

Corporate Social Responsibility and Gender in Workplace

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ABSTRACT : *The term CSR relates to the continuing commitment of a company to behave fairly and responsibly towards the society and the environment within which it operates while contributing to economic competitiveness and progress. Today CSR is considered a valuable tool to create gender equality at the place where you work. Equality and diversity in the workplace are the main pillars of CSR. The companies are increasingly addressing the gender equality agenda and including it within their CSR programmes, because of shortage of skilled labour and a growth in the participation of women in the workforce. The inclusion of gender perspective in CSR can play a dynamic role in achieving gender equality in the workplace through activities, initiatives, strategies and policies that provide equal access to job opportunities to female employees and provide for equality of the treatment of women in the workplace. Regardless of the present legal provisions women are often deprived of their fundamental rights, given low-paid subsidiary jobs and are barred from the decision making process in the economy. Women have faced discrimination both at home and at the societal level. The very fact of women being adequately represented in the work-force, but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been tagged as glass ceiling. This paper is try to extend our understanding of CSR as a potential policy instrument to advance gender equality as well as to highlight the factors that account for this glass ceiling, and comes up with suggestions as to how to deal with the problems. The paper concludes that there is a need for policies that promote women's role, opportunities and rights in the workplace and empower and enable the complete workforce, both men and women, to contribute and participate with their capacity. With the right CSR strategy and gender balance in the workplace, companies can reflect a better public and brand image and will succeed in creating a sustainable workforce that can focus on and invest in excellent performance sets.*

KEYWORDS: *CSR, Gender diversity and equality, Glass Ceiling*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term Corporate Social Responsibility has been gaining an amazing appearance at the global level recently. CSR relates to the continuing commitment of a company to behave fairly and responsibly towards the society and the environment within which it operates while contributing to economic competitiveness and progress. CSR expands the activities of a business entity from a limited number of consumers and shareholders, to the entire globe or the stakeholders (employees, community, suppliers, environmental groups and government). Thus, CSR focuses on main elements: the community, the workplace, the marketplace and the environment. Now-a-days, the term has been linked up with Quadruple Bottom Line Reporting which essentially measures the performance of an enterprise against economic, social and environmental and spiritual indicators. The social aspect of quadruple bottom line reporting concentrates on the fair treatment of human capital by providing fair wages and a safe workplace and performing responsible and beneficial business activities and practices within the community. The ethics and practice of CSR require that businesses provide acceptable work conditions to their employees, and help them attain a better quality of life. Socially responsible human resource management strives to provide a commitment to life-long learning, health and safety, a healthy balance between work, family and leisure, better workforce diversity and gender blind rewards and career opportunities.

CSR is considered a valuable tool to create gender equality in the place where you work. Equality and diversity in the workplace are the main pillars of CSR. Now-a-days companies are increasingly addressing the gender equality agenda and including it within their CSR programmes, because of shortage of skilled labour and a growth in the participation of women in the workforce. The inclusion of gender perspective in CSR can play a dynamic role in achieving gender equality in the workplace through activities, initiatives, strategies and policies that provide equal access to job opportunities to female employees and provide for equality of the treatment of women in the workplace. It goes without saying that regardless of the present legal provisions women are often deprived of their fundamental rights, given low-paid subsidiary jobs, subjected to sexual harassment, barred from the decision making process in the economy and are not recognized as contributors to the family and

society as a whole. Women have faced discrimination both at home and at the societal level. Even though gender inequality has been on the schema of social research and activism for decades, gender inequality in organizational leadership has been despondently ignored. The workplace has become a chief arena in the struggle for gender equality. In developing nations, women face tremendous problems in securing employment. Even in developed nations, the problems of inequalities are persistent. In the United States, women working the same jobs as men made only 82.2% of the wages, and only 3% of the world's CEOs are women. Today all over the world women still face challenges when it comes to truly achieving equality in the workplace. Women have attained incredible triumph in the so-called male dominating working world. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of women in the workforce over the years with a parallel increase in the number of highly educated women equipped with technical expertise. However, gender inequality in the workplace has given rise to the problems such as occupational segregation based upon gender, gender-based wage discrimination etc., all of which have impacted their advancement in jobs that acquire higher societal recognition among men. Progression of women in management jobs has not kept tempo with the corresponding rise in the number of working women. Despite their technical and professional qualifications or achievements, women are prohibited from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach the top management positions. That's why; their presence in senior management level is negligible. Research and surveys in India disclose that men out-number women in terms of attaining top managerial positions. Review of secondary sources shows that data on Indian female managers is almost non-existent. The very fact of women being adequately represented in the work-force, but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been tagged as the glass ceiling, which is "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, however so strong that it stops women from moving up in the management hierarchy."

II. THE BUSINESS CASE FOR CSR AND GENDER EQUALITY

In 2010 the UN Global Compact placed Gender Equality on the CSR agenda through the launch of the Women Empowerment Principles. These principles address the issue of gender equality in all areas including leadership, entrepreneurship and supply chains in communities. The principles give practical examples and create awareness of what corporations can do to empower women's role in the workplace. Empowerment of women to enable them to participate completely in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is necessary to:

- Build powerful economies;
- Create more stable societies;
- Achieve internationally agreed goals for sustainability, development and human rights;
- Improve quality of life for families and communities, women, men; and
- Boost the operations and goals of businesses.

Yet, ensuring the inclusion of women's talents, skills, experience and energies require intentional actions and deliberate policies. There is increasing evidence that gender equality, diversity and sensitivity in the workplace leads to improved productivity of employees, and subsequently the company as a whole. The 'business case' for gender equality claims that the competitiveness of organizations can be increased through improved diversity management, particularly by dropping turnover and training costs and minimizing reputational and litigation risks arising from potentially discriminatory behavior. Thus, there exists a strong correlation between gender diversity in management & financial performance. According to a report by McKinsey & Co 2007, the companies where women are most strongly represented in top management are also the companies which outperform those with no women in top management. Also, in some other study it was highlighted that gender inclusive leadership actually causes companies to be more socially responsible and also leads to increased philanthropy and environmental benefits.

III. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GLASS CEILING

There are many direct and indirect factors that contribute to gender inequality in the corporate world. The important ones are highlighted as:

Organization related Factors: The overall situation of women and gender dynamics are affected by the organizational policies, structures and values. There exist the traditional stereotypes or old mental perceptions regarding women's commitment to their jobs because of their social roles and the secondary role of the job for them. Women are offered positions that have titles with little real power or supervisory authority. Responsibilities such as sales and production positions that are vital for progression to the top are thought-out to be 'no-woman' areas. It is also observed that some companies have well documented and successfully communicated policies, but these are not necessarily implemented into practice or rooted within the company

customs. Further, there are certain structural factors also which impede the career growth of the women such as discriminatory recruitment and promotion policies, absence of legal policies to ensure women participation, absence of women in unions or committees inside or outside the organization, lack of leadership training and opportunities for career development for women etc.

Society related Factors: The socio-cultural perceptions which establish the attitudes and behaviors of individual men and women form barriers to the equal participation of women in higher management. In addition to the legal structure, society directly and indirectly enforces certain practices and tolerable standards such as the role of women, priorities for women, the time women can work etc. The common societal notions that women's role is primary as a housewife and child bearer and job is their second priority and that they are temporarily in the market place to supplement their family income create problems. Thus, social perception affects the ability of women to work in certain departments, work overtime and perform their duties effectively.

Personal Factors: There are so many personal factors relating to women that affect their career growth such as personality, attitudes and behavioral skills of women themselves, lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, limited aspirations in the field of management, lack of motivation and aspiration to accept challenges to go up the ladder, being less assertive, less emotionally stable, women's unwillingness to boast of their achievements and capabilities making them institutionally invisible and lacking ability to handle a crisis. There are also the factors relating to male personalities such as male managerial styles, discourse and language that shut women out, the persistence of cultural values and attitudes that strongly support women's childcare, family and domestic responsibilities as priority over career aspirations.

Legal Factors: The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Fundamental Rights, Indian Constitution, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution guarantees equality to women, it also empowers the State to take on measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Remedies under labour statutes, of course, remain available. For example, protection against gender-based discrimination in recruitment and promotions is guaranteed by the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (ERA). There are labor laws which provide for a certain degree of protection for women's rights in the workplace i.e. maternity leave, childcare etc. But, women in the unorganized sector are also often not covered under labour laws since these laws are confined to industries/ sectors employing a minimum of workers. This is a form of discrimination against unorganized workers. The recently enacted Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, aims to provide minimum benefits to such workers. Further, there are no provisions which specifically prohibit gender discrimination in labor opportunities or in the workplace, and no provisions pressure equal salaries for men and women who hold the same positions. These legislations are not enough to provide the sufficient encouragement for women to enter the workplace. There are numerous loopholes that remain providing the private sector with an opportunity to discourage or limit the employment, opportunities and growth of women in the workplace. Protective legislations need to be strengthened to empower the most vulnerable women workers in the country.

IV. SOME CORPORATE EXAMPLES ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY

- [1] **Infosys** is an Indian IT company that puts a focus on gender diversity. The company has established the Infosys Women Inclusivity Network to encourage a gender sensitive work environment and the Family Matters Network to offer help to employees on parenting matters. As a result of, today women make up above 32% of the Infosys workforce.
- [2] **Titan Industries Ltd.** ("Titan") is an Indian company that is part of the Tata Group and that manufactures watches, jewelry and glasses. Through its program, MEADOW i.e. (Management of Enterprise and Development of Women), the company has created opportunities for poor women from rural Indian communities to become wage earners and supported women's entrepreneurship through business education.
- [3] **Johnson & Johnson**, headquartered in New Jersey, is one of the world's leading providers of health care products and services. The company includes diversity as a significant process not only in recruiting, but also in its supply chain, product development, sales, marketing and advertising. The company is also promoting women to senior management positions, which signifies gender diversity.
- [4] **Ericsson**, a Swedish provider of technology and services to telecom operators, has started a programme to bring high speed internet connectivity to rural Tamil Nadu, India. The program aims to provide the region with a wide variety of internet-based resources which will help the region's women to access to regular medical checkups via telemedicine and to register newborn children online, ensuring eligibility for essential health and education services.

- [5] Microsoft-india is trying to bring back the women who had left the jobs of their company because of personal reasons and staying at home by giving flexible hours of working and work from home to bring the gender diversity

V. SUGGESTIONS TO REMOVE THE GENDER GAPS

One of the main mechanisms for promoting gender equality is the policy of **Gender Mainstreaming** which means the reorganization, enhancement, growth and assessment of policy processes, to include a gender equality perspective is included in all policies at all stages, by the persons involved in policy making. The inclusion of gender into the mainstream of business thinking will necessitate the alteration and reorientation of present policies, a transformation in decision-making processes, prioritization of gender-equality goals and re-thinking the position of multi-stakeholders –employees, customers, suppliers so that existing policy goals are more effectively achieved. Thus, there is a need for policies that promote women's role, opportunities and rights in the workplace and empower and enable the workforce, both men and women, to contribute and participate with their capacity. Some of the suggestions in this area are:

- There should be a **fundamental change in the organizational policies and practices** to eliminate inappropriate discrimination against women in the workplace. Companies should organize well-defined diversity and inclusion programs with the aim to promote gender diversity through recruitment and retention efforts, to promote employee awareness and gender-specific accountability measures.
- Managers should be given **training** on how to deal with **gender diversity** and encourage gender equality in the workplace. Further, there should be training for recruitment and selection staff to ensure the incoming employees can create a more balanced workplace.
- **Women** need to develop the confidence, attitude and skills needed to succeed in business and enterprising activities. Women should be **aware of their rights** and they should be trained on how to be more proactive in the workplace and how to deal with conflicts, sexual harassment and complaints. so companies should organized awareness programs for women of organization as a part of CSR.
- Actions should be taken to **change the present mental models** and informal cultures that are prevalent against women. There should be a shift from traditional stereotypes to an open minded perception to value women's skills and contributions in the workplace more, create an equal opportunity for women entering the workplace and overcoming inappropriate job segregations based upon gender.
- Gender-related **education and training programs** should also be organized to raise employee awareness of gender issues and how these issues impact inter-office relationships. Such trainings help establish interpersonal relationships and discourage sex discrimination in the workplace.
- Measures should be implemented to **facilitate work-life balance** for women such as flexible working hours, career flexibility etc.
- It should be ensured that recruitment; appraisal and career management systems do not hold women back in their professional development. Thus, there is need to **adapt the Human Resource Management process** also.

VI. CONCLUSION

The whole show presents the picture that women in India experience a slower progression compared to their male counterparts. In spite of easy entry, head ways slows down and in most situations regardless of their qualifications, performances or achievements, women are prohibited from hiking the corporate hierarchy to the top. There are certain examples of the women, who have come to very top in their world of work, such Kiran Mazumdar Shaw of Biocon, Chanda Kochhar, the incumbent MD & CEO of ICICI Bank, Vinita Bali of Britannia Industries, Kalpana Chawla, Sunita Williams of NASA, President Pratibha Patil, Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of UPA, Mamata Banerjee- MP, Jayalalitha (TN) from Indian Politics, Arundhati Roy, Shobaa De, Priety Zinta from IPL. But, the success stories of few women making it to the top are does not show the complete picture. Excluding a handful examples cited above, an overwhelming majority of Indian boardrooms are still no-entry areas for women. Women today comprise only 2 percent of the total managerial strength in the Indian Management sector. Although India is witnessing an increasing number of women occupying management positions in leading companies but still India's performance is well below the global level. Thus, there is need to create awareness regarding gender issues at the corporate and societal level. With the right CSR strategy and gender balance in the workplace, companies can reflect a better public and brand image and will succeed in creating a sustainable workforce that can focus on and invest in excellent performance sets. On the other hand If the companies gave them proper status, position and money in the corporate world then without any doubt their position will improve in the home and they will earn more respect in the family and it will help in bringing the much needed

improvement in mental modal of our society. so companies should include gender diversity as a compulsory factor in their corporate social responsibility for their own benefit and for the benefit of society.

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