

BIAS AND BARRIERS THAT WOMEN CONFRONT IN LEADERSHIP

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Methodology

Women face many barriers and bias in leadership. This could be one of the key reasons as to why few women occupy leadership positions. Another assumption is that most organizations and careers are male-dominated (McGowan et. al., 2015). It is, therefore, difficult for women to lead in firms that are founded on strong masculine values. The final assumption is that women do not receive enough support in their management roles. As a result, their chances of failing are significant. There is a lot of literature that discusses the challenges that women face in leadership. The paper will, therefore, employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to establish various findings. Qualitative research will be the primary approach because it allows the scholar to compare finding from different scholars. As a result, the strengths and weaknesses of their study can be identified easily. Also, it helps in determining new areas of study that are yet to be fully exploited. The research will also use questionnaires to collect data as regards to the research question. This information will help outline specific barriers that women face as well as recommend steps that need to be taken. The use of questionnaires will help answer the research question since I will interact with a lot of individuals.

Participants

A sample population of about 20 individuals was used in this paper. This small number of participants was due to the time restrictions. Nevertheless, it still helped in acquiring crucial feedback as regards to the research question. Most of the participants were women since they are directly affected by this issue. They, therefore, had a chance to outline some of the issues that affected them in their workplaces.

Sampling Method

The participants were chosen on a random basis. This method allowed me to collect more valid responses from a huge audience. Furthermore, it eliminated bias and other different barriers. Scholars who chose their participants based on their race, religion, and ethnicity can be considered unethical. Furthermore, their final results may not reflect the picture of the entire organization.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection method that was used in this study is questionnaires. Due to the time restrictions of the project, this was the best method of collecting valid information from the participants. There are several benefits of questionnaires. Firstly, questionnaires are cheap and can be formulated easily. They also allow a scholar to collect objective and specific information from participants. As a result, more conclusive findings can be made. Lastly, data from questionnaires can be extracted easily and plotted in graphs. Most of the information used in this study was extracted from secondary research. This enabled the study to reach more conclusive and reliable findings. Furthermore, the results of this study could be easily compared to those performed in the study.

Information Being Sought

The research will be seeking to find out from the participants the primary barriers and biases that are affecting women in leadership positions. Some of the questions that they will be asked are shown below.

1. Do you believe that women face more leadership barriers as compared to men? (Yes or No)
2. What are some of the barriers that female leaders face in their workplaces?
3. Do you believe enough has been done to deal with this situation?
4. What other measures should be implemented to promote women in leadership positions?

Data Analysis

As stated before, the data that was collected in this process was analyzed through the use of SPSS. This is a statistical program that is used by many researchers. It is quite effective when it comes to evaluating large amounts of data. Furthermore, it can be easily obtained from the Internet.

Limitations of the Methodology

Several potential limitations could influence data collection activities. The first factor is time constraints. Some of the participants could slow down the process, and thus cause massive delays in my research. This can end up affecting the credibility of the study. The second issue is convincing people to participate in the study. Some of the participants may have busy schedules and will, therefore, contribute nothing useful to the project. Lastly, some of the participants may fail to send back their filled questionnaires. Fortunately, there are several strategies in place to deal with these issues when they occur. For instance, their research will have 10 spare participants to help in data collection, in case someone decides to pull out at the last minute. All questionnaires will also be double-checked to ensure that the answers that have been provided relate to the research questions. Also, the data collection process will begin at an early stage to avoid any pressure or stress. It is important to note that participating in the research will be on a voluntary basis. No individual will be forced to engage in the paper. Furthermore, personal information will not be collected or distributed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical and moral standards are critical in any study. They help in determining right and wrong. In other words, they can be used to ensure that scholars are portraying acceptable

behaviors in their work environment. The research will uphold all ethical standards. Firstly, there will be no falsification of data. All the information in the study will be supported by credible references and citations. This will help in delivering quality and reliable results. Secondly, there will be no violation of privacy. This situation is a huge ethical concern in different studies. Some scholars usually break these regulations by revealing confidential information about the participants. The disturbing thing is they do not bother to seek their permission or opinion as regards to the issue. Observing participants secretly in their homes can also be regarded as a violation of privacy. The information of all the participants in this study will be kept secret. Furthermore, there will no secret observation processes. Only those individuals that will give their informed consent will be involved in this study. The second ethical concern is plagiarism. It refers to a situation when a person uses materials from other scholars without giving them the required recognition. As stated before, any resources that will be used in this study will be referenced appropriately. Finally, the study will not endanger the lives of any participant. This is usually a major concern in scientific projects where participants are involved in lab experiments.

Results

The expected findings from this research are that women are underrepresented in the allocation of leadership and managerial roles. They also face significant barriers and bias as they strive to succeed in their leadership roles. Issues such as sexual discrimination and harassment are not regional but global problems.

Figure One: Are women underrepresented in leadership positions?

Do female leaders face barriers in their workplaces?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	7	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Yes	13	65.0	65.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

From the 20 participants that were analyzed, 13 of them claimed that women faced numerous issues in their leadership positions. Only 7 of the participants argued that there were no significant factors affecting women. The high frequency of those who agreed with these questions indicates the existence of numerous issues in organizations. A study conducted by Haile et. al. (2016) reveals that women are indeed underrepresented in both management and leadership roles. Though women have higher levels of education as compared to the previous centuries, they are still denied leadership opportunities. Haile et. al. (2016) also believe that male-dominated cultures are to blame for the non-performance of women in leadership positions. Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) also claim that women occupy few managerial positions as compared to men. Though women make up a greater part of the American workforce, there are very few of them at the top of organizational hierarchies. The advanced degree, diploma, and master's programs that women have enrolled have done very little to improve their position.

Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) also state that only 5% of Fortune 500 companies have women as their chief executive officers. Women are clearly lagging behind in all sectors including business, healthcare, and manufacturing fields. In universities and colleges, very few women hold authoritative faculty positions. Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) claim that most male employees are usually discontented when they are managed by a female leader. Figure one below shows a global analysis of the representation of women in boards. As of 2016, the percentage of women holding leadership position was only 15.3%. This percentage is still quite low despite the rapid changes and regulations that have been introduced. According to the CFA Institute (2016), campaigns for women participation in leadership positions have increased in the recent past. As a result, some positive changes have been realized. For example, the number of women in boardrooms increased from 12.4% in 2015 to 15.3% in 2016. Some nations have passed more regulations to facilitate more female representation in leadership.

Figure Two: The percentage of female representation in boardrooms

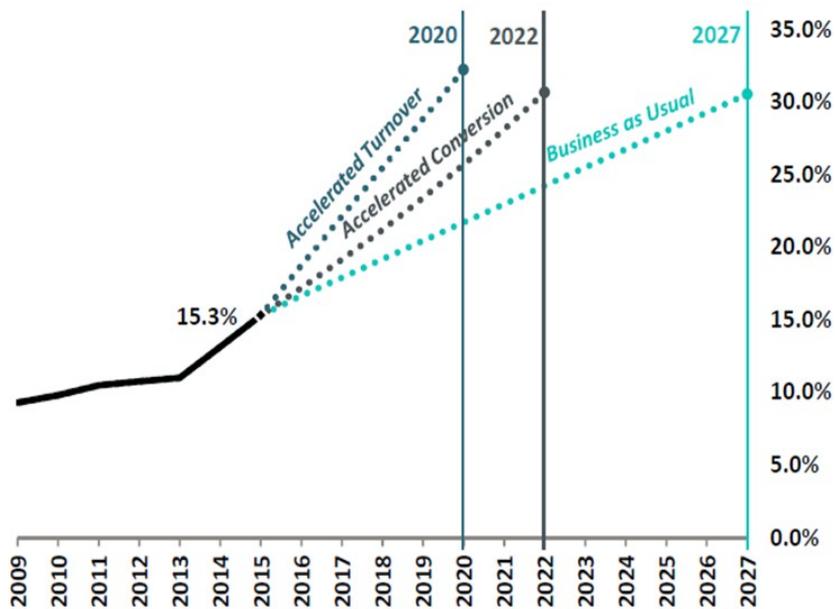


Figure Three: What are the barriers that affect women in leadership?

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Glass Ceiling	20	0	1	.85	.366
Lack of mentors	20	0	1	.80	.410
Biased recruitment policies	20	0	1	.85	.366
Resistance from other employees	20	0	1	.70	.470
Gender Stereotypes	20	0	1	.90	.308
Inappropriate organizational culture	20	0	1	.70	.470
Valid N (listwise)	20				

The figure above shows some of the factors that the participants pointed out. All of these elements are capable of affecting women in leadership positions negatively. One of the issues that stand out in this analysis is sexual discrimination and harassment. A lot of women are denied the opportunity to get leadership positions due to their gender. Most people have the assumption that women can cope with the demands in this position. The standard deviation of all of the above variables is lower than 1. This indicates a strong correlation between these factors and the poor performance of women in leadership positions.

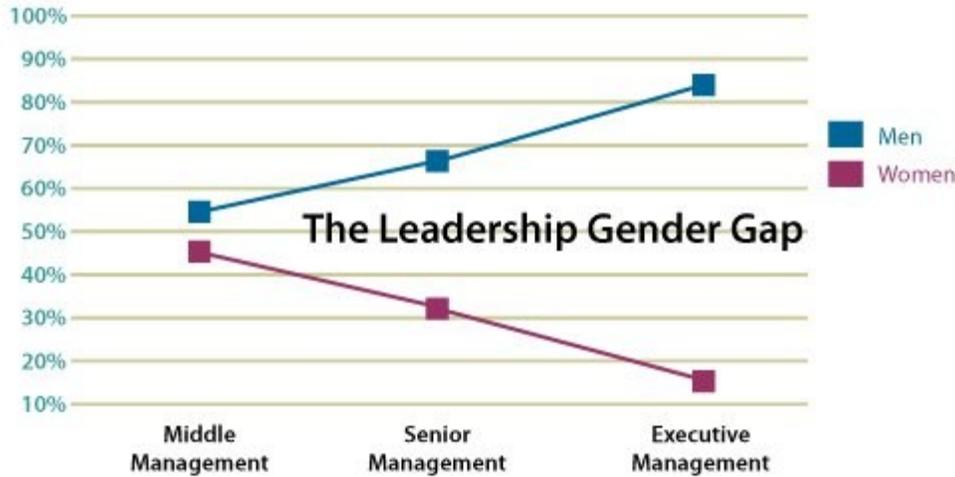
A lot of scholars have focused their efforts on this area to promote human rights. Research has revealed that women are indeed impacted by a variety of factors. Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) claim that the lack of education does not affect women in leadership but rather outdated institutional structures and unintentional biases. These factors are hindering the advancement and access of women. Gender stereotypes are also blocking women's access to senior managerial positions. Most organizations have developed their recruitment practices on male values, especially when recruiting, retaining, and promoting new staff. Female

characteristics, on the other hand, have been devalued and rendered meaningless. Grant & Taylor (2014) in their study emphasize that women face more scrutiny as compared to men in organizations. Female employees are evaluated more strictly than men holding similar positions. For instance, they can be described as too feminine, and thus prevented from accessing certain positions. Since women are considered as a weaker species, they have to invest more hard work in their activities to prove that they have the required leadership potential. Some scholars have even suggested that gender and race also affect women's access to managerial posts. For example, Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) suggest that black and Asian women face greater discrimination as compared to white people during recruitment activities.

The lack of mentality and morale to pursue leadership is also a huge barrier. Due to the presence of few female mentors, it is quite difficult for women to arise or believe that they can succeed in male-dominated fields. Unlike men, women usually take fewer career risks. They, therefore, deny themselves the opportunity to exploit different opportunities. The lack of mentality to lead occurs when women consider themselves incapable of holding certain positions. When female employees are continuously assigned less demanding or challenging tasks, they reach a certain level where they perceive themselves as weak. The probability of them applying for top leadership positions is, therefore, quite low (Glass & Cook, 2016). The existence of a few women in leadership positions acts as a precedent for another critical obstacle: the lack of mentors, role models, and sponsors. Since the number of women getting leadership roles is low, other female employees may find it hard to believe that they succeed in those areas (Morley, 2014). Mentors are crucial because they encourage women to take up leadership positions in their organizations. Sponsors also help in supporting women in their managerial roles. Therefore, the absence of these stakeholders creates an unfavorable environment.

Balancing work-life and family issues are also a challenge for women in leadership. Both of these positions are time-consuming and require commitment and dedication (Rhode, 2017). If women spend more time with their family, the chances of their organization running into difficulties are quite high. Similarly, their families will be affected negatively if they were to dedicate much of their time to conducting managerial functions. Family responsibilities also prevent women from advancing their careers. This causes them to lose a lot of opportunities to their male counterparts. Also, the lack of external and internal networks, opportunities, resources, and recognition makes it hard for women to develop (Madsen & Scribner, 2017). As stated before, it is difficult for women to occupy leadership positions without the support of relevant stakeholders. Leadership styles can also act as barriers for women in leadership. Research shows that men and women usually apply unique approaches when dealing with employees. Women may prefer to use specific procedures which will not win them much recognition among their peers. The salary gap is also a huge barrier for women. According to Heilman (2015), most women earn less than men though they hold similar positions. The morale of female leaders is decreased when they receive low salaries as compared to that of their male counterparts. Figure 2 below shows the leadership gender gap in different levels of leadership. As stated before, the gap seems to increase as women approach the top leadership level of their organization. As Haile et. al. (2016) put it, female employees literally 'disappear' on their journey to the top. This situation is also referred to as a glass ceiling and affects all nations in the world.

Figure Four: The increasing leadership gap between different management positions

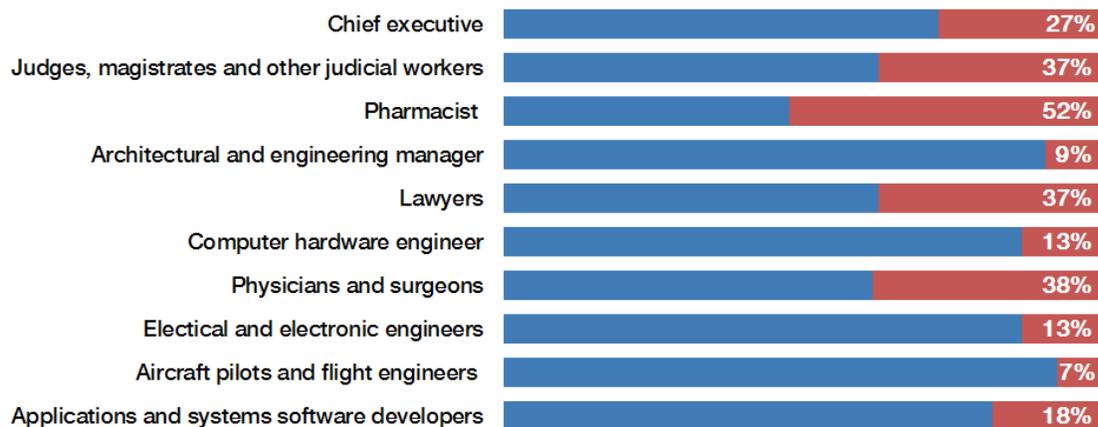


Naff (2018) also found that women in leadership are continuously being frustrated by the gender pay gap. Though they work hard and hold similar qualifications as those of their male counterparts, they are still underpaid and exposed to more stressful situations. According to the Joint Economic Committee (2016), salary disparities of more than 40% are usually a result of discrimination. Research has found that private firms have greater gender pay disparity as compared to public institutions. In the recent past, a lot of campaigns have been conducted to promote ‘*equal pay for equal work.*’ As shown in figure 3, women still occupy fewer of the well-paying jobs as compared to men. For instance, only 27% of female employees are chief executives in their respective firms. Women are underrepresented in complex fields such as aviation, engineering, and architecture. These are some of the areas that are dominated by men. Women fear to enter into these careers due to the complexities involved. They, therefore, miss out on crucial opportunities which could have allowed them to become leaders.

Figure Five: The percentage of men and women employed in high paying jobs in the USA

Gender breakdown of top 10 highest-paid jobs

Percentage of male (blue) and female (red) workers in America's highest-paid jobs.



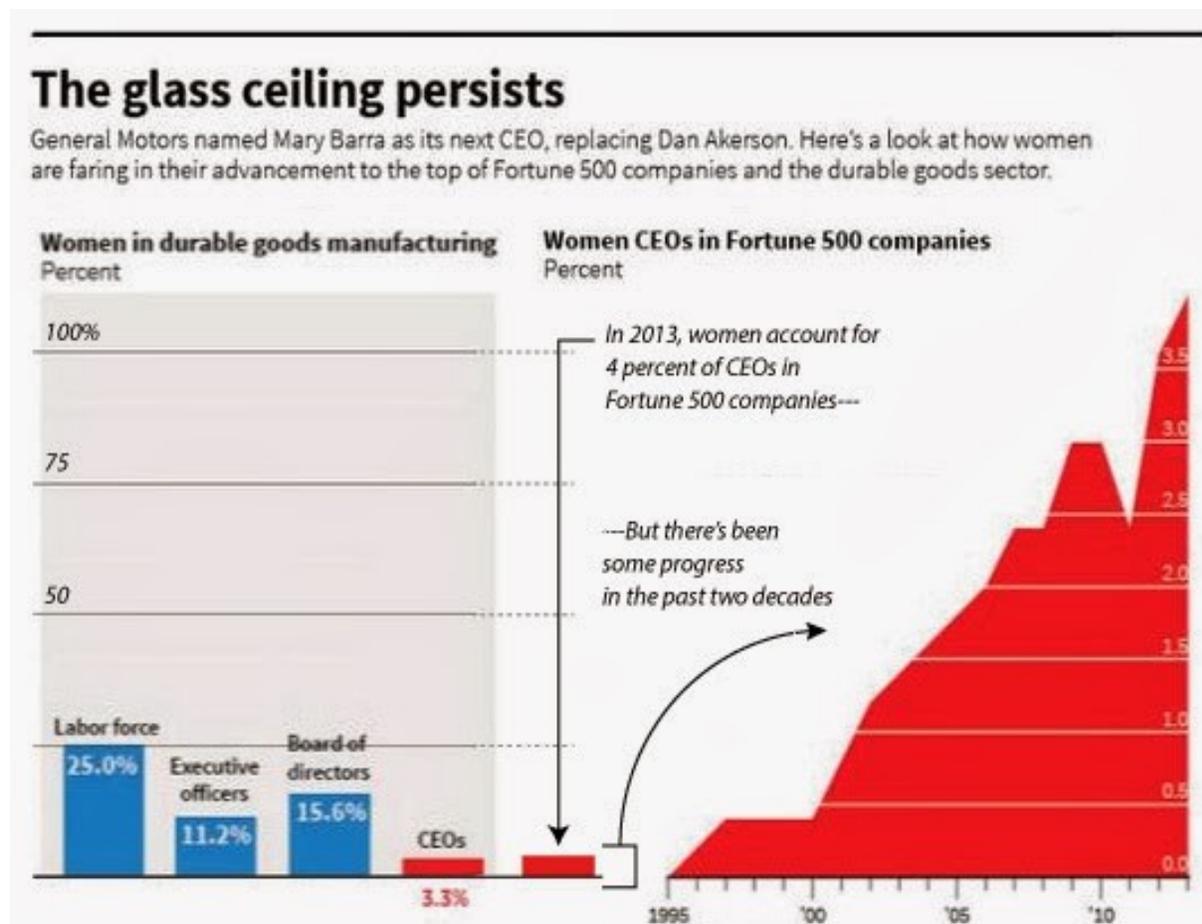
Data: US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015

What is the impact of glass ceilings on women leadership?

A research carried out by Ryan & Haslam (2007) reveals that glass ceilings have an impact on women leadership. This barrier is primarily responsible for the low number of women occupying leadership positions in most organizations. Any attempts to break the existing glass ceilings are met with a lot of resistance which forces women to pull out of the organization. In

some cases, the board of directors may fail to vote for a woman simply because they think that she will not manage to withstand and deal with the pressure in that position. The measures that organizations have implemented in the past to deal with this phenomenon have also yielded unexpected disappointing results.

Figure Six shows the persistence of the glass ceiling among major organizations.

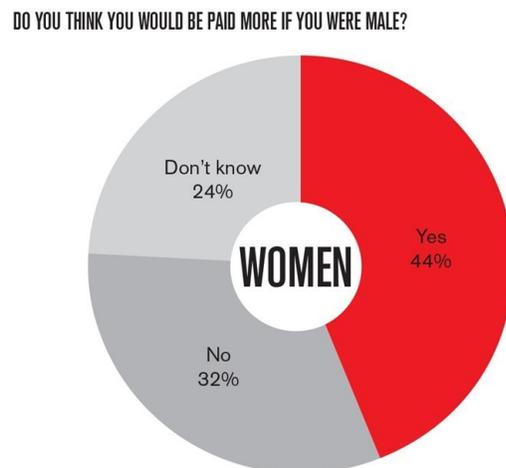


(Chezvoila, 2018)

What is the impact of the wage gap on women leaders?

Ryan & Haslam (2007), in their research, found that salaries have a direct impact on the performance of employees. Those individuals that are paid more are likely to work harder as compared to those who are paid less. Their research highlighted the severity of the gender wage pay gap. Evidently, many are still earning lower salaries as compared to their male counterparts, even though they hold similar managerial positions. The disparity in the income rates strikes a heavy blow on the motivation of these leaders. This ends up affecting their overall performance. Figure seven below shows the opinion of women as regards to the existing wage gap.

Figure Seven: Gender Wage Gap



Many female employees believe that they could have earned more if they were men. Despite the implementation of many reforms, a lot of organizations are yet to fully eradicate the gender wage gap.

What is the impact of career disruptions on women leadership?

Bierema (2016) also notes that career disruptions pose a lot of challenges to women in leadership positions. Most women are forced to cut short their leadership plans to take care of

their families. Furthermore, many men have abandoned their family responsibilities since they consider them as a woman's job. Data from secondary sources reveals that many women are unable to balance their leadership responsibilities and their family lives. In the table below, 53% of the respondents agree that family roles prevent women from engaging in effective leadership. Concentrating too much on these family responsibilities prevents women from expanding their academic qualifications.

Figure Eight: Family responsibilities and leadership

Employee responses on whether women are unable to balance family responsibility and leadership positions

Response	F	%
Yes	16	53.3
No	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Do hiring and recruitment policies affect women in leadership positions?

Williamson & Wilkie (2015) carried a study to evaluate how organizational recruitment policies affected women in leadership positions. Their research revealed that women were having trouble climbing up the organizational structure due to the biased recruitment practices of organizational. Women have been forced to satisfy more standards as compared to men. For instance, pregnant women were not allowed to occupy some positions. Such recruitment policies gave men an added advantage to occupy top leadership positions. Williamson & Wilkie (2015)

also found that the probability of men being promoted to top leadership positions is higher than that of female employees.

How does organizational culture act as a barrier to women in leadership positions?

Naff (2018) found that there was a direct relationship between organizational culture and the effectiveness of women in leadership. Those organizations that embraced female leaders in their operations were more likely to achieve success as compared to those that failed to do so. In addition, female leaders performed better in these environments since they had support from relevant stakeholders. Ellemers (2014) also found a number of organizations that had unfavorable cultures. For instance, workers in these organizations were not willing to be governed by a female leader. As a result, they openly engaged in resistance to ensure that female leaders are not successful. In some cases, workers that portray these behaviors usually go unpunished. This ends up increasing the severity of the problem. The poor support from the board of directors also decreased the effectiveness of female leaders. According to Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017), more than 50% of female leaders usually quit their positions within the first six months.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify the numerous barriers and biases that were affecting women in leadership position. Efforts to deal with this situation have not yielded much results. Radke, Hornsey, & Barlow (2016) noted that women were affected by cultural and educational factors. Furthermore, husbands whose wives held leadership positions also felt threatened. Most men do not like to have wives who earn or hold more powerful positions than them. The pressure to perform family duties also prevents women from succeeding in

leadership positions. The multiple roles that individuals play in society can become too overwhelming for them to concentrate on other areas. This study has also found that there is a glass ceiling in most of the industries in the United States. As women climb up the career ladder, their number drastically decreases. Also, the barriers affecting their positions continue to increase. In most organizations, the glass ceiling is evident in those jobs that have been primarily set aside for women. The glass ceiling effect prevents women from expanding their careers and occupying more demanding positions (Madsen & Scribner, 2017). It also prevents women from socializing with other male colleagues due to the negative perceptions. This situation ends up creating hostility in the organization and forces some women out of their leadership positions.

The study also revealed that pay-related issues had the ability to affect the performance of female leaders. The research shows the numerous genders pay disparities across the industry. Though women have similar education levels as men, they are rarely rewarded with promotions. The study has also shown how discriminative cultural practices can affect female leaders. The belief that women are weaker than men and cannot handle certain tasks is misleading. A lot of organizations divide their responsibilities based on this principle. As a result, women are prevented from occupying top leadership positions (Heilman, 2015). Men are also likely to impose dictatorial rule in their homestead that prevents women from performing their leadership responsibilities well. For example, they can tell their wives not to come home late hours. In the real sense, some organizational meetings usually require more time to be completed.

From the study, it is also evident that sexual discrimination and harassment affect a lot of women in leadership positions. All researchers that have been involved in this study note that cases of sexual harassment are rampant in most organizations. Many women are sexually harassed and victimized in their workplaces. They are also threatened by their bosses if they

make any attempt of reporting the issue to the authority. As a result, a lot of female employees choose to suffer in silence to protect their jobs. The recent MeToo Campaigns in the United States show the severity of this issue. Many female employees are opening up and revealing the horrifying things they were forced to put up with in certain organizations. Some organizations usually strive to ensure that these cases are not revealed to the public (Johns, 2013). For instance, they can bribe the victims with pay raises and promotions or even threaten them of dire consequences. The sexual harassment cases that occur in these organizations usually lower the self-esteem and dignity of women. As a result, they are discouraged from working hard because they think that they will be victimized.

From the research, there is also a positive relationship between gender stereotypes and female leadership. A huge number of participants perceive women as less logical, more emotional and expressive, less independent, as well as less goal-oriented (Hoyt, 2010). Men, on the other hand, are regarded as more decisive and independent. Men are also capable to perform better under pressure as compared to women. As a result, these negative gender stereotypes have relegated the position of women in society. The stereotypes have made it more difficult for women to hold meaningful positions in organizations. Research carried out by Carter & Peters (2016) reveals that most women hold undemanding positions in their firms. The popular jobs among women include secretary, attendants, and support staff. Despite the increase in education levels among women, they are yet to be given the respect that they deserve. Some men also believe that women in powerful leadership positions only got there through favors. Some male employees also believe that women are promoted just to satisfy the gender policy that was proposed by the government (Gabaldon et. al., 2016). As a result, some male colleagues are not willing to treat their female leaders with respect. For instance, they openly resist any attempts by

these leaders to introduce reforms in the organization. It is quite difficult for women to succeed in a male-dominated organization. The existence of 'old boy's networks' in these firms limits their access to opportunities. Women are usually inefficient when it comes to creating job networks. This is because they take more time to trust other individuals. Men, therefore, have a better opportunity of identifying new career opportunities and advancing to top leadership positions. Nevertheless, all the above scholars agree that non-supportive environments act as impediments to female leadership. This explains why only 21 companies in the Fortune 500 list had female CEOs in 2016. The few role models in these positions also cause women to feel inadequate and lower their ambitions. The above findings show that women are willing to work hard as long as they have the necessary support. The gender stereotypes and sexual discrimination act as stumbling blocks to their success. When compared to male employees, female leaders are usually isolated in their management tenure. In some cases, they do not have even the support of the board. Unless these issues are solved, women will still be unable to perform well in top leadership positions.

Conclusion

The research question that this paper sought to answer was: what barriers and biases affect women in leadership position? The above study has found that, indeed, women face numerous obstacles in their leadership. As stated before, the issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment are quite dominant in many organizations. Female employees are victimized and threatened of dire consequences if they dare to reveal what was happening to them. Organizational culture is also a major issue of concern (Grant & Taylor, 2014). The above findings show that most cultures focus on promoting male agendas. In such an environment it is quite difficult for female employees to climb up the organizational structure and occupy a leadership position.

The pressure to handle family responsibilities is also an issue of concern. Most husbands are usually non-supportive and leave all of their family responsibilities to women. It is quite difficult for female leaders to balance between these tasks. Glass ceilings are also present in most of the industries. The number of women in the workforce decreases as they climb up the ladder of success. The huge barriers present in organizations force female employees to abandon their dreams and settle for minor positions. The gender wage gap is still high despite the efforts that have been taken to deal with this phenomenon. Though this issue is not directly associated with leadership, it still demoralizes female leaders. The absence of enough professional networks causes women to lag behind in development. Lastly, gender stereotypes are also affecting women in leadership positions. Many people still believe that women can excel only in particular positions and not others.

Recommendations

The above issues act as impediments to female leadership and development. Numerous steps need to be taken to help promote women leadership (Grant & Taylor, 2014). Firstly, the government should consider implementing stricter policies to curb sexual harassment and discrimination. Those who engage in these activities should face the full force of the law. Furthermore, the licenses of those organizations that support sexual harassment should be revoked. The second step involves providing employees with training. Workshops can help change the perception of the individuals as regards to women (Carter & Peters, 2016). As a result, female leaders will receive greater support from the workforce. There is also the need to empower women socially. This can help change attitudes and increase their motivation. As a result, they will take up more leadership positions. Men also need to share family responsibilities with their wives. As stated before, the pressure to multitask reduces the effectiveness of female leaders. Husbands can help offload this burden by taking their roles seriously. Another recommendation is for more female mentors to arise and encourage other women to pursue success. For instance, they can share with them the steps that they took to achieve success. It is crucial for other managers to support female leaders in their organizations (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Just like men, women have the ability to boost organizational performance as long as they have the relevant support.

Future Research

This research was carried out under strict time limitations. As a result, various things were not conducted. For instance, the number of participants was too small to acquire any conclusive results. Further studies should, therefore, use a larger sample size. This will allow them to identify more issues affecting women in the workforces. The research also did not look at female leadership in the private and public sectors. Instead, all of the information was generalized. Future studies can, therefore, identify the sectors in which these issues are more dominant. This can help in the implementation of more effective policies. Lastly, future research should determine whether or not the policies that have been implemented to deal with this phenomenon are effective or not. This information is crucial because it enables stakeholders to make better decisions. In the 21st century, discrimination needs to be a thing of the past.

Significance or Implication

Women have passed through many challenges to reach their current position. However, there are still several factors that are affecting their well-being. This study seeks to evaluate the numerous barriers and biases that influence the success of women negatively. Rather than relying on assumptions, this research will outline facts that will help policymakers in making decisions. This study is also essential because it recommends some of the steps that can be taken to remedy the situation. The research also encourages the government to boost its efforts in promoting equality in public institutions. Private firms should also ensure that they follow all regulations and refrain from engaging in discrimination (Madsen & Scribner, 2017). The research also educates women about their rights and freedom. It encourages them to consider legal measures in case they are harassed or discriminated at the workplace. All individuals are equal and should, therefore, be treated with the respect that they deserve. Dividing employees into social classes

basing on gender is illegal and should be discouraged in all firms. The research will also motivate more women to hold leadership positions and act as mentors for the future generation. Most women are performing poorly simply because they lack sponsors (Johns, 2013). Therefore, the government and other organizations should sponsor women as they fight to attain leadership positions. The study also seeks to discourage the use of various myths and misconceptions. For instance, accusing women of engaging in sexual relationships to win promotions is demeaning. Such remarks can reduce the morale of many hardworking women. Family responsibilities should also be divided equally between the partners. Women are left behind simply because they have to balance their family duties with their work life. For society to change, such practices need to be a thing of the past.

The implications of this project are also significant. For starters, the number of women leaders is set to increase once the implementation of the suggested recommendations is done. Also, cases of sexual harassment and discrimination will reduce since women will be treated with greater respect. Organizations will also revise their recruitment and hiring processes. Instead of basing on gender, HRM managers should focus on the qualifications and skills of the applicants. These practices will open more leadership positions to female employees. Another implication of this study is that women will get the chance to advance their careers. These are the results from research that revealed issues concerning women confronting bias and barriers in leadership.

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