



# Analysis of Work Environment of Women in the Corporate

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## Abstract

This study is to analyse and to present perspectives that offer an increased awareness of the challenges and opportunities for women in corporate in India and to study dimensions of the work organization that contribute to a supportive or hostile environment for women. Based on analysis of survey data from 100 respondents working in corporate settings, a scale was developed to measure five dimensions: Dual Standards and Opportunities; Sexist Attitudes and Comments; Informal Socializing; Balancing Work and Personal Obligations; and Remediation Policies and Practices. Women perceived their work environments as significantly more hostile on all five dimensions. Scores on the scale were related to intent to stay with the organization: For the women surveyed, the friendlier they perceived the work environment for women to be, the longer individuals intended to stay at the company.

**Keywords:** Opportunities, Work, Environment, Women, Corporate world

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## Introduction

Today, India is a force in the global economy, with a high demand for talent. A key source of talent is educated Indian women. While Corporate India has not yet fully recognized or utilized this talent pool, the growing gender diversity in Indian managerial ranks offers a pathway for change for Indian women. Cultural and societal change means a shift from traditional views and stereotypes. Traditionally, women have been under-represented in organizations and the argument for equal opportunity employment has not borne sufficient results in India. As organizations struggle with a scarcity for talent, smarter companies are beginning to recognize the opportunity in grooming and retaining women.

Though the corporate world has opened its doors for women, it has not been successful in placing them in the top level management. Women are often observed to be working in the administrative departments. Very few of them get to climb the ladder and enjoy the post of CEO or Managing Director. Women have to juggle between work and life. They have to take care of their parents, children, in-laws which make them think twice before resuming work

after marriage. A recent survey found that women want a corporate environment that recognizes that their strengths and skills are different from male colleagues but equally intrinsic to the organization's success. With increasing number of women climbing the competitive corporate ladder, companies seem to be leaving no stone unturned to lure them and are even offering existing employees an additional bonus as much as 25 per cent for referring a female employee. The focus of this research is to provide a glimpse into the status of women in management in India based on interviews with Indian professional women and findings from Indian research studies.

**Aim:** To analyse the challenges and opportunities for women in corporate in India.

#### **Hypothesis**

- Status of women in India in the corporate not at par with men
- Special incentives and privileges given to women in the corporate

#### **Review of Literature**

**Ms. Sraboni Ganguly, Faculty – Human Resource Management, International School of Business, Kolkata, in her paper “21 Century Women in Corporate World”** opines that *during the past decade, the environment for multinational corporations has been quite volatile, with numerous challenges for the firms operating in this arena. However, throughout this period there have emerged a number of executive leaders who have been recognized for their contributions to organizational excellence and leadership despite the environmental fluctuations. But invariably even few years back women power was not so welcome to hold & glorify the top positions of different corporate*

*houses. Several myths were there & so women employees used to face barriers while climbing up the corporate ladder. But time and again women power have proved them, succeeded over those imposed barriers & made major contribution towards organizational excellence. The study deals with those barriers which a woman faces while climbing up the corporate ladder. The perceived notion is women are ruled by heart and not head, they personal life gets priority over professional life. These restrict the species called "women" from being accepted whole heartedly in any organization and from getting due recognition for her contribution towards organizational success.*

**In a Tata Consultancy Services Survey conducted By People Matters “Gender Inclusion In India”** People Matters engaged leaders from the HR community to share gender-related information from their companies. This report is a compilation of the information obtained from 116 companies and gives an insight into the practices, policies and metrics regarding gender inclusion in Corporate India. Their key findings revealed that: Women are under-represented in organizations, especially in senior management roles and corporate boards. Women continue to face many barriers on their way to the top that are unique to their gender. Most CEOs and Top Management realize the benefits of gender diversity and are committed to the mandate of gender inclusion. This commitment is, however, not translated into actions. CEO commitment, women's individual development and practices that allow a flexible work environment are at the centre of a conducive environment for women to succeed.

The term 'glass ceiling' was first coined by Wall Street Journal 25 years back. And unfortunately even today, the number of women in top management and leadership roles are not representative of the workforce population. Time alone is not the answer for gender inclusion. This so called 'glass ceiling' today is a metaphor describing an environment in organizations that does not create an ecosystem for women to grow into leadership roles.

### Methodology:

Considering most of the working population today is getting younger and younger at a very fast pace, it was decided to focus on the younger generation of working women more. However, women above the age of 35 were also included. In order to gain a reasonably accurate understanding of the work environment of women today, data was collected from 100 respondents which included women roughly from the age of 18 to 50 years of age.

The questions included were on compensation as well to determine whether there was any bias as far as giving compensation to men and women was concerned. The working women were surveyed with a structured questionnaire. They belonged to various organizations in Pune which included software companies, banking sector, malls, educational institutes, manufacturing industries and telecom sector.

### Results

Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 21-25 years whereas it was found a moderate number of respondents belonging to other age groups. Very few working women above the 45 year bracket were available for the survey. This shows that majority of the working population among women is young. Majority of

women being from the young age group and being fresher's in the corporate world fell into the 'less than Rs. 25000' income bracket whereas the percentage fell considerably as the higher income bracket was seen.

**Table 1 : Equal opportunities given to males and females**

Sr. No.	Options	Percentage
1	Equal	41
2	Unequal	59

Equal Appraisals/ Compensations given to males and females

Sr. No.	Appraisals	Percentage
1	Equal	65
2	Unequal	35
Sr. No.	Compensations	Percentage
1	Yes	91
2	No	9

In terms of opportunities given to men and women in organizations, the difference of opinion was fairly low, although tending towards the higher side for Unequal work opportunities.

The above results prove that the Hypothesis 1 is correct.

Most of the women felt that sexual harassment was not a major concern in their organisation whereas a few felt otherwise. Majority of women felt that there have been steps implemented in their organisation to curb any kind of instances of sexual harassment, whereas very few experienced the lack of such initiatives at their workplace. Most of the females felt that there were equal opportunities given to men and

women in their organisation whereas there was a sizeable number that felt inequality prevailed. With respect to compensation given to women, it was seen that a surprisingly large number of organisations awarded various compensations specific to women.

Although a large number of women disagreed to the fact that incentives were offered in return for sexual favours at their workplace, a surprising 29% agreed and had directly or indirectly experienced the same.

**Table 2 : Feeling of safety for females within work environment**

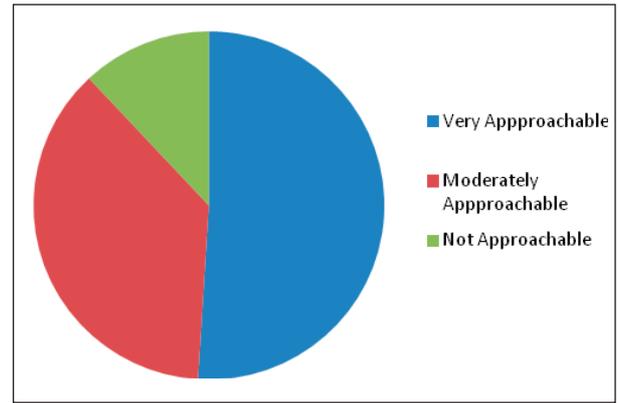
Sr.No.	Options	Percentage
1	Very safe	29
2	Moderately safe	57
3	Not safe	12
4	Threatened	2

Approachability of HR department for women related issues

Sr.No.	Options	Percentage
1	Very approachable	51
2	Moderately approachable	37
3	Not approachable	12

As far as safety of women in their organizations was concerned, it was seen that majority of the organizations made their female employees feel safe whereas 14% fell into the unsafe category. In today's organizations the HR department seems to be promoting approachability and transparency for problem-solving issues, whereas on the contrary our statistics showed otherwise. A very meagre 51% of the women felt their organizations HR departments were approachable for women related issues.

It was observed that a very clear majority of

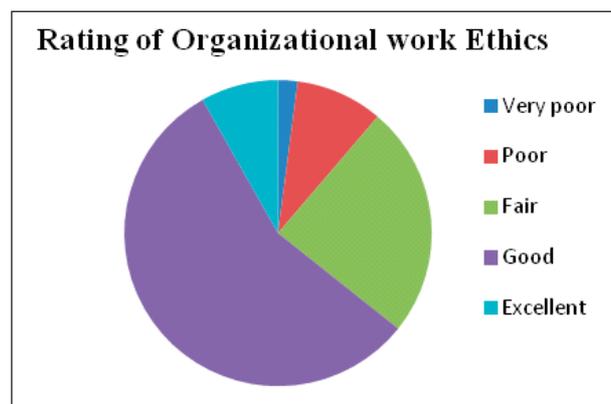


**Figure 1: Approachability of HR department for women related issues**

companies had a well-defined and acceptable protocol to handle issues concerning pregnant women.

**Table 3: Rating of organizational work ethics**

SNo.	Options	Percentage
1	Very poor	2
2	Poor	9
3	Fair	24
4	Good	55
5	Excellent	8



Most women were satisfied with the ethics governing their workplace although a small number felt the need of some major changes to be brought in place. It was observed that a lot of organizations today want to be seen as women-



friendly and this is reflected in the statistical data collected by the researchers.

The above results prove that the hypothesis 2 is correct.

**Table 4: Most common incentive structures**

SNo.	Options	Percentage
1	Maternity Leave	71
2	Flexible leave on request	19
3	Special Night Drop-to-Home	10

In today's organizations, the most common incentive that women are privileged with, was Maternity Leave followed far behind by Flexible leaves and Night-Drop to home

**Table 5: Wrong usage of protocols favouring females**

Sr.No.	Options	Percentage
1	Yes	46
2	No	54

A good number of women admitted to using protocols meant for females, like flexible leaves, sexual harassment claims, etc. to their advantage. Majority of women felt that one of the major ways in which women use their sexuality to their advantage was Being over-friendly with colleagues and managers

It was found that the most common protocol prevailing today for women to address their concerns was to report such issues to their immediate managers, followed closely by taking such issues directly to the HR department. A very few organizations today have a specific women's division handling women related issues.

**Table 6: Changes needed in the organization**

Sr.No.	Options	Percentage
1	Flexible Timings needed	49
2	Travelling arrangements	13
3	Forming a women's cell	38

Of all the women surveyed, a sizable number felt they needed a change in their organization with regards to policies governing women, in one way or another. Majority of them felt that timings should be more flexible, followed closely by realising the need for a special cell to handle women's issues. Travel arrangements for women made up another considerable change desired by women in their workplace.

### Conclusions

From the results, it was concluded that 87% of the respondents were aware of the work ethics at the workplace and only 13% were unaware. 74% of them accepted that there is fair male to female ratio at the work but remaining 26% denied this fact. As far as equal opportunities were concerned, only 41% of females agreed whereas 59% females denied. 21% women opined that there is sexual harassment at the work place and 79% felt otherwise but at the same time 83% answered that there are steps taken to curb the harassment. Regarding appraisals and compensations 65% women felt equal appraisals and given and 91% thought equal compensations were also given and remaining percentage thought otherwise.

29% of women were offered sexual favours. Regarding safety-57% females thought that they were moderately safe while 2% thought that they are threatened. As per, approachability

to HR department. 51% think they are very approachable, 37% think they are moderately approachable, 12% think they aren't really approachable. 94% females think that pregnancy protocol is followed. 26% females feel inferior to males at the workplace. 55% females think that organizational work ethics are good, 24% think they are fair, and remaining think other way round. 77% holds an opinion that there are special incentives for women and also 46% females think that there is wrong usage of protocols favouring females.

There were certain changes needed as per the females working in different corporate 49% wanted to have flexible work timings and 13% seek transport facilities and 38% women wants that there should be a women cell in the offices.

#### **Some important observations flowing from the research:**

- Women are under-represented in organizations, especially in senior management roles and corporate boards.
- Women continue to face many barriers on their way to the top that are unique to their gender.
- Most CEOs and Top Management realize the benefits of gender diversity and are committed to the mandate of gender inclusion. This commitment is, however, not translated into actions.
- CEO commitment, women's individual development and practices that allow a

flexible work environment are at the centre of a conducive environment for women to succeed.

- The term 'glass ceiling' was first coined by Wall Street Journal 25 years back. Unfortunately even today, the number of women in top management/ leadership roles is not representative of the workforce population. Time alone is not the answer for gender inclusion. This so called 'glass ceiling' is today a metaphor that describes an environment in organizations that does not create an ecosystem for women to grow into those leadership roles.

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