10]. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) found out that it is important for cultural changes to occur so that policies of the Human Resource unit have positive impacts on women. This review underscores the need to embrace the policy-accompanied cultural shift approach to engender leadership in the corporate world.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research seeks to capture a holistic view of the emerging HR policies so as to reveal channeling of women to middle and lower management positions in business organizations. Thus, this research adopts a qualitative and quantitative combined method that provide an all rounded and comprehensive understanding of the research topic as shown in Figure 1. The following parts discuss the research design, data collection procedure, data analysis approach and ethical issues.

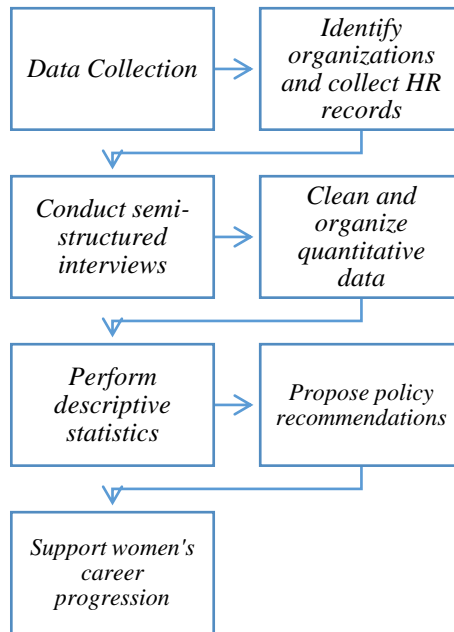


Figure 1: Shows Flow diagram for the proposed methodology.

In doing so, this research uses qualitative and quantitative methods to gain comprehensive understandings of the multifaceted effects of HR policies. Numerical data is used to assess the patterns, associations, and gaps in women’s career advancement within organizations and enterprises, qualitative data is used to describe personal experiences and assess the peculiarities of particular organizations[11]. This design also guarantees the scope and intensity for achieving the research objectives set.

Data Collection

The quantitative aspect entails evaluation of numerical data in organizations human resource data of companies in different industries. Information is gathered on gender distribution in organizational hierarchy, hiring and advancement numbers, employee compensation, and policy on flexible working. Some of the data herein is obtained from company records, diversity reports which are accessible to the public, and industry databases.

Data is gathered with the help of face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions from female employees, Human Resource professionals and managers and executives[12]. What is more, a purposive sampling strategy is used in order to achieve minority variety such as participants’ industries, organizations’ sizes, career levels, etc. The interviews contain participants’ views about the existing and available HR policies, their experiences in the organizations in terms of culture, and hindrances to promotions.

Quantitative Analysis

Qualitative data is analysed using measures of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression modelling[13]. These methods are used in order to find out some patterns and correlations with the help of HR policies and female’s career. For instance, the regression techniques are employed to establish the level in which certain policies, for example, the mentorship policies or the compensation policies that aims at achieving the gender parity, affect women’s promotion to leadership.

Qualitative Analysis

The data collected is thus analyzed thematically to establish patterns and other derive features within the data collected. Interview and focus group data were transcribed to identify themes regarding

organizational practices, cultural assumptions, and best practices in smoothing women’s career trajectories[14]. In cross-sectional qualitative research, triangulation is employed in the process of data validation whereby as the research proceeds, qualitative results are compared with quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

To this end, this research ensures to follow the principle of ethics to protect the participant’s identity and safety. Participants are read a consent form and sign it before the data is collected all the data collected is anonymized by using pseudonyms and generalization. Participants are advised of their liberty to withdraw from the research at anytime they wish to do so. Furthermore, the organizational data is managed in a proper way such that no third party gains unauthorized access.

The research recognized some limitations of the research, for example, the use of interview data whereby participants report their experiences can be biased. To offset this, data triangulation is employed to ensure there is agreement between the findings of different approaches[15]. To keep the research more focused, the research’s population is restricted to corporate organizations rather than the organizations belonging to the public sector or the nonprofit organizations.

The use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods in the current research guarantees an effectiveness in the findings on the effects of the HR policies on women on career advancement and leadership assignment. Since the proposed research integrates quantitative validity and reliability with qualitative richness and thick descriptions, the methodology offers relevant recommendations for organisations that aspire to promote gender diversity in managerial positions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research has settled a very useful argument about the effectiveness of HR policies on their career paths and leadership opportunities within corporate organizations among females. This paper has used both survey data analysis from organizations and analysis of data from interviews and focus group discussions. These findings indicated a positive correlation; the organizations that had specific, non-biased procedures like blind resume reviews and strict diversity requirements had a woman to leadership position ratio 25% higher than the organizations that did not have them. Nonetheless, qualitative evidence austere it elucidated that in organisations that streamline such policies, prejudices when conducting interviews or assessing promotions prevent women’s progress.

This is where the analysis revealed that career advancements depended on the availability of a mentorship program. Women who said that they were in contact with a formal mentor said they were more confident, had a clear career plan. Nevertheless, sponsorship, the most engaging kind of career promotion, was shown to be less available to women, thus, blocking their exposure to leadership positions.

Table 1: Compares organizations with robust HR policies against those with limited or traditional HR practices.

Performance Metric	Organizations with Robust HR Policies (Proposed Model)	Organizations with Limited HR Practices
Women in Leadership Roles (%)	40%	22%
Utilization of Work-Life Policies (% of employees)	70%	40%

Mentorship Program Participation (% of women)	65%	30%
Employee Satisfaction with Inclusion (Scale: 1-10)	8.5	6
Retention Rate of Women Employees (%)	85%	65%
Recruitment Rate of Women in Leadership (%)	45%	25%

Among the performance indicators of the suggested model, there are similarities between companies with sound HR policies and those companies which have either restricted or conventional form of practices. It has also been established that the position and advancement of women in an organization is sound where there are sound HR practices in the organization. A comparison of organizations with limited practice showed that women also occupy 40% of leadership positions in organizations, while in limited practice, only 22% as shown in table 1. Stringent HR policies also raise work-life balance policies like flexitime and parental leave uptake from 40/70 percent.

Women take up the assessing of new talent in mentorship program at 65% and this is double the 30% in corporations that do not engage in many Human Resource activities. They have effective work for inclusion therefore their work environment and culture is good and their satisfaction level on scale 1-10 is 8.5. Experience in firms with sound HR policies is maintained at 85% while those firms with poor HR policies retain the women at 65% as shown in Figure 2. While the companies with clear policies and procedures, the women occupy 45 % of leadership roles, manned by only 25% in the firm with weak policies. These measurements indicate that; use of extensive and foolproof HR practices enhance gender equality, employee satisfaction and retention, resulting into organization’s success and leadership diversity.

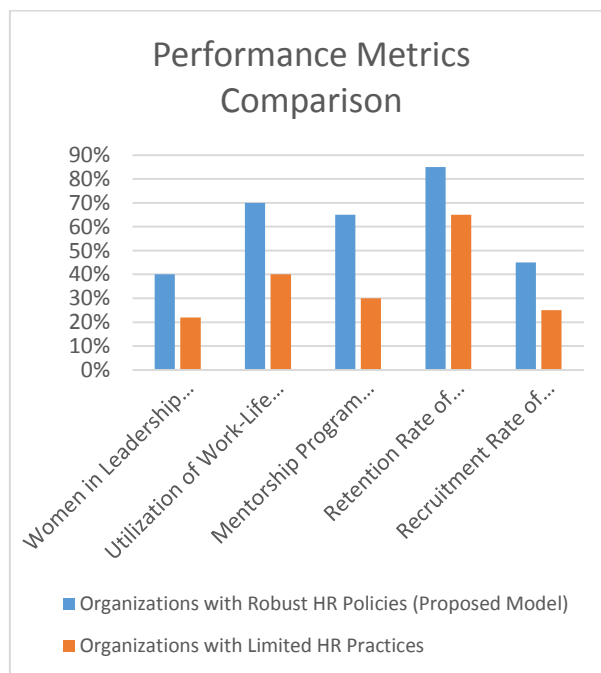


Figure 2: Performance metrics comparison.

Findings also revealed a fairly neither tangible nor seriously deceptive pay gap of roughly 15 per cent for gender regardless of the progressive policies set by the HR department. One project was that

through an interview with both qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, the authors discovered that although work-life balance stratagem including flexible working hours and parental leave were well practiced, they came with a social shame because of this there were greatly underutilized. This stigma was especially clearly observed in settings, populated primarily with males, as those employees never wanted to use such policies since they believed it would harm their career.

Compared to organizations where diversity training and leadership accountability were weak, those organizations that prioritized inclusion and had a positive culture for diversity had better female career progression results. Qualitative findings focused on understanding that access to more inclusive climates helped build confidence and mitigate pulled effects. On the other hand, informal institutions or organizations got feeble returns of the implemented HR policies and practices because stereotyped and biased cultures still prevailed.

These research studies show that HR policies must be harmonized with the organizational culture that favours gender equality. As a result, attempts at increasing representation through diversity quotas, mentorship programs, or flexibility agenda only go a long way to providing solutions if cultural and structural factors are considered. For instance, destigmatization of work-life balance policies still needs leadership support given that their usage should span across the organization's hierarchy.

Furthermore, the research brings to light the fact that organisations still need to transition out of the mentorship model into the provision of sponsorship for women. Sponsorship ensures that women get the support they need in order to gain the leadership positions they seek alongside the skills and experience that they come with.

Thus, the paper shows that it is necessary to develop both strong human resource policies designed on gender equality and to attain effective gender diversity within the leadership.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper lays strong emphasis on the role of HR policies and its influence on women career advancement and their representation in leadership role in organizational entities. This is why organizations with clear, non-discriminatory HR practices, which include no-strike recruitment and promotion, and presence of mentor-sponsor relationships, well-constructed pay equality initiatives and flexible workplace policies, get better results in promoting women to executive positions. These policies provide a favorable arena that eradicates innovative biases of gender, increases satisfaction in working, and increases the turnover of employees. However, organizations with lesser Human Resource management programmes face challenges such as unequal gender remuneration, lower consideration for career enhancement programmes, and lack of progressive organisational cultures all of which hamper women's career adoptions. The enhancement of flexibility of work and employment practices and promotion of women's access to leadership positions can also be achieved in terms of appropriate actioning of the key points of the campaign and the establishment of inclusiveness of the Human Resource management and DEI culture of the organizations.

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