Gender Discrimination: The Role of HRM in Advancing Women to Managerial Positions

1. Why is important to have a diverse workforce in terms of gender?

Gender diversity is an umbrella term that is used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of expression beyond the binary framework. Changes are underway, with a growing proportion of women seeking positions out of a “nurturing” role and stepping into managerial roles, enticing the concept of creating a more diverse workforce. The importance of assembling a diverse workforce based on gender is essential to communicate different viewpoints and ideas, as this expands the talent pool and allows for an industry to recollect a wider level of knowledge. In hindsight, employing a diverse workforce that expands marketing insights and ideologies/perspectives allows for better collaboration and enhances the reputation of the business in the eye of the public, generating a larger consumer base and thus greater profitability. Whilst it is important for gender diversity in the workplace, and there is an increasing movement towards gender equality in the workforce, there has been much research and conjecture concerning the barriers women face in trying to climb the corporate ladder, with evidence suggesting that they typically confront a ‘glass ceiling’ while men are more likely to benefit from a ‘glass escalator’ (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

2. What are the possible issues or barriers for women to take managerial roles?

Gender issues in management fundamentally stems from the mistreatment of women and the inequity possessed in the treatment of men and women, thus creating a pull for women to move up and promote towards higher managerial levels. Areas of management are generally grouped with a masculine role, pursing men’s attitudes of drive and achievement. With analysis showing a decline in the proportion of male managers, there is still no difference of senior levels taking on positive change and managerial positions for women. Stereotypes are one of the biggest barriers of progression for women in the workforce, these are perceptions and ‘gender stereotypes influence beliefs, behaviours and self-concepts at both conscious and unconscious levels’ (Rhode 2003, p. 7). With women being made to deal with dual roles of an employee and a housewife/mother, a sort of work-family conflict and objective phenomenon, this inflicts a mode of dysfunctionality in the interaction between work and family (Grunberg & Matei, 2020). Despite the increase in employability of women in the workforce, moving from 31 percent in 1951 to 40 percent in 1981 (Crew, 1985) there is still a discriminatory wall with most women left in lower or middle positions due to gender biases.

Gender discrimination accordingly becomes another reason for women to be confronted by a ‘glass ceiling’ motive, with women starting at the same level as their male counterparts, but having to induce more labour and hard work in order to progress up the hierarchy despite being more qualified than the males progressing faster than them. Gender discrimination goes beyond the recruitment and remuneration processes, but with the general assumption that women are not committed to their job as they consider the future of creating a family. Women that are

seemingly not progressing at the same pace as their male counterparts are seen to display certain characteristics such as being nurturing or caring (Diehl, A., Stephenson, A., Dzubinski, L., & Wang, D. (2020)). Women who attain these characteristics are more likely to be scrutinized in the workplace (Lyness and Heilmen, 2006). Gender discrimination also reflects on job turnover, with correlations between workplace harassment and turnover intent (Kim, Longacre, & Werner, 2017). This sort of harassment and discrimination towards women creates a high alert environment for the victim, establishing discomfort and intimidation. This builds an element of fear and degradation for women, minimising their role in the workforce.

Organizational levels align with implicit bias and can be as harmful as overt bias to work, career, physical, and psychological outcomes (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2013). Between 1981 and 1986, there was a dramatic increase in self-employment amongst women with a 27% incline and men with a miniscule increase of 7%. This five-year period also displayed the most popular career categories with men taking on mostly managerial and manufacturing occupations and women boarding traditional clerical and services occupations. Despite these statistics, women have been able to stagger up and occupy 32.3% of managerial/administration positions, an approximate increase of 12% in 10 years. As a result of implicit bias, women are typically seen as not inhabiting the characteristics and abilities required to pursue leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Ergo, despite women scoring higher on performance ratings, as a result of implicit bias men are favoured and selected to take on the line of duty, with men scoring higher on ratings of promotion since employers degrade and expect low ratings of women.

The pay gap is a long-lasting battle amongst the topic of gender discrimination that is constantly observed. The vast disparities in the pay gap show where women will earn significantly less in juxtaposition to their male counterparts for doing the same work. This remuneration disparity has limited the number of women holding managerial positions, with legislation that has been ascribed to outline the discrimination but never reaching an eligible outcome as there is no way for the commission to effectively take on the issue, thus regulatory failures have become a contribution to the vast situations of inequality. According to a study that was conducted by the WAGE Now Project, they found that the vast disparities in pay equality are between $750 thousand and $2 million over the course of lifetime (Its Time for Working Women to Earn Equal Pay 2007). Ultimately creating an artificial barrier for women, known as the glass ceiling, which was assembled by organizational and attitudinal prejudices, allowing a male dominated society to overpower and discriminate against women. This inevitably restricts women from being able to push these boundaries and move beyond middle management positions. The barriers symbolising this glass ceiling include a lack of self-confidence, avoid of risk taking and not setting higher goals in comparison to men (Krambia-Kapardi 2006).

3. How does HRM ensure organisations respond to these issues in order to advance women to managerial roles

Human Resource Management (HRM) can apply a variety of practices in order to advance women into managerial roles and provide them with an equal advantage to their counterparts. An impactful promotion of gender equality in the workplace involves the suitable utilization of the labour pool in order to obtain a sustained competitive advantage within the market (cf. Porter, 1989). In order to establish a sense of equity, it is the role of the HRM itself to encourage women into employment and into management, to make the effort to lead women into higher positions. HRM can stimulate learning of gender equity in order to commit to equity and

diversity. It is crucial to discuss the requisite knowledge to talk about a variety way of working flexibly, how to eliminate or lessen gender bias within the recruitment and selection progress and gender pay equity. HRM can provide the tools and programs necessary to educate other and bring light to the situation. HRM can co-opt to facilitate and organise programs for women that strategically aim at mentoring women and identify and upscale their potential as well as programs that help to create a work-family life balance including the adoption of on-site childcare facilities or offering flexible working hours in order to provide women with family's that balance. In order to encourage and stimulate women to further their skills in the workforce, HRM and the organisation as a collective need to work on creating potential workshops and programs for women to better their skills and to suit their current lifestyle needs. This includes maintaining flexibility of working hours and conducting workshops for 'returners' into the workforce and encouraging a recruitment process that is blindly based on skills and prerequisites then looking into the further aspects of the individual such as their gender. When looking to employ an individual into a managerial role, it is crucial to conduct interviews and application processes with the basis of it being a "blind" recruitment and selection in order to stray from the traditional "men utilise better management skills" concept when adhering to the acquisition of a potential managerial talent pool.

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