

Examining the role of biases and barriers in the workplace



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Although women are now more educated than ever with 60% of all bachelors and masters being held by women (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) even still moving up the corporate hierarchy; women only fill 10% of all leadership roles (Alter, 2019). Although women's advancement in the corporate workplace has greatly increased, research demonstrates that despite an increased presence of female employees in mid-management positions, executive positions continue to be male dominated. Women are underrepresented in areas of governance, directorship, and executive leadership contradicting the apparent momentum of the promotion of women. These problems lay far beyond the pay gap in which a woman gets 77 cents to a man's dollar (Fernandez & Campero, 2017) and cannot be fixed by legislations alone as they are caused by structural issues: some found in society generally, and others found solely in corporate settings. When considering why the gap in salaries and positions still exists corporate culture, societal norms, psychological differences and domestic responsibility are factors that inadvertently contribute to the workplace unbalances women continue to face.

Professors Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam popularized the term “ Glass Ceiling” in the 1980's after it was published in an academic journal by (Tamer, 2016) the term is a metaphor which refers to an invisible and informal barrier faced by women, in their respective profession which prevents women from rising in the corporate hierarchy and advancing in their career; this in turn prohibits both women and companies from reaching their full potential (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) The idea of the glass ceiling frames studies surrounding gender inequality in fields such as sociology and

economics (Fernandez & Campero, 2017). Although most female executives both recognize and acknowledge that the glass ceiling is more of a societal obstacle than a personal obstacle (Glass Ceiling Not Cracked for Executives, 2006) there is a tension between women's desire to progress career-wise and breaking systemic barriers. New legislations and social justice movements, women have tripled participation in leadership and women have obtained an increase in pay since the 2008 recession (Bertrand & Hallock, 2001) but even now the glass ceiling continues to prevent women from rising the corporate hierarchy.

Although the advancement of women in the workplace has greatly increased with more commitment to gender diversity and mandatory reporting of salaries combined with an actual effort to acknowledge the capabilities of women and promote them accordingly yet the organizational culture of an organization continues to be one of the largest hinderances to women's career advancement. In any workplace, relationships are vital in order to be visible and finding a person who will use their influence is quintessential in advancing a woman's career and professional development. Women are unable to find this sponsor as they typically are not invited to informal networking events such as getting a drink after work and playing a round of golf due to the fact that men don't feel that women would want to participate in such activities. And when a woman tries to initiate these informal networking activities it is often misinterpreted as sexual advances rather than networking.

While 48% of men have lunch with their managers at least once a month only 33% of women do (Johns, 2013), this lack of access to mentorship <https://assignbuster.com/examining-the-role-of-biases-and-barriers-in-the-workplace/>

opportunities greatly effects the opportunities available to women especially in internal recruitment. Furthermore, as women often lack a sponsor to promote them and tell of their accomplishments and skills to others which is proven to be beneficial as 70% of females in higher positions have had at least one mentor in career (Steele Flippin, 2017). This causes women not to be equally considered for internal openings during those closed-door informal networking and mentorship discussions. This mentor would be beneficial in climbing the organizational ladder and would help shorten the three years longer it takes women to obtain managerial positions (Johns, 2013).

Men tend to create more widely dispersed networks; creating numerous relationships in the corporate world while women have a very different approach and create small professional networks based on trust; allowing them to stay within their comfort zone. This approach greatly reduces a women's chance of taking advantage of their networks in order to develop a reputation. Due to tougher legislation, explicit gender bias over the years have greatly reduced but these inexplicit biases derail a women's motivation and women sometimes opt out of roles when they see opportunities pass them by through internal recruitment (Shlomo, 2018)

Psychological differences account to approximately 10% of the pay gap (Heneghan, 2018) with women always feeling like they need to mimic men mainly as they don't want to seem too soft (Palacio, 2019). This is because our society holds many hidden biases for how women look, how they dress etc. (Heneghan, 2018) and these notions are difficult to dispel as they carry into the workplace (Palacio, 2019). Behavioural requirements of a leader in a <https://assignbuster.com/examining-the-role-of-biases-and-barriers-in-the-workplace/>

managerial position reflect that of a stereotypical male (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) and as a typical women's communication skills are warmer and more empathetic than a man's typical communication skills (Johns, 2013). When women realize that their styles undervalued because of the belief that feminine women often lack self-confidence which leads to less risk-taking and more cautious career choices, the abilities of women are often undermined, they tend to lower their career expectations and thus do not advance as much as they could (Johns, 2013).

Women often miss promotions because they do not self-promote to the same extent men do. Females also feel less secure at work than men as they prefer collaborative and cooperative environments while men prefer existing environment which is more competitive (Taylor, 1995) and therefore are likely to take fewer risks in career (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) because of this most women see opportunities pass them by regularly.

In corporate settings, women are vulnerable to interruption and even when they make comments in between a conversation it lasts for only a few seconds while if a man interrupts, they typically talk until they are finished. Although women don't feel disrespected when interrupted rather, they attribute this to a normal conversation, but they are still overwhelmingly conscious of these interruptions and spend a lot of energy to process interruptions and how to or not respond to interruptions (Reeves, 2019). Furthermore, these interruptions cause women to engage less in conversations when a male employee is participating.

Hiring managers say the wage gap and lack of female leadership advancement is primarily caused by a relative lack of long-term career commitment (Bertrand & Hallock, 2001); due to familial responsibility. Childcare and pregnancy being two of the major factors causing work-place related consequences and altogether halting career advancement. Because of this when hiring female employees hiring managers often take the liberty of asking female candidates openly about their marriage and future family plans. Life stages that only effect women have a major impact on hiring (Steele Flippin, 2017), many say that this is because females are prone to willingly takes breaks from employment and are usually the ones who have to take days off/absences in order to take care of children when they're sick etc. in comparison with their male counterparts.

A term that is used at the same time as the " Glass Ceiling" is the " Mommy Track", a path for women who supposedly would rather spend time raising their children then advance their career. This is due to the perception woman would take time off or leave the workforce if they have children and that if women choose to return to work many believe that they are less dedicated due to the fact that they have maternal duties to attend to thus, those on the " Mommy Track" are usually sidelined from promotions and raises which is referred to as the " motherhood penalty", closely associated performance pay (Heywood & Parent, 2017). Furthermore employer prejudices regarding motherhood is reflected in pay gap (Heywood & Parent, 2017) in which mothers face a 7% wage penalty compared to childless female employees a gap that is bigger than the gap between men and women (Johns, 2013) while men are rewarded with a promotion after having a child according to a GAO

report, fathers received a 2.1 percent pay increase after each child (Johns, 2013) as having a family to provide for makes them more committed to work. Women although serving as breadwinners in 40% of American homes (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) are still given the “motherhood penalty” as a result of their lack of commitment and stability. Due to this penalty women need to work harder in case of a possible absence if pregnant (Tamer, 2016) as off-ramping to fulfill caregiving role makes it harder to gain momentum and parity in promotion and earning power. (Johns, 2013). Requiring taking days off/absences in order to take care of children when they’re sick etc. and balancing career and primary caregiver responsibilities presents a significant challenge and can become a career killer.

Higher paying jobs require more time commitment, but women are positioned in social structure to have greater domestic responsibility (Cejka & Eagly, 1999) and are respected when they spend time at home tending after their children at home rather than having their time consumed by their careers. This then leads to decisions such as obtaining a less demanding job which would completely halt their career advancement, or as many believe when women return to work that they become less dedicated due to the fact that they have maternal duties to attend to and have take time off for all child related emergencies, or the dreaded option to quit work in order to make time to care for their family. Which then leads to the fact that it would be easier to close the wage gap more if women were not assumed to be the primary caregivers of children a long-standing societal standard/norm (Crofts & Coffey, 2017)

The unconscious mind is constantly jumping to conclusions (Heneghan, 2018). Biases have power to restrict women to back office/subordinate position exist along with an existing social norm that men should earn more than wives, the bias becomes one of many that have the power to prevent women from progressing in their career (Shlomo, 2018). When married couples' hours worked are correlated with performance pay and women typically reduce hours of work to accommodate husbands (Heywood & Parent, 2017). Consequently, married women make far less and are given less opportunities than unmarried women.

Implicit bias shaped by culture and upbringing (Palacio, 2019) is one of the worst hinderances for women's advancement in work (Steele Flippin, 2017) as stereotypical female behaviour is not consistent with expectations for a successful manager. Women only make up 27% of individuals who make over 100, 000 a year (Rio, 2018) although the majority of Americans find that men and women have the same level of capability (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) only 33% of men believe women have the same opportunities available to them (Glass Ceiling Not Cracked for Executives, 2006). Moreover, it is acknowledged that individuals have the tendency to judge women's abilities more harshly and hold women higher standard of competence in comparison with their male counterparts (Johns, 2013)

Where women are judged for their appearance; men are not. Women are expected to have a nice appearance; but if they wear high heels and makeup they are seen as incompetent with their work but on the otherhand if they do not keep up with their appearance they are seen as vain and unfeminine.

Women have to spend time creating this balance. Female leaders are either <https://assignbuster.com/examining-the-role-of-biases-and-barriers-in-the-workplace/>

seen as competent or well-liked they are never both. An example of implicit bias is when people say jobs such as engineer you automatically assume person to be male (Palacio, 2019). These kinds of assumptions fueled by stereotypes justify the subordination and income of women and the overall social system in which women are inferior to men (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). Women always have two jobs simultaneously - their actual work and overcoming stereotypes (Chisholm-Burns, 2017). Stereotypes has the potential to hamper with their leadership potential and due to this woman are forced to balance the two things; their work and overcoming stereotypes (Chisholm-Burns, 2017). Firms need to address the issues in order to advance women further (Nancherla, 2009)

Although many Americans argue that the wage gap and lack of career advancement of women is caused by women choosing lower-paying post-secondary programs, saying that it is not an inequality but rather a choice. But there is considerable evidence supporting the fact that women “choose” these programs such as education as that is what society expects of them and it is where they feel the safest. This education disparity leaves women over-represented in lower-paying industries (Administrative and secretarial work, education and customer service) compared to male-dominated industries (engineering and computer programming) which are generally higher paying.

Promoting women would be beneficial to propel society forward and breaking the glass ceiling as gender equality in senior leadership roles brings better decision making, higher ROI's, improved efficiency and lower turnover (Alter, 2019) and female leaders benefits the financial performance and economic

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growth of a company (Chisholm-Burns, 2017). Furthermore, the wages of already promoted women grow faster than that of non promoted (Booth et al, 2003) which is why if men and women are promoted equally this will lead to a decrease in the wage gap and breakage in the glass ceiling. Additionally, there are countless proven competitive and bottom-line benefits associated with female leadership (Alter, 2019). There is a contagion effect of attendance going up when female opportunities participate in boards as women come better prepared to board meetings (Booth et al, 2003). If there are more females on the board room the company tends to be more socially responsible (Alter, 2019) as when women are in corporate boards there are fewer legal infraction like fraud, due to more monitoring. (Chisholm-Burns, 2017) When women are finally given top leadership roles, like that of a CEO it is when companies are having trouble financially. “ When things are going great, its usually men who occupy these roles” Ryan of University of Exeter’s school of Psychology (Billings, 2019) this is because both men and women acknowledge the benefits of having women in leadership but won’t allow them to do anything until the last possible moment.

As of 2015, women have overtaken men in numerous occupations that were previously male-dominated such as the occupations of pharmacists, human resource managers and social workers (Steele Flippin, 2017) But one thing that remains constant is the need for a buy-in from someone presently in the senior leadership ranks (Rio, 2018)

In spite of the existence of the Ontario Employment Equity Act and numerous other legislations which covers women’s rights (Taylor, 1995) and the implementation of other bias-remediation policies which aid in in <https://assignbuster.com/examining-the-role-of-biases-and-barriers-in-the-workplace/>

heightening awareness of inequality (Johns, 2013) and gender discrimination in the workplace, these policies/legislations aren't the most effective way to go about it (Fernandez & Campero, 2017). There has been a proven rapid change after a fine although according to Tierney Remick, vice-chairperson and co-leader of Korn Ferry's board " People would prefer that you wouldn't have to mandate but in reality, the progress is not moving fast" (Alter, 2019). Furthermore, to tackle the glass ceiling, external recruiting will be most effective (Fernandez & Campero, 2017) as this will aid in avoiding gender bias in internal recruiting. Equal pay would help advance female leadership as when women receive higher pay, they are perceived as better candidates for senior positions (Rio, 2018)

Women are still fighting to have the same opportunities and salaries that men are handed. Though since women had first entered the workplace there has been significant opportunities; the glass ceiling is still from the point of breaking. Researchers say it could be potentially be another century until men and women are considered equal in the workplace (Steele Flippin, 2017) due to a lack of pressure to integrate more women in the leadership ranks and the reduction of spending on social support programs after the 2008 recession in. but one things for certain equality at the bottom needs to be fixed first before the board room (Aron, 2015).

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