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CORPORATE STEREOTYPING OF WOMEN AT WORK PLACE

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Abstract

Stereotyping is an issue faced by women across the world. There have always been clear distinct roles for women and men in the society because of nature-versus-nurture debate that has haunted the humanity for very long. The main motive of the research is to test the effects of women stereotyping at their work places and how it could affect their confidence level in while moving onto the higher managerial positions. It is reported that women held under a quarter (24%) of senior roles across the world in 2016, which is only 3% of increase from 2011. Furthermore, one third (33%) of global businesses had no women in senior management roles, a number which has stayed stagnant since 2011. It is feared that in given circumstances and level of growth, women will not reach parity with men until 2060. The primary reason attributed to this discrimination is stereotyping faced by women in the form of gender inequalities, biased leadership, traditions and culture. The purpose of the study is to examine existence of this phenomena and how it may affect self-confidence, work performance of women working at entry and senior management level positions in UAE. The research design was based on primary data collection using questionnaire method and randomized sampling techniques were deployed. Data analysis was done using SPSS v. 2.0 and techniques used were Pearson correlation, post

hoc test, and independent t -test. The study was able to substantiate the ongoing perception that women indeed are stereotyped in a corporate world, even though there is a boost in female workers considering the past reports. It is unfortunate that very few women are given senior roles and results also showed that even though women had accumulated 10+ years of work experience, they still faced major stereotype threats hindering their career advancement to reach higher level.

Keywords

Stereotype Threats, Gender Discrimination, Career Planning

1. Introduction

“We all use stereotypes, all the time, without knowing it. We have met the enemy of equality, and the enemy is us.”

A study conducted by Starmarski CS and Son Hing LS (2015) states that gender inequalities based on various discrimination between men and women, affects women negatively in terms of income and opportunities, which is considered to be unpleasant for women to work, thereby the organization fails to follow equal opportunity employee and such issues give rise to unequal distribution of resources and recognition of certain gender over the other. To support this fact, it is reported that less than seven per cent of women in the national assembly and eight state Houses of Representatives, with no women is a major reason of slow pace of emerging women power in decision making bodies. It is unfortunate, that most people are not aware of side-effects of stereotyping and how it may influence once thinking. It is, therefore, believed that perceptions are based on objective observations which may rather be based on judgements and personal biasness. There is no denying of the fact that women stereotyping exist in every realm of our life. Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2012) focused on how engineering working women experience barriers in their career path. They reported that psychological barrier of gender discrimination arises due to inadequate training and mentorship opportunities, which is the major reason women take back seat on their career path in the field of engineering. Likewise, there are numerous studies conducted by (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Cha, 2013) that support existence of phenomena women stereotyping at workplaces based on gender, roles and income level. It is reported in studies that role and expectations are traditionally stereotyped or spilled over in organizational policies.

Moreover, there are practices to provide marginalized work roles to women in addition to stagnating their career growth in an organizational culture that is gender biased. Women of today are better than women of yesterday as they are eager, educated and continue climbing the rungs of power, politics and build their ranks as heads of state, corporate leaders and media influencers. However, at the same time women given or treated with minority status at workplaces, means they still face harsh, limiting assessments based on their gender. Ongoing perception prevails that that powerful women are intimidating to men. Women are required to sacrifice their personal lives and careers to support their homes, kids and husbands in many ways and adapt to single facet approach towards life. While, male leaders are allowed to have complex personalities, powerful women are often summed up by hackneyed stereotypes that undermine them and their power. Unless a woman proves herself to be ruthless, a traditionally masculine trait, men sometimes treat women as if they were gentler, this can undermine their authority.

A research published by Elizabeth Sheedy (2017), states that women are more risk averse than men. Even though women comprise more than half the work force in banks, they are under-represented in senior level and institutional banking. People who are more risk loving are less likely to display good risk management behavior. Risk tolerance varies between men and women when they are junior levels but these differences disappear as they climb the corporate ladder. Women are just like men in terms of risk tolerance, so the way they manage risk is also similar. Women who make it to the top level don't conform to gender stereotypes.

In this paper, we have studied various aspects and threats associated with stereotyping of women in the corporate world. It is argued in this research that professional women face far more stereotyping challenges. Psychological research demonstrates that people often automatically remember and believe information that is consistent with their stereotypes and are apt to dismiss observations that contradict these stereotypes. Therefore, individuals with more exposure to women leaders may remember more instances in which they witness women leaders acting in stereotypic ways. The main objectives of this is research is to *understand* various stereotypes faced by women at different job level in the corporate world, to *determine* the impact of experience on confidence level of women and, to *propose* how relevant support systems can change negative perceptions on stereotypes effecting women at workplace.

2. Literature Review

According to Courtney von Hippel, Elise K. Kalokerinos and Hannes Zacher (2017), female employees are susceptible to stereotype threat, due to incongruity between the female

gender role and the masculine traits required for success in many organizations, which in turn is associated with more negative views of family- friendly policies. Recent studies show that unknowingly in day to day basis, through our unconscious mind we use stereotype, all the time. According to Fiske (2010), stereotyping is based on an individual's own opinions, views, and outlooks onto other individuals without first obtaining realistic knowledge about the individual(s). A research published by Ijeoma Thomas-Odia (2017) states that by giving women the right support, having great potentials; have the tendency to get into top level management but due to certain encumbers, women are not able to reach higher level. Factors contributing to this include, (a) existence of the social cultural stereotype like leadership positions are held only by men and the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society. (b) Religion, tradition and culture are still being used as an excuse to render women voiceless. (c) Underrepresented of women in a particular educational program or a particular job type, organization discrimination against women can occur in HR policy from the recruitment and selection process. (d) Within HR system, women experience biased performance evaluation on male typed tasks within HR policy, and (e) Biased HR decisions have shown negative effect on women's pay, opportunities, less status and less upward mobility within the organization.

It is important to understand there are countless stereotypes of women in various roles in business. These stereotypes hover around main assumption that women are merely nurture providers while men are bread winners, hence, as a result we see men are more than women in management positions or at top level. It is unfortunate but true that people bring with them preconceived ideas on how they view the world, other cultures, and themselves. They have misjudgments about certain groups that can create destruction within an organization - ideas based upon mere stereotypes. A research done by Alexis Krivkovich, Eric Kutcher, and Lareina Yee (2016) found out that on average at the top level of management across all industries such as logistics and transportation, financial service, media, healthcare, retailing, hospitality etc., in every 100 C-suite executive there are only 18 women. Moreover, from 30,000 employees, across 9 industries in 118 North American companies, all are afflicted by one of the three common problematic issues such as women are unable to enter, stuck at the middle or locked out of the top due to low graduating rate, stress and pressure, few opportunities due to biased practices and lack of work flexibility arrangements. At times, despite of having work experience and broader knowledge in that particular field, women still continue to work at the lower level or leave the job due to certain stereotype that exist among people in the organization such as women are not

creative or innovative and not capable of handling higher ranking job and a major gap between men and women for higher level promotion creates hindrance for the women to grow.

The strongest stereotype towards women is reported that they are more emotional, aware of other's feelings, kind and warm than men, and more appropriate to look after house affairs. Unconscious biasness distorts the way in which people perceive and remember gender atypical behavior more in a stereotypical way, than it actually was. Young women who step into the corporate world are ambitious and full of confidence. On the other hand, as women advance in their careers, diverse situations and circumstances analyze their confidence level, which have to be dealt with if their potential is to be understood. By reinvigorating some development programs, mentoring and coaching, organizations could help women simplify their careers goals and build a path that is realistic enough to achieve. Women are proficient enough to achieve something if given the right opportunity but they should take step out of their comfort zone.

A stereotype is harmful when it limits women's or men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives and life plans. Negative stereotypes hinder people's ability to fulfill their potential by limiting choices and opportunities. Hence, in order to provide a solution for the problem. Multi-level interventions are needed. For example, (i) creating formal agreements, codes and laws to change norms that violate women's human rights, and then implementing them, (ii) adopting multi-level strategies to change norms including supporting women's organizations; and (iii) working with boys and men to transform masculinist values and behavior that harm women's mind and their own.

Most alarmingly, men consider women to be less adept at problem-solving, one of the qualities most commonly associated with effective leadership and a hallmark behavior of a CEO. Giving irrelevant tasks to women, assuming that they will be better at them than men deprives women of the chance to improve relevant skills. It misrepresents the true talents of women leaders, undermines women's capacity to lead, and pose serious challenges to women's career advancement. Unless organizations take steps to eradicate this bias, women leaders will forever be undermined and misjudged, regardless of their talents or aptitudes. Companies should take active steps to combat stereotyping by instituting more rigorous and transparent performance evaluation processes; implementing a series of checks and balances to safeguard against stereotyping; educating managers and executives about the often-latent influence of stereotyping and about ways to override automatic tendencies to use stereotyping; and showcasing the achievements of women leaders, particularly those in traditionally male-dominated fields.

This research paper is about investigating problems associated with women stereotyping in corporate world. The study studies factors that lead to women stereotyping in work places such as gender inequalities, biased leadership, tradition's and cultures. It does a cross examination on how women perform in workplaces at entry level and experienced level by giving input on their job level. This study uses a primary data collection and discusses how this issue can be minimized, if not be completely eradicated with help and support of developing appropriate business system policies and introducing methods of training, coaching, mentoring, and communication in organizations in organizations.

3. Research Methodology

In this Section, Research Methodology is discussed to conduct this study.

3.1 Study Objectives

The key objective of the study was to evaluate the stereotypes that exist against women in the corporate world. The methodology was formulated considering the primary sources of data set. Our sample is derived from UAE only. We required participants who are working individuals and with knowledge or experience of stereotypes that exist in the corporate world against women. In addition, our study needed participants who are currently involved or working in a corporate setting. The data collection was based on questionnaire method, which was carefully designed based on extensive literature review. The factors contributing towards existence of women specific stereotypes were gender constructs, biased leadership and traditions and religious views.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework was evolved for testing purpose and is shown in Figure 1. The framework developed had input variables and constructs and as an output provides solutions to minimize existence of such stereotypes through business support system policy development and implementation process.

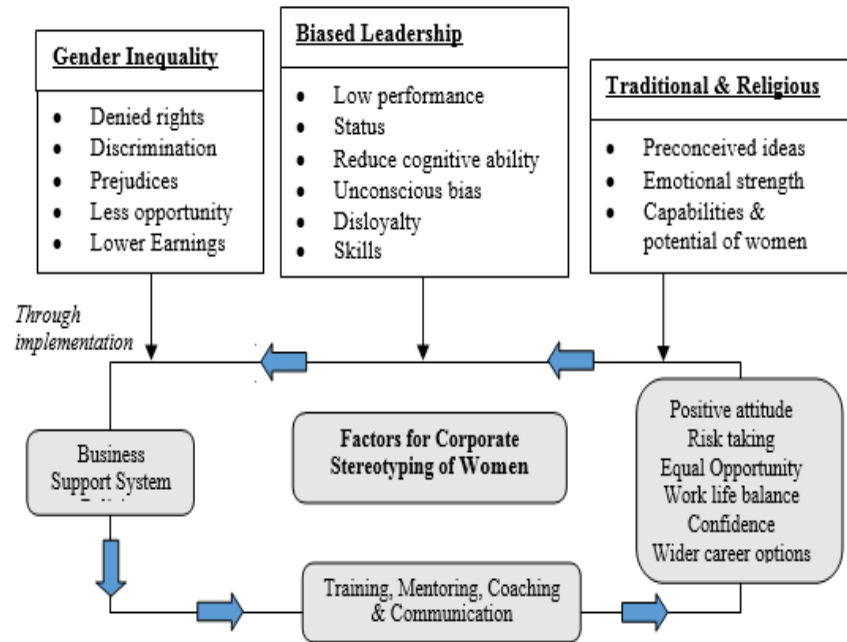


Figure 1: Theoretical framework corporate stereotypes faced by women at workplaces

Stereotypes were measured as an output variable reflecting negatively or positively upon women’s confidence level at workplace, provision or availability of support system in organizations to ensure women empowerment and prevailing perception of having or not having equal opportunities of growth and career planning.

3.3 Sample Size

To understand the various stereotype faced by women at different job level in corporate world. 100 samples were collected from working individuals at different job levels and surveyed about the stereotypes faced by women in corporate world.

3.4 Methods & Procedure

The study used following methods and procedures to test various hypotheses as per theoretical framework shown in Figure 1.

A. Corporate Stereotypes Association with Job Level

H_0 - There will be no significant correlation in stereotype faced by women and job level they are in.

H_1 - There will be significant correlation in stereotype faced by women and job level they are in.

A Pearson’s r data analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation $r = .267, p = .007 < .01$. Job level is statistically significant to determine the stereotype experienced by the population. Therefore, job level is associated with the stereotype experience.

In T- test group statistics, mean estimation results show that stereotype faced at entry level, with mean 2.76 was comparability different stereotype faced at experience level with mean 3.32.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Testing

| | | Stereo Type | Job Level |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Stereotype | Pearson correlation | 1 | .267** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .007 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Job Level | Pearson Correlation | .267** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .007 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance and results showed that equality of variance assumption has not been violated with $F(99) = 1.397$, $p = .240 > 0.05$, shows that the result is non-significant, but even thou there is a difference in mean (entry level with mean 2.76 and experience level with mean 3.32), they are comparable groups, hence we fail to reject null.

H₀ – There is no significant difference in stereotype faced at different job level on group 1 and group 2

H₂ – There is significant difference in stereotype faced at different job level on group 1 and group 2

Independent sample t-test was run to compare mean difference of group 1, and group 2 both subjected to different job levels (entry level and experienced level) estimated on stereotype. T-test showed $t(98) = -2.743$, $p = .007$ with equal variance assumed, suggesting there is significant difference in stereotype faced at different job level (Entry level = 2.76, Experience level = 3.32), therefore we reject null hypothesis and accept alternative due the stereotype faced by women between entry level and experience level has different impact in the form of gender inequalities, biased leadership, traditions and culture as they reach higher position level.

H₀ – 0-2 years of work experience will not significantly differ from 2-5 years, 5-10 years and 10 years above facing stereotype at different job level.

H₃ – 0-2 years of work experience will significantly differ from 2-5 years, 5-10 years and 10 years above facing stereotype at different job level

Post-hoc multiple comparison test was run using Scheffe method to test the hypothesis. Post hoc results showed that 0 - 2 years of work experience did not differ significantly from 2 - 5 years and 5 - 10 years on stereotype with $p = .881$, $p = .180$ but differed significantly from 10 years above $p = .049 < 0.05$.

In 2 -5 years of work experience did not differ significantly from 0-2 years, 5-10 years and 10 years above on stereotype with $p = .881$, $p = .733$ and $p = .516$. In 5-10 years of work experience did not differ significantly from 0 -2 years, 2-5 years and 10 years above on stereotype with $p = .180$, $p = .733$ and $p = .992$.

In 10 years above of work experience, differed significantly from 0 - 2 years on stereotype with $p = .049 < 0.05$, but did not differ significantly from 2-5 years and 5 -10 years with $p = .516$ and $p = .992$.

Post-hoc Scheffe test confirmed that 0-2 years of work experience has faced comparability low stereotype at entry level ($M = 2.76$). The difference was marginally insignificant in comparison with 2-5 years $p = .881$ ($M = 3.00$) and 5-10 years $p = .180$ ($M = 3.37$), and statistically significant in comparison with 10 years above $p = .049 < 0.05$ ($M = 3.47$). Hence, we partially failed to reject null hypothesis and partially accept alternative hypothesis in study. As results shown above, women with high work experience tend to find difficult to climb up in the managerial position and face more stereotyping threats based on their capability, skills and knowledge compare to entry level.

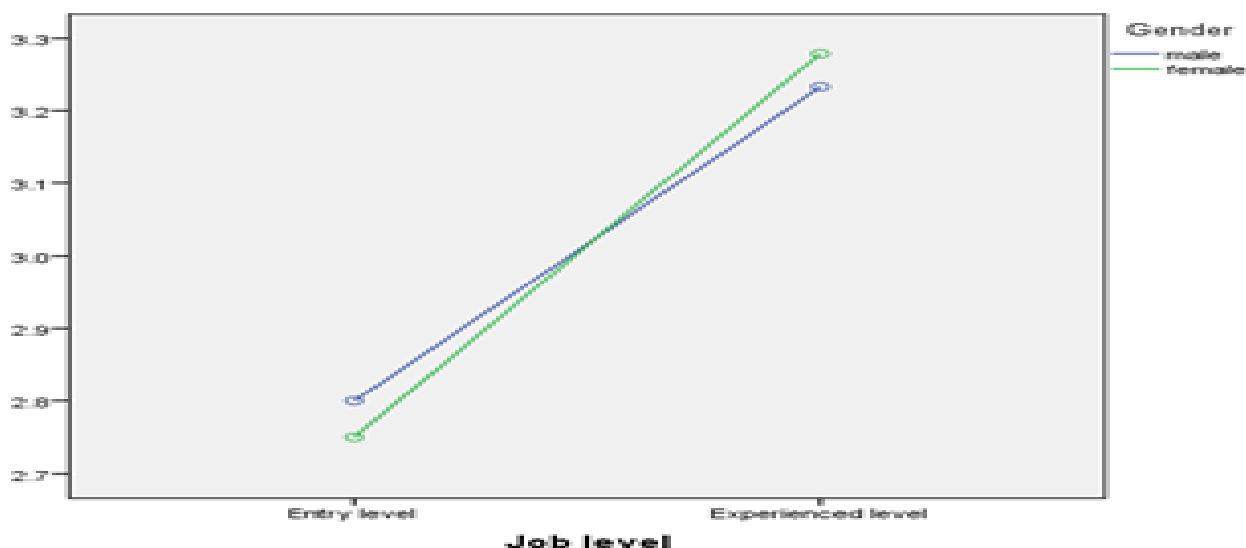


Figure 2: *Stereotype faced in corporate world, classified by gender and job level (Entry and experienced level)*

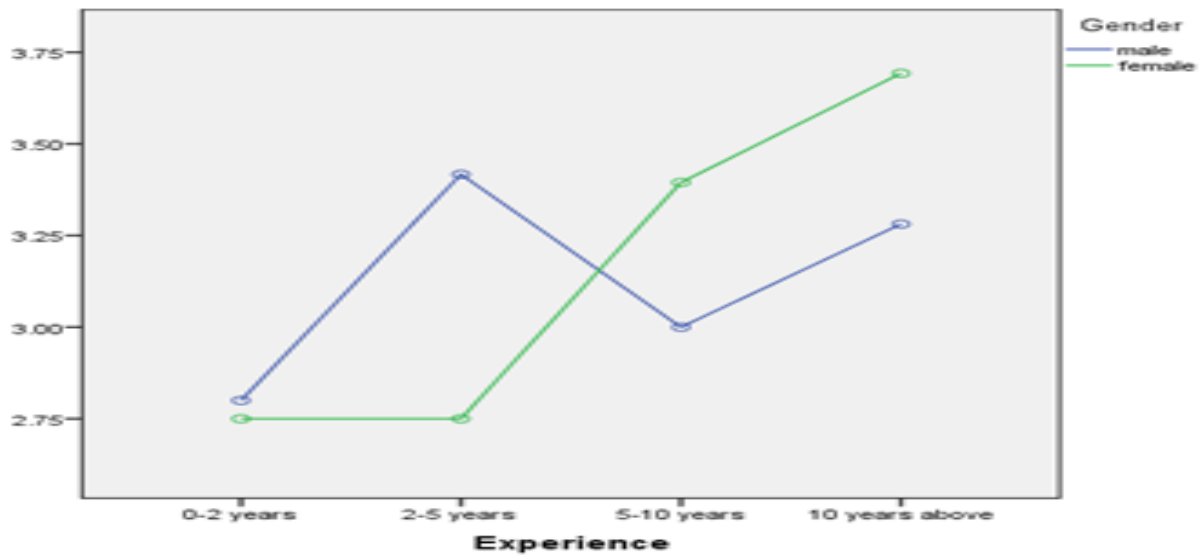


Figure 3: *Stereotype faced in corporate world, classified by gender with different work experience*

B. Work Experience Effect on Confidence Level

To determine the impact of experience on the confidence level in women to overcome the stereotype in the corporate world, Pearson correlation was performed.

Ho – Impact of work experience will have no significant correlation with confidence level in women.

H₄ –Impact of work experience will have a significant correlation with confidence level in women.

Results showed that Experience correlated significantly with confidence level in women with, $r = .049 < 0.05$ level giving confidence interval of 95% (two-tailed results). Gender $r = .491$ at $p = -.070$, Job level $r = .093$ at $p = .169$ had non-significant correlations with confidence level. The findings suggest that only with high level of work experience can prove to be strong predicting variable for confidence level, while other variables had little to no association at all. Based on our findings, Impact of work experience has a strong correlation with the confidence level in women; hence we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative.

In T- test, group statistics, mean estimation results at the entry level, the confidence is 1.7714 and at the experience level, the confidence is 1.9590.

Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levine's Test for Equality of Variance and results showed that equality of variance assumption not been violated with $F(99) = 3.484$, $p = .065 > 0.05$ with confidence interval of 95% as the two groups are not statistically different, but they are comparable group; hence we fail to reject null.

H₀ - Confidence level in women do not increase with the increase in work experience.

H₅ - Confidence level in women increases with the increase in work experience.

An independent sample t-test was performed. This was performed to compare the mean difference between group 1 and group 2 both subjected to the work experience (entry level and experience level). T test showed a significance level of .076. It is not significant but it is close to being significant. The results are not significant due to small data set and sampling errors. Therefore, we failed to reject the null hypothesis. It is due to high stereotyping threats prevailing in top level positions, it reduces the confidence level in women and in turn they don't get better opportunities and career options, despite of having 10+ years of work experience.

C. Change in Negative Perception through Policies

To understand how support system changes negative perception in stereotype against women at workplace.

H₀: Policies in the organization have not changed the negative perception of stereotype against women

H₆: Polices in the organization have changed negative perception of stereotype against women

Pearson correlation test showed a positive correlation and a significant result for negative perception and policy formulation with, $r = .000 < 0.01$ level giving confidence interval of 99% (two-tailed results). The findings suggest that only policy formulation can prove to be strong predicting variable for negative perception. Impact of policy formulation has a strong correlation with the negative perception; hence we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative.

In T- test, group statistics, Negative perception for male is 2.7500 and for female, the negative perception is 2.9444.

Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levine's Test for Equality of Variance and results showed that equality of variance assumption not been violated with $F(99) = 1.006$, $p = .318 > 0.05$ with confidence interval of 95% as the two groups are not statistically different, but they are comparable group; hence we fail to reject null.

H₀: Negative perception does not have a varying impact on men and women through policies.

H₇: Negative perception has a varying impact on men and women through policies.

An independent sample t-test showed mean difference between group 1 and group 2 both subjected to the gender (male and female). T test showed a significance level of .193. The results are not significant; hence we failed to reject the null hypothesis. The results show that through implementing certain policies in the organization to reduce stereotype will not help to

reduce the threats, there should be various other methods should be taken care off to reduce the impact of stereotype in the corporate world such as giving more challenging jobs to women to break the stereotype and to prove their ability equal to that of men.

D. Equal Employment Opportunities

In order to analyze if men and women are given equal opportunities in UAE, independent sample t-test was performed.

Mean estimation results show that on average people who agree that men and women are given equal opportunities is higher, with mean 2.63, than the people who agree men and women are not given equal opportunities with mean 1.40.

H₀- opportunities for men and women in UAE will not significantly differ for variance within.

H₈- opportunity for men and women in UAE will significantly differ for variance within

Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene's Test for Equality of variance and results showed that equality of variance assumption has not been violated with $F(23) = 3.767$, $p = .065 > 0.05$ with confidence interval of 95% as the two groups are not statistically different; even thou it shows non-significant results, they are comparable, hence we failed to reject null.

H₀- Equal opportunity for men and women does not prevail in UAE market.

H₉- Equal opportunity for men and women prevails in UAE market.

Independent sample t-test was run to compare mean difference between group 1 and group 2 both subjected to gender (male and female). T-test showed $t(22) = -2.187$, $p=.040$ with equal variance assumed, suggesting significant difference (Male = 1.40, Female = 2.63), therefore we reject null hypothesis and accept alternative. It shows that despite of having many stereotyping threats faced by the women there is equal opportunity given to both men and women in the UAE market and women are capable of reaching higher level position but only few achieves to reach the top level, therefore women has to break the stereotypes and move forward by taking up challenging roles.

4. Conclusion

A person's gender is not a sign to underestimate their capacity, ability or enthusiasm to perform a work. Through various statistical tests by using SPSS, it shows that despite of having 10+ years of work experience, women are still stuck at entry or mid-job level positions, it is due to stereotyping that exists in the mind of the people at workplace. As a result, only few women in the corporate world are achieving the top most job position.

The impact can be reduced, only if business support policies system is implemented in an effective manner and focus on areas like recruitment policies in terms of the pay, hiring & selection process, in which it promotes “equality” for both men and women by giving them equal career development options despite of their gender identity, age and color etc.

One of the common stereotype that women face at workplace is that they are more emotional, less capable of taking up challenges, they take decisions with the support of the family, in turn such stereotype has reduce the confidence level in women to take up higher job positions.

Professional business women face more stereotypes at the experienced level, i.e. (5 to 10+ years of work experience) than the one at entry level, i.e. (0- 4 years). The major reason can be due to gender inequalities, biased leadership, traditions and culture.

It is time to cast out the idea that specific sorts of work are only appropriate to women or men and its time to emphasis on providing equal opportunity for both men and women at workplace and encourage women to make a move to the higher management positions to make them stronger.

5. Research Limitations

This research was undertaken as part of our MBA postgraduate study at Amity University Dubai. It was a cross-sectional study, with basic and applied nature of inquiry. The study met with constraints in terms of meeting professional business women to get appointments and actual feedback collection. The survey was primarily done online, therefore less credibility of online data is reported. Moreover, we could not meet people in person to verify their credentials who filled in online forums, hence likelihood of same respondents or effect of snow-ball sampling cannot be overruled. Likewise, the information provided by the respondents could not be verified for internal validity purpose. There were issues of reporting errors and omissions in data as well as error of central tendency, which was controlled at analysis level by researchers.

The research was based on small sample size, but randomly chosen through an online survey method. However, it not relevant for generalization of findings on larger population. Due to time limitation, it could not focus on cross-comparison drawing inferences based on female corporate employers across different sectors and regions.

6. Recommendations

Corporate stereotyping of women is not a myth, but a severe fact and be considered a serious intellectual threat to society at large. The study makes following recommendations for research purpose:

- In depth study on how stereotyping of women in corporate world influences men, and what steps can be taken to reduce the impact.
- Study on how social disparities influencing generalization in women at work environment, how women can turn out to be better pioneers by staying away from stereotype in organization.
- In-depth study on women's decision to leave the organization because of stereotyping threats, and how women's capacities are consistently criticized by negative stereotyping.
- Study on cross-compare female corporate employers across different sectors and regions

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