An Analysis on Psychological Barriers faced by Women Leaders in IT Companies

Dr. K.Vidyakala[1], HoD, Department of Business Administration, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. S. Poornima[2], Associate Professor, HoD (Rtd.) & Associate Professor , Department of Business Administration, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Dr. J. Sheela[3], Assistant Professor, Centre for Women's Studies, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Mrs. Raji Jennet[4], Research Scholar (FT), Department of Business Administration, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, India.

Dr. K. Nithyakala[5], Assistant Professor, Department of Women's Studies, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, India.

Abstract - Women leaders play an increasing and significant role in today's economy. Their income and spending capacity are critical to the country's economic well-being. Most of the corporate companies hire men for the top positions. The fundamental structure of patriarchal society depends upon the understanding that male are superior, more powerful, and that they represent the "norm," whereas women are considered as inferior; they lack in power and autonomy. The power of socialization that underlies this system cannot be ignored. In fact, gender related patriarchal values are so deeply ingrained in society's consciousness that they are largely invisible. Thus, women are more likely than men to encounter negative expectations and reactions, making it more difficult for them to reach positions of respect, influence, and leadership. In this study the barriers faced by women leaders in job related stress, gender related barrier and work life balance and how these type of psychological barriers affects women leaders in their workplace.

Key words: Women leaders, psychological barriers.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Due to fundamental gains achieved by women in the workplace. There has been a growth in the women holding senior and leading positions around the world in comparison with previous years. For example, 51 % of senior management positions were held by women in China. This increasing rate can be seen in other countries as well e.g., Japan (7%), United Arab Emirates (11 %), and Netherlands (11 %). Jordan enhances the role of women and the importance of their presence in all sectors e.g. (political, social and economic life) (Basil Alzougool, 2015). The proportion of women in the workforce has grown from just over a third of all workers in 1970 to almost half of the total workforce in 2012. And in the education and healthcare sectors, the percentage is even higher: women account for 77.4 percent of the workforce. Increasingly women are obtain higher educational degrees, and they now represent 60 percent of all bachelor degrees conferred annually, an increase of 20 percent since 1970 (Merida L. Johns 2013).

Gender roles are instead socially constructed classifications that are inspired and furthered by the overarching influence of patriarchy within society, communities, and families. Women are generally concentrated in the lower, supportive positions necessary to keep this male leadership in power. Hence, the power, prestige, and privileges of those in positions of power, generally males, depend on the subordinate position of women. This ordering of power thus has serious consequences for women's leadership. When women move into leadership positions, they are conditioned by the perspectives and power structures to maintain the status quo; while gender composition may be changed, the underlying structure of power, knowledge, status, and wealth is not challenged. Simply put, male dominance is the main obstacle to women rising to top positions in corporations and politics. Furthermore, traditional gender roles, still widespread in society, are barriers to women climbing corporate ladders. Current value systems largely support the notion that it is better for the family if the father is employed and the mother takes care of the majority of parental responsibilities.

Unsupportive attitudes from family, friends, and co-workers may have negative effects on women's work and their roles in society (Jakobsh-2012).

Job Related Stress

Job stress is the unbearable physical and emotional responses that happen when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2002). Stress can be generally defined as the negative reaction people have to aspects of their environment as they perceive it. Stress is a response to an inducement and involves a sense of an inability to cope. Job stress can be defined as an employee's awareness or feeling of personal dysfunction as a result of perceived conditions or happenings in the workplace, and the employee's psychological and physiological reactions caused by these uncomfortable, undesirable, or threats in the employee's immediate workplace environment (Montgomery et al., 1996).

Gender Related Barriers

Gender barriers to communication arise because men and women have a different way of communication and each feels uncomfortable while talking to the other because of the basic differences in communication styles. They face problems in work place like sexual harassment, lack of family support, poor security and unequal pay. In a workplace where women and men share equal stature, knowledge and experience, differing communication styles may prevent them from working together effectively. These gender barriers may be inherent or may be related to gender stereotypes and the ways in which men and women are taught to behave as children. Although not all men or all women communicate the same way as the rest of their gender, researchers have identified several traits that tend to be more common in one gender or the other. Understanding these tendencies is key in creating a work environment that fosters open communication among all employees.

Work Life Balance

Increased participation of women in the work force creates challenges for them to balance work and family obligations. The situation becomes more complicated in patriarchal societies   due to women's stereotypical domestic roles, religious prescriptions as well as cultural norms and values. Among other challenges, managing work and family responsibilities is one of the most significant challenges women face (Frone et al., 1992; Guendouzi, 2006; Noor, 2004). In an effort to increase work-life balance, women have started entering into self-employment to gain more flexibility and control over their work and personal lives (Baber and Monaghan, 1988; Ward, 2007). Balancing work and family is often more difficult for women than for men because of the disproportionate burden of the family responsibilities (Bird, 2006). Women face uneven distribution of childcare and other domestic responsibilities which become major barriers in the advancement of their career (Cross and Linehan, 2006).

This study aims to explore how different psychological barriers have an effect on women leaders in their workplace with special reference to information technology companies in the Coimbatore city.

Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the significance of demographic profile of the respondents towards the psychological barriers faced by women leaders.
- To identify the association between the different demographics profile of the respondents.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Schein (2001), found that the early 1970s Schein identified managerial sex typing as a major psychological barrier to the advancement of women in the United States. The globalization of management brings to the forefront the need to examine the relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics in the international arena. A review of the replications of the Schein research in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, China, and Japan provides the basis for a global look at the "think manager–think male" phenomenon. Implications of the outcomes, especially among males, for women's progress in management worldwide are discussed.

Lorene (2010), examined the progress of women's rights and the increase of opportunity women do now enjoy in the context of the discrimination which still exists against them. Current discrimination and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes by both masculine and feminine society are explored. The psychological aspect of the issue is examined at length. The ways in which psychological phenomena continue to oppress females are discussed, and the absence of certain socially nurtured psychological mentalities on the part of women as factors for motivation are also presented. Possible solutions to the complex problem are offered via recommendations to the educational community about academic courses and career guidance, both which have proved to diminish negative psychology. Finally, a review of legislation which has helped to battle discrimination is given and an invocation is made to all readers to emphasize the need for tougher legislation to law officials in order to more strongly battle lingering discriminatory incidents.

Hannum, et al, (2017), found that 35 women at the senior-most levels of institutions of higher education and explored their journey into senior leadership roles and their experience of being a leader in higher education today. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, coded, and analyzed. Included is a statistical comparison of the experiences of white women and women of color. This

research contributes to a deeper understanding of the experiences of women in senior leadership positions in higher education. The women leaders in this study provide more detailed descriptions of the positive aspects of being in a leadership role than have been previously reported. The positive aspects of being in a leadership role are important to document in order to provide balanced perspective on the experiences of being a senior leader and a woman in higher education.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Type of Research:** The present study is descriptive in nature.

- **Area of the study:** The study was conducted among the women leaders IT Companies in Coimbatore. **Population** includes women leaders who are working as a team leader, project manager and associate manager of IT Companies, Coimbatore.

- **Sampling technique:** Convenience sampling technique is used to select the sample. Primary data collection was done through survey method using a well-structured questionnaire. The Sample Size of 75 women respondents from the IT companies in Coimbatore was chosen through convenience sampling method.

- **Tools used for analysis:** Cross tabulation, Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (Anova)

- **Analysis and Interpretation:** The collected data is processed, classified, and interpreted using the following statistical analysis:

    #### Cross tabulation and Chi-square test
    Cross tabulation is two/n way classification of data. Chi-square is compares the counts of categorical responses between two (or more) independent groups.

    #### Cross tabulation of Age and Designation

Table 1: Cross tabulation of Age and Designation

Age (years)	Team Leader	Project Manager	Associate Manager	Total
20-30	10	8	5	23
31-40	7	6	5	18
41-50	5	5	6	16
above 50	5	7	6	18
Total	27	26	22	75

Source: Primary data

Finding: The above table shows the cross tabulation of 75 respondents, 23 respondents are in 20-30 years, of which 10 are team leaders, 8 are project managers and 5 are in associate manager level. 18 respondents are in the age group between 31-40 years, 7 respondents are team leaders, 6

respondents are project managers and 5 respondents are associate mangers. 16 respondents are in the age group 41-50 years, of which 5 respondents are team leaders, 5 respondents are project managers and 6 respondents are associate mangers. Among the 18 respondents above 50 years of age, 5 are team leaders, 7 are project managers and 6 are associate manger level.

Table 2. **Chi-square test**

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.379[a]	6	.002
Likelihood Ratio	20.898	6	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.988	1	.159
N of Valid Cases	75		

Source: Primary data

Result: The above table shows significant association (x^2= 21.379, p<0.002) between Age and Designation. As the chi-square sig.value (p<0.002) is less than 0.05, it indicates that the association between age and designation is significant.

Cross tabulation of Education and designation

Table 3: Cross tabulation of Education and Designation

Education	Designation			Total
	team leader	project manager	associate manager	
Diploma	5	5	5	15
Degree	5	5	5	15
master's degree	5	5	5	15
Professional	5	5	5	15
Others	5	6	4	15
Total	25	26	24	75

Source: Primary data

Finding: The table 3 shows that among the 75 respondents, 15 respondents are diploma holders, of which 5 are at team leader level, 5 are project managers and 5 are in associate manger level. Of the 15 respondents are degree holders, 5 respondents are team leaders, 5 respondents are project managers and 5 respondents are associate mangers. Of the 15 respondents are master's degree holders, of which 5 respondents are in the team leaders, 5 respondents are project managers and 5 respondents are associate mangers. Among the 15 respondents are professional degree holders, of which 5 are on team leaders, 5 are in project managers and 5 are in associate manger level. Of the 15 respondents are hold other qualification, of which 5 respondents are team leaders, 6 respondents are project managers and 4 respondents are associate mangers.

Table 4: **Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.132[a]	8	.002
Likelihood Ratio	25.517	8	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.343	1	.021
N of Valid Cases	75		

Source: Primary data

Result: There is significant association (x^2= 24.132, p<0.002) between education and Designation. As the chi-square sig.value (p<0.002) is less than 0.05, it indicates that the association between education and designation is significant.

The present study outcome concurs with the study of Alexandra Beauregard (2009).

Table 5: ANOVA Marital status and Psychological barriers

↓ Analysis of variance (ANOVA):

The principle of ANOVA is to test for differences among the mean of the populations by examining the amount of variation within each of these samples, relative to the variation between the samples using SPSS software version 16.0.

o **ANOVA: Marital status and Psychological barriers (Job related stress, gender related barriers, Work-life balance)**

Null Hypothesis H0: There is no significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and marital status groups.

Alternate Hypothesis H1: There is significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and marital status groups.

ANOVA						
Socio-Psychological Barriers		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.JRSAVG	Between Groups	4.867	3	1.622	3.074	.033*
	Within Groups	37.469	71	.528		
	Total	42.336	74			
2.GRBAVG	Between Groups	2.478	3	.826	3.032	.035*
	Within Groups	19.341	71	.272		
	Total	21.819	74			
3.WLBAVG	Between Groups	1.846	3	.615	2.250	.090
	Within Groups	19.419	71	.274		
	Total	21.265	74			

*5% level of significance

Findings: From the analysis it is found that there is significant difference between job related stress, gender related barriers and different marital status group (F= 3.074, p= .033 and F=3.032, p=.035 were p<0.05). Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

The f value is 2.250 and the significant level is 0.090. The calculated table is more than the table value of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between marital status and work life balance.

o **ANOVA: Mother Tongue and Socio-Psychological barriers (Job related stress, gender related barriers, Work-life balance)**

Null Hypothesis H0: There is no significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and different mother tongue groups.

Alternate Hypothesis H1: There is significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and different mother tongue groups.

Table 6: ANOVA: Mother Tongue and Socio-Psychological barriers

ANOVA						
Socio-Psychological Barriers		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Total	15.464	74			
1.JRSAVG	Between	9.539	4	2.385	5.090	.001*

	Groups					
	Within Groups	32.797	70	.469		
	Total	42.336	74			
2.GRBAVG	Between Groups	8.305	4	2.076	10.755	.000*
	Within Groups	13.514	70	.193		
	Total	21.819	74			
3.WLBAVG	Between Groups	2.863	4	.716	2.722	.036*
	Within Groups	18.403	70	.263		
	Total	21.265	74			

*5% level of significance

Findings: From the analysis it can be seen that there is significant difference between job related stress, gender related barriers, work life balance and different groups of mother tongue (F= 5.090, p= .001, F=10.755, p=.000 and F=2.722, p=.036 were p<0.05). Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

- **ANOVA: Total experience and Socio-Psychological barriers (Job related stress, gender related barriers, Work-life balance)**

Null Hypothesis H0: There is no significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and different total experience groups.

Alternate Hypothesis H1: There is significant difference in the dimensions of Socio-Psychological barriers of the respondents and different total experience groups.

Table 7: ANOVA: Total experience and Socio-Psychological barriers

ANOVA						
Socio-Psychological Barriers		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.JRSAVG	Between Groups	4.192	3	1.397	2.601	.059
	Within Groups	38.145	71	.537		
	Total	42.336	74			
2.GRBAVG	Between Groups	2.672	3	.891	3.303	.025*
	Within Groups	19.146	71	.270		
	Total	21.819	74			
3.WLBAVG	Between Groups	2.818	3	.939	3.615	.017*
	Within Groups	18.447	71	.260		
	Total	21.265	74			

*5% level of significance

IV. FINDINGS

From the analysis it can be seen that there is significant difference between gender related barriers, work life balance and different total experience groups (F= 3.303, p= .025 and F=3.615, p=.017 were p<0.05). Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

The f value is 2.601 and the significant level is 0.059. The calculated table is more to the table value of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between total experience and job related stress. The results of this study concur with the result of Akpinar (2013).

V. SUGGESTIONS

- Women leaders are not able to balance their work and career. So the organizations should support women leaders like child care facility, flexible timings and work at home etc.
- Women leaders feel they are less qualified to handle their job, so they should be motivated to work comfortably with the help of senior authorities.

Since the respondents lack proper communication with their peers at times, the top management should facilitate frequent discussions among their teams to promote gender equality.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that job related stress and gender related barriers are the most affecting socio-psychological barriers faced by women leaders in IT sector. Nowadays, stress is a growing problem in the workplace. The problems due to high level of stress are exhibited physically, psychologically and behaviourally by an individual. Because women need to play multiple roles in which they are not able to provide full potential. This study indicates that work-life balance is also one of the most significant drivers for women leaders. Some of them consider leadership as a burden while some others may take it as opportunity to prove their leadership efficiency. Career mentors for women leaders in IT sector may help them to achieve higher level positions in future.

REFERENCE

[1] Akpinar-Sposito(2013), "The Glass Ceiling: Structural, Cultural and Organizational Career Barriers for French and Turkish Women Executives", Le 24ème congrèsde AGRH 2013, Nov 2013, PARIS, France. 2013.

[2] Alexandra Beauregard and Lesley C. Henry((2009) Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance. Human resource management review, 19. pp. 9-22. ISSN 1053-4822

[3] Basil Alzougool (2015), "Women's Leadership Styles in Private Sector in Jordan" International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology, Vol. 6, No. 3, (pp.166)

[4] Baber, K. and Monaghan, P. (1988), "College women's career and motherhood expectation", Sex Roles, Vol. 19 Nos 3/4, pp. 189-203.

[5] Bird, S.R. (2006), "Theorizing masculinities: recent trends in the social sciences", Gender Studies Journal of Eastern Europe, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 1-21

[6] Cross, C. and Linehan, M. (2006), "Barriers to advancing female careers in the high-tech sector: empirical evidence from Ireland", Women in Management Review, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 28-39.

[7] Elmuti (2009), "Challenges Women Face in Leadership Positions and Organizational Effectiveness" Journal of Leadership Education, Volume 8, Issue 2, (pp.167-168).

[8] Frone, M., Russell, M. and Copper, M. (1992), "Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: testing a model of the work-family interface", Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 77 No. 1, pp. 65-78.

[9] Guendouzi, J. (2006), "The guilt thing: balancing domestic and professional roles", Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 68 No. 4, pp. 901-10.

[10] Jakobsh, Doris R. (2012)"Barriers to Women's Leadership." Encyclopedia of Leadership. Ed. . Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2004. 77-81. SAGE Reference Online. Web. 30 Jan.

[11] Merida L. Johns (2013) "Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Structural, Cultural, and Organizational Barriers Preventing Women from Achieving Senior and Executive Positions", Online research journal Perspectives in Health Information management, Published online 2013Jan 1

[12] Noor, N. (2004), "Work-family conflict, work- and family-role salience and women's well-being", Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 144 No. 4, pp. 389-405.

[13] Richa Agarwal (2015), "Gender and work-life balance" University of Delhi, conference center, (pp. 58-63).

[14] Ward, L. (2007), "Women: taking care of business: the government suggests becoming an entrepreneur is the perfect way for women to achieve work-life balance. But is it all it is cracked up to be", The Guardian (UK), 16 March.