

A Study of Challenges and Opportunities of Women in Management

BALA KOTESWARI AND SANDHYA. KV

Today India is a force in the global economy with the high demand for talent. A key source of talent is educated Indian women. While Indian corporations have not yet fully recognized nor utilized this talent pool, the growing gender diversity in Indian managerial ranks now offers a pathway for change in Indian women. While change is slow for Indian women to gain executive positions, they have made change in management in a relatively short time. An attempt has been made in the present paper to try and understand challenges and opportunities of the women in the top management positions. Further, the thoughts of different women across the organizations in top management positions are highlighted in their own words. Through empirical research, this article brings out the factors hindering the growth of women in management. Strategies which can be adopted by women to face the challenges are highlighted at the end.

Key Words: Talent pool, Gender diversity, Challenges, Opportunities

Introduction

Historically India was male dominated where women were only house wives. The growing educational values slowly brought a change in Indian women who are evidence to manage family and professional life as well. This was difficult initially where women were not given a chance to work and if given, it was limited to operational/admin jobs which was discouraging. But slowly women started to grow day by day and even started their own business which constantly brought a new edge towards the society and faith in women who proved that they can manage their personal and professional life. Women in top management are now the change agents who are very innovative and bringing new ways of doing business and set evidence that women can succeed in any field like journalism, marketing, aviation, advertising, banking, civil services, engineering, financial services, manufacturing, police and armed forces and emerging fields such as IT and communications.

Dr. Bala Koteswari is an Associate Professor, Department of MBA, The Oxford College of Engineering, Hosur Road, Bommanahalli, Bengaluru-560 068, 09945211674, 080-30219601/02, 080-25730551,30219629, drbalakoteswari@gmail.com, www.theoxford.edu

Ms. Sandhya is KV, IV Semester Student, Department of MBA, The Oxford College of Engineering, Hosur Road, Bommanahalli, Bengaluru-560 068, 09741752071, sandhya.kv92@gmail.com

Women have attained remarkable success in what was once considered the "male domain", of the working world. Worldwide the number of women in the workforce has increased over the years with a corresponding increase in the number of highly educated women. However, discrimination against women in the workplace has impacted their advancement in jobs that acquire higher societal recognition among men. Gender inequality in the workplace is exhibited in various forms, such as occupational segregation, gender-based wage gap and discrimination. Working women have constantly battled against not only horizontal segregation, but also, the separation of women and men into gender specific jobs.

Advancement of women in management jobs, has not kept pace with the corresponding increase in the number of working women. Their presence in senior management level is negligible. Women are graduating and entering management positions, yet there is a bottleneck at middle management levels. While entry is easier, progression slows down after the middle level and in most situations, regardless of their technical and professional qualifications or achievements, women are prevented from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach the top level management.

Review of literature

The worldwide statistics shows that in 2000-2002 women's overall share of managerial jobs was between 20 percent and 40 percent in 48 countries. As far as senior management positions are concerned female representation is much less. Women take 20 percent of senior managerial positions in the US and 19 percent in the world on an average.

However, women in management face challenges due to stereotyping. A 2002 study *Gender Stereotypes at Work* suggests that Indian male managers are viewed, stereotypically, as working in the areas of sales, marketing and production, being good leaders, decision makers and bosses and handling challenging assignments. On the other hand, Indian women are viewed as working in HR and administrative positions at low to junior levels, and in fields such as fashion and beauty.

The very fact of women being adequately represented in the workforce, but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been labeled "the glass ceiling", "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up in the management hierarchy" (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). The "glass ceiling" comes in many forms: women's under-representation at the corporate hierarchy, gendered wage gap, occupational segregation, discriminative corporate policies, lack of attention to the specific needs women have, sexual harassment at the workplace, exclusion of women from informal networks.

A tremendous amount of research has been undertaken in this area with "Breaking through the Glass Ceiling" by International Labour Organization (2004) being one of the most comprehensive international studies. Indian literature about women in management is limited. Yet, while research reveals a challenging environment for women in the business world in India, there is a positive movement. Budhwar P.S. (2005) studied extensively on Women in Management in the New Economic Environment and revealed that that "developments in information technology and related services sectors are helping women in India to move out of their traditional household roles and develop a career in organizations." And, emphasized that merely having programs for women in the workplace will not be sufficient. Rather, there must be a true commitment on the part of senior management to hire women managers, including a policy for advancement linked to the business strategy.

According to the study by Koshal (2006), two women per 100 economically active men take administrative and managerial positions in India. Confederation of Indian Industry studied 149 large and medium size companies across regions in the country. The report highlights that women comprise 16 percent at junior management level, 4 percent each at middle and senior levels, and only 1 percent in organizational leadership positions (CEOs).

Women in Indian organizations are not given enough challenging assignments. Male managers feel that women as being treated more leniently than men when making mistakes. A 2008 study Gender Stereotypes in Corporate India states Indian men managers held similar managerial gender stereotypes as found in earlier Western studies. That is, they associate managerial success with men more than with women. Further, entrepreneurship has provided women in India the opportunity to enter social and political circles previously closed to them. Family background and support play an important role to achieve independence and move above the confines of a male-dominated traditional society. Experience in the sector, social class, caste and education are important. For most women entrepreneurs, financial stability in the household and family support is critical for their success.

Women's Work Participation in India

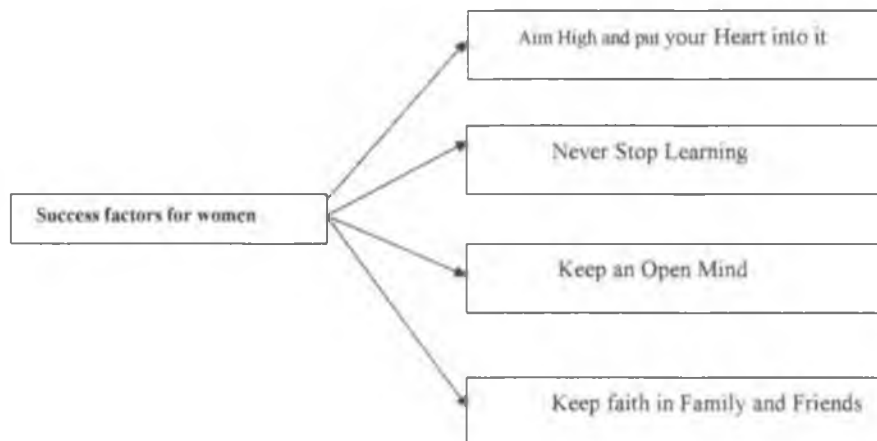
In India, the situation of women is changing with more and more women getting educated not only in general streams but also in technical and professional courses. Along with their increasing level of education in various streams, there has been sizeable increase in their workforce participation. The table below reveals that in the supply side, there has been an increase in the pool of educated women as resources for increase in work force participation.

Table shows the women's work participation in India

Employment	Self employed (%)	Regular Wage/salary (%)	Total (%)
Year			
1994	24.5	2.9	27.7
2000	22.5	3.1	25.6
2005	26.7	3.9	30.5

Further, the thoughts of Indian women in management on the status of women and challenges faced by them are explained by four leading women executives.

1.Indira Nooyi: She is the CEO of Pepsico, Has been ranked no.4 on Forbes Magazine annual survey of the 100 most powerful women in the world. She says that "There is no limit to what women can do. But the concept of success for oneself should not be defined by anyone else. Success is not about money, prestige or power, because net worth can never define self-worth. True success is being happy with oneself, being fulfilled. It is achieved by devoting time to, doing what one loves most. The core concept of success lies in knowing what you want to do in life. Those who have successfully identified such issues can consider themselves as tremendously blessed". According to her the following are the success factors



2. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw: She is the CEO of Biocon and she is among the earliest Indian women to build large businesses, Shaw inspires every young woman who dreams of making it to the top. Her story is one of self-made success in corporate India and is special not just because she is a woman, but because she was among the earliest to spot opportunity in the (then) emerging area of bio-pharmaceuticals in India. She has also been an advocate

for entrepreneurship in India. While there are many women entrepreneurs in India now, there are still fewer stories of women who have built very large companies. Shaw inspires us because:

- She is a 'garage startup' entrepreneur
- She has demonstrated that women can build businesses - and build them big
- She has built an adaptable business and had the courage to change tracks when necessary; at a personal level from brew master to enzyme maker and then to a business in bio-pharma
- She overcame early adversity when no one would hire a female brewmaster and decided to go her own road instead.

Her Advice for the future women managers:

- Be introspective.
- Focus on how to build a meaningful life.
- Posses a spirit of Challenge and Achievement which give you satisfaction.
- Identify the right opportunities and tap it at the right time.

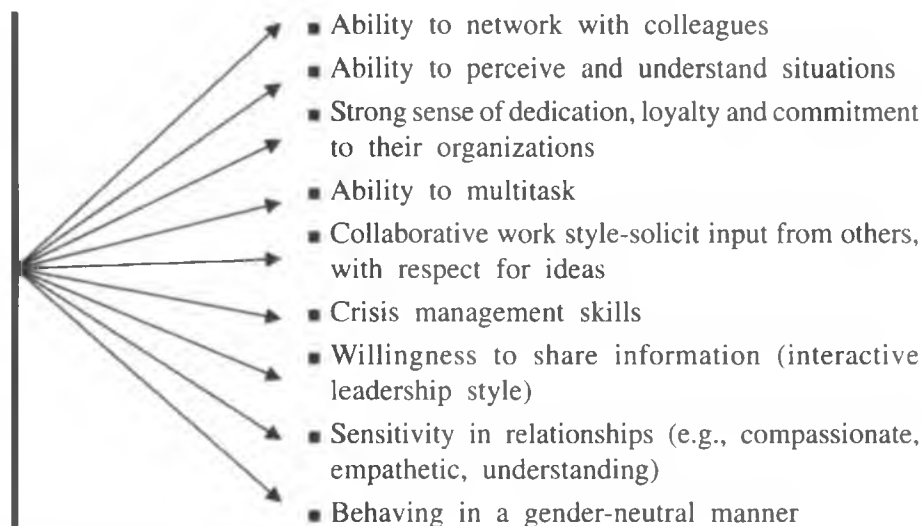
3. Archana Bhaskar: She is HR Director for Shell Companies in India and opines that, "There is certainly positive change for women in India in the workplace. There is a gap in the Indian talent market, with significantly more jobs than talented people. Today, women are thought of as great managers, often pursued strongly by search firms. In fact, several firms have targets to achieve on women numbers." She also adds to explain that more and more women are now in professional careers. Multinational corporations have clearly led the way with their practices on diversity. The real change, though, has happened with the advent of the IT and business process outsourcing (BPO) industries, which has employed significant numbers of women and brought in best practices to enable women staff.

Ms. Bhaskar's experience illustrates that there was not much support for women managers. Women had to be like one of the men to succeed, work/life balance was almost thrown out of the window, and the one or two women that were in my organization were busy trying to compete with each other rather than help. Male colleagues and managers consistently refused to take her seriously, saying that she was in the job for entertainment rather than to make a professional success. She says from her experience that success is a mix of tradeoffs, perseverance and focus.

4. HemaHattangady: She is Vice Chairman and CEO of Schneider Electric Conzerv India feels that the presence of Indian women managers ranges between a high of 6% and a low of 3%. Women can be seen mainly in HR, IT, administration and other support functions. She emphasizes that there is still a lot to achieve with regard to women in management positions in India.

"Although ever-evolving HR practices, diversity practices and factors like education have led to an increase in the number of women working in India, there is still a lot left to be done to develop, encourage and empower women for management positions."

From the opinion of the women in the top management, the following characteristics of the women are observed which make them face the challenges at the work place effectively:



Objectives of the present study






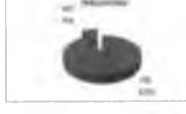


1. To identify situation of women in Management in India.
2. To determine the challenges and opportunities faced by the Indian women in management.
3. To narrate the Factors hindering growth of women in management.



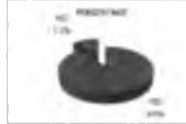
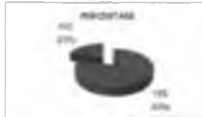

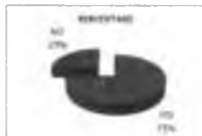
Sample and Data Collection

Sample consisted of 35 women managers across different industries, namely, service, manufacturing and IT. Data was collected by sending questionnaires online through e-mail, where the respondents answered the statements in Yes or No. Questionnaire consisted of 14 statements measuring challenges and opportunities. The data was further analysed by using statistical tools, Mean and Standard Deviation and the results are tabulated

Results and Interpretation

Results are depicted in the form of diagrams shown below. The 14 statements which are taken for testing represent the perception of the women managers and the status of women in management.

Sl. No.	Statement	"Yes" Response (%)	"No" Response (%)	Graphical Representation
1.	Do you feel that there are Preconceptions towards women that they are fragile and lacking in the qualities that are considered useful to be effective managers	75	25	
2.	Do you feel that top posts are generally characterized by masculine aggressive values and suitability for them is decided mostly according to male criteria and by male	80	20	
3..	Do you feel that women are primarily placed in non-strategic sectors rather than in the positions that involve financial decision-making or revenue-generating responsibilities	82	18	
4.	Do you feel that Women lack mentoring in the advancement into management positions.	90	10	
5.	Do you feel women lack access to training, attainment of skills related to job area, and career development activities.	78	22	
6.	Do you feel women still bear more of the main burden in the family responsibilities than men which is affecting their advancement in the enterprises.	92	08	
7.	Do you feel that women often have to deal with the complexities of the dual role as working women and mother, and sometimes have to make compromises, which slows down their careers.	97	03	
8.	Do you think that inability to stay late at work and a disinclination for jobs involving travel and transfers is a hurdle for women's advancement in their careers.	90	10	

9. Do you think that many women do not aspire for higher management posts which will automatically bring in loads of responsibilities including late hours and travel as that would disrupt family life.	92	08	
10. Do you feel that women have confidence and attitude needed to succeed in business as managers.	100	00	
11. Do you feel that women lack opportunities to grow in their career compared to men	89	11	
12. Do you feel that women face prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination at work.	80	20	
13. Do you feel that it is really challenging for women to deal with male subordinate associates, especially in meetings when their opinions were taken in last with management showing preference for decisions coming from male colleagues	85	15	
14. Do you feel that some male colleagues felt threatened of being led by women	75	25	

According to the results shown in the table above, statement 1: Do you feel that there are Preconceptions towards women that they are fragile and lacking in the qualities that are considered useful to be effective managers shows that 25% of the women managers felt NO and 75% of the women managers felt YES. Results reveal that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true as they could not prove themselves effective and climb up the ladder as men do.

The Responses for statement 2: Do you feel that top posts are generally characterized by masculine aggressive values and suitability for them is decided mostly according to male criteria and by male shows that 20% of the women managers felt NO and 80% of the women managers felt YES. It implies that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 3: Do you feel that women are primarily placed in non-strategic sectors rather than in the positions that involve financial decision-making or revenue-generating responsibilities shows that 18% of the

women managers felt NO and 82% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 4: Do you feel that the women managers felt that women lack mentoring in the advancement into management positions shows that 10% of the women managers felt NO and 90% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 5: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women lack access to training, attainment of skills related to job area and career development activities shows that 22% of the women managers felt NO and 78% of the women managers felt YES. It implies that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 6: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women still bear more of the main burden in the family responsibilities than men which is affecting their advancement in the enterprises shows that 08% of the women managers felt NO and 92% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 7: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women often have to deal with the complexities of the dual role as working women and mother and sometimes have to make compromises, which slows down their careers shows that 03% of the women managers felt NO and 97% of the women managers felt YES. It can be interpreted that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 8: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that inability to stay late at work and a disinclination for jobs involving travel and transfers is a hurdle for women's advancement in their careers shows that 10% of the women managers felt NO and 90% of the women managers felt YES. Results that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 9: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that many women do not aspire for higher management posts which will automatically bring in loads of responsibilities including late hours and travel as that would disrupt family life shows that 08% of the women managers felt NO and 92% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 10: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women have confidence and attitude needed to succeed in business as managers shows that 00% of the women managers felt NO and 100% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 11: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women lack opportunities to grow in their career compared to men shows that 11% of the women managers felt NO and 89% of the women managers felt YES. It says that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 12: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that women face prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination at work shows that 20% of the women managers felt NO and 80% of the women managers felt YES. It says that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 13: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that it is really challenging for women to deal with male subordinate associates, especially in meetings when their opinions were taken in last with management showing preference for decisions coming from male colleagues shows that 15% of the women managers felt NO and 85% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

The Responses to statement 14: Do you feel that of the women managers felt that some male colleagues felt threatened of being led by women shows that 25% of the women managers felt NO and 75% of the women managers felt YES. It reveals that most of the women managers felt that the statement is true.

With the above findings the following are the factors identified which hinders the growth of the women in management

1. **Stereotypes & pre-conceptions towards women** : Stereotypes & pre-conceptions towards women that they are fragile & lacking in the qualities that are considered useful to be effective managers. This is due to traditional masculine traits having higher value than feminine traits in the management world.
2. **Women often secure positions that have titles with little real power or supervisory authority**: Top posts are generally characterized by masculine aggressive values, and suitability for them is decided mostly according to male criteria and by male. The position which an individual holds within the organization shapes the traits, and the behavior they develop or possess.
3. **Women are primarily placed in non-strategic sectors**: Women are placed more in non-strategic sectors rather than in the positions that involve financial decision-making or revenue-generating responsibilities, like sales and production positions that are critical for advancement to the top.

4. **Lack of Mentoring:** Lack of mentoring for women in organisation is the main hurdle in the advancement of women into management positions. However, mentoring is often limited for women, which in turn results in lack of access and training and career development activities.
5. **Lack of information and knowledge:** Lack of information and knowledge regarding training and attainment of skills related to job area and leadership qualities impact advancement in career.
6. **Family burden and responsibilities:** Women workers still bear more of the main burden of family responsibilities than men and so have less time for the "extracurricular" formal and informal networking, essential for advancement in enterprises.
7. **Complexities of Dual Role:** Women's career paths tend to be more circuitous and interrupted than those of men which are typically linear, and this impedes women's progress to top positions. Women often have to deal with the complexities of the dual role as working women and mother sometimes have to make compromises, which slow down their careers.
8. **Inability to stay late at work:** Inability to stay late at work and a disinclination for jobs involving travel and transfers have been identified as another major factor for women in not achieving top positions.
9. **Inner battles to aspire high management posts:** Women managers also have their own inner battles, which need to be fought and overcome. Many women do not aspire for higher management posts which will automatically bring in loads of responsibilities including late hours and travel as that would disrupt family life.
10. **Women managers lack effective career planning:** Unlike men they generally don't have fixed career goals and they lack determination to overcome the obstacles that exist to keep them from accomplishing their goals. There is lack of confidence and attitude needed on the part of the women managers to succeed in business

Challenges for the women at work according to the study are:

- Prejudices
- Stereotyping
- Discrimination and insufficient time

It is really challenging for women to deal with male subordinate associates, especially, if the subordinates were older then there is a challenge in decision making especially in meetings when their opinions were taken in last with management showing preference for decisions coming from male colleagues. There was a feeling that some male colleagues felt threatened of being led by a woman.

Recommendations of the Study

Individual Strategies

Strategies to deal with Challenge of Work- Life Balance

From the present study work-life balance is found to be major challenge among women in management, and the following are some suggestions to tackle the issue of work life balance:

1. **Build downtime into your schedule:** When you plan your week, make it a point to schedule time with your family and friends, and activities that help you recharge.
2. **Drop activities that sap your time or energy:** Not waste their time on activities or people that add no value -- for example, spending too much time at work with a colleague who is constantly gossiping. Drop the activities that don't enhance your career or personal life, and minimize the time you spend on them.
3. **Rethink your priorities:** Consider whether you can outsource any of your time-consuming household activities, like ordering groceries online, trading services with friends, doing tasks that you enjoy or that you were planning to do.
4. **Spending some time in a day for yourself to exercise/meditation:** It's hard to make time for exercise when you have a jam-packed schedule, but it may ultimately help you get more done by boosting your energy level and ability to concentrate. Slowly building activities into your schedule that are important to you, spending an hour a week on your hobby of carpentry, or planning a weekend with your spouse etc.
5. **Women should voluntarily explore more career opportunities to grow personally and professionally:** There were various sectors available for women to excel in her career in the management field. They are as follows:

S. No.	Sectors
1	Accountancy, banking and finance
2	Armed forces and emergency services
3	Business, consulting and management
4	Charities and voluntary work
5	Creative arts and culture
6	Energy and utilities
7	Environment and agriculture
8	Engineering and manufacturing
9	Health and social care
10	Hospitality, tourism and sport
11	IT and information services
12	Law

13	Marketing, advertising and PR
14	Property and construction
15	Public sector
16	Recruitment and HR
17	Retail and sales
18	Science and pharmaceuticals
19	Teaching and education
20	Transport and logistics

Organizational Strategies: There should be changes in the organizational policies encouraging women friendly place to work like

1. Promoting awareness initiatives that highlight the value of women managers
2. Developing the culture in the organization to respect women.
3. Eliciting input from women employees regarding policies, promotion and performance review.
4. Providing career counselling and guidance to the women by mentoring.
5. Making accommodation for women in areas such as need based postings.
6. Providing childcare facilities to the women to manage their work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

In today's global economy, Indian corporations need talent in order to be competitive. Generally, women as managers are underutilized in corporate India. To advance women in managerial roles, support by top management is essential. Promoting diverse management practices and opening doors to women in management- through proactive human resource policies and programs-is one way for Indian organizations to expand their talent pool and, ultimately, their leadership pipeline. As highlighted by the Indian women professionals, specific success factors- good education, mentoring, family support, strong communication skills, and lifelong learning-are essential for Indian women managers today. While traditional Indian cultural viewpoints are slow to change (and not all women want a career in management), positive change for women in the business world in India is moving forward.

REFERENCES

1. ILO (2001). Beyond the "glass ceiling": Women in the world of work progress, but slowly: 2001, originally published in World of work, No. 39, June 2001, Geneva ILO, 2007, Page-7.
2. Khandelwal, P. (2002), Gender stereotypes at work: Implications for organizations. Indian Journal of Training and Development. XXXII (2), April- 18 June 72-83.

3. Budhwar, P. S., Saini, D. S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2005). Women in management.
4. Reddy. A (2006). Entrepreneurship Development Program (Text Book) - Himalaya Publishing house. First Edition.
5. Koshal, Manjulika, Koshal, Rajindar K. & Gupta, Ashok (2006). Women managers: perception vs performance analysis, Journal of Management Research 3 (1), Page 31-42.
6. Basu, S. (2008). 16 Gender stereotypes in Corporate India: A glimpse. New Delhi: Response Books.
7. Jack zenger and Joseph folkman (2011), HBR article "Making Yourself Indispensable," and the book How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths (McGraw-Hill, 2012).
8. ILO (2011) Global Employment Trends 13 ILO: Beyond the "glass ceiling": Women in the world of work progress, but slowly: p-6.

Websites:

1. http://www.shrm.org/research/articles/articles/documents/09-0677_india_women_ldrshp_fnl.pdf
2. <http://wowfactor.asia/wow-factor-list-of-women-entrepreneurs-from-india-on-twitter/>
3. <http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/the-most-powerful--women--in-indian-business/1/198090.html>
4. www.topmba.com
5. <http://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/protect-health-13/balance-life>
6. <http://wowfactor.asia/wow-factor-list-of-women-entrepreneurs-from-india-on-twitter/>

QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following Statements in Yes or NO

1. _____ Do you feel that there are Preconceptions towards women that they are fragile and lacking in the qualities that are considered useful to be effective managers.
2. _____ Do you feel that top posts are generally characterized by masculine aggressive values and suitability for them is decided mostly according to male criteria and by male.
3. _____ Do you feel that women are primarily placed in non-strategic sectors rather than in the positions that involve financial decision-making or revenue-generating responsibilities.
4. _____ Do you feel that Women lack mentoring in the advancement into management positions.
5. _____ Do you feel women lack access to training, attainment of skills related to job area and career development activities.
6. _____ Do you feel women still bear more of the main burden in the family responsibilities than men which is affecting their advancement in the enterprises.

7. _____ Do you feel that women often have to deal with the complexities of the dual role as working women and mother and sometimes have to make compromises, which slows down their careers.
8. _____ Do you think that inability to stay late at work and a disinclination for jobs involving travel and transfers is a hurdle for women's advancement in their careers.
9. _____ Do you think that many women do not aspire for higher management posts which will automatically bring in loads of responsibilities including late hours and travel as that would disrupt family life.
10. _____ Do you feel that women have confidence and attitude needed to succeed in business as managers.
11. _____ Do you feel that women lack opportunities to grow in their career compared to men.
12. _____ Do you feel that women face prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination at work.
13. _____ Do you feel that it is really challenging for women to deal with male subordinate associates, especially in meetings when their opinions were taken in last with management showing preference for decisions coming from male colleagues.
14. _____ Do you feel that some male colleagues felt threatened of being led by women.