Corporate Social Responsibility - A Gender Perspective

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Abstract
The concept of CSR is not new to India; contributing to society without expecting anything in return is an intrinsic part of Indian tradition. It has recently been recognized as an essential part of business and as a result has been widely promoted. The challenge has been to integrate CSR as a wholesome activity into all aspects of business.

Today business entity is not only an important economic institution but also a social institution. Business enterprises are important organ of a society. Organisations have responsibility to manage diverse workforce. Gender difference does not make any difference to the attitude or capability of a person. There are number of cases, where women are paid lesser in comparison to men for the same jobs and they face greater barriers in the matter of promotion to higher managerial positions. Discriminatory treatment of diverse workforce by the companies is very common. For example, in many companies, men are generally given preference over women in the matters of powers, facilities and promotions. In companies women are not treated at par with the men even if they hold a similar job profile.

Many companies do not give similar wages to women employee as they give to men for the same work. Such discriminatory practices lower down women employees moral and we know our society includes women also, who are half of the population and ultimately it adversely affect society. So women should be given importance in the important role of the company such as manager, in making policies, participation in decision making etc. a company should give equal opportunities to all people to work in it. It should not refuse to hire the people on the basis of gender. Selection and all other personnel decisions must be made solely on the basis of objective criteria such as efficiency to perform or seniority. Women, often encounter barriers workplace. The difference in gender is used as a tool to exploit them.

In this paper attempt has been made to trace out the factors related to less women participation in work place. Although the working women have been provided various benefits, protection and safeguards under different labour legislations in order to provide security against various risk specific to their nature which are likely to occur in their lives yet their work participation is not appropriate.

Keywords: CSR; Gender Perspective

Introduction
Gender equality does not imply that all women and men must be the same. Instead, it entails equipping both with equal

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access to capabilities; so that they have the freedom to choose opportunities that improve their lives.

It means that women have equal access to resources and rights as men, and vice versa”.

-Power, Voice and Rights 2010, Asia Pacific Human Development Report, UNDP

Today business entity is not only an important economic institution but also a social institution. Business enterprises are important organ of a society. They have direct impact on society. For example, if an enterprise does not pay fair wages, the employees shall have a lower purchasing power resulting in low standard of living and poor demand for goods and services. Enterprises, which do not care for their discharges like gas, toxic etc., pollute environment and adversely affect ecological balance. In the same way organisations have responsibility to manage diverse workforce. Gender difference does not make any difference to the attitude or capability of a person. There are number of cases, where women are paid lesser in comparison to men for the same jobs and they face greater barriers in the matter of promotion to higher managerial positions. Discriminatory treatment of diverse workforce by the companies is very common. For example, in many companies, men are generally given preference over women in the matters of powers, facilities and promotions. In companies women are not treated at par with the men even if they hold a similar job profile. Many companies do not give similar wages to women employee as they give to men for the same work. Such discriminatory practices lower down women employees moral and we know our society includes women also, who are half of the population and ultimately it adversely affect society. So women should be given importance in the important role of the company such as manager, in making policies, participation in decision making etc. a company should give equal opportunities to all people to work in it. It should not refuse to hire the people on the basis of gender. Selection and all other personnel decisions must be made solely on the basis of objective criteria such as efficiency to perform or seniority. Women, often encounter barriers workplace. The difference in gender is used as a tool to exploit them. Corporate Sector should be encouraged to take up projects for providing assistance to women in situations of domestic violence and for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking (XII Five Year Plan Report of the Working Group on Women’s Agency and Empowerment)

“Corporate social responsibility challenges business to be accountable for the consequences of their actions while pursuing economic goals. A corporation should be held accountable for any of its actions that affect people, their communities and their environment. It is continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of workforce and their families as well the local community and society at large.”- Post, Fredrick and Lawrence

CSR activities can be done on the following areas, which are given below:

- The workplace,
- The marketplace,
- The community, and
- The environment.

As per Census 2001, the Indian workforce is over 400 million strong constituting 39.1 percent of the total population of the country. There is a wide gap between the
proportion of male and female workers to the respective population. While 51.7 percent of the total males are workers, female workers constitute 25.6 percent of the total female population. These percentages are called work participation rates (WPR). The female WPRs during the 1981-2001 censuses and respective gaps between male WPR and female WPR are shown below.

Table 1. Female Work Participation Rate and its gap with Male Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Gap (Male to Female)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Office of the Registrar General, India, ORG and Census Commissioner of India

It is observed from above that the Female Work Participation Rates have increased over decades resulting in narrowing of gaps with Male Work Participation Rates. Moreover, the number of female workers is about less than half the number of male workers.

The net increases (in million) of workers in four different industrial categories, namely, Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industries and Other Workers between 1991 and 2001 are as under

Table 2. Net increase (in millions) in the different categories of workers between 1991 & 2001: India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Workers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Industries</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Workers</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Office of the Registrar General, India, ORG and Census Commissioner of India

While the absolute number of male cultivators has decreased, there has been an increase in the number of female cultivators. In the Household Industries category, the increase in females is glaringly more than that of males. Some of the industries and occupations are dominated by females. Among these are skilled jobs like professionals, technicians and associate professionals (16.8 percent females compared to 10.8 percent males), skilled agriculture and fisheries workers (10.6 percent females compared to 3.6 percent males), elementary occupations (19.4 percent females compared to 16.5 percent males) and skilled agriculture and fisheries workers (10.5 percent females compared to 3.6 percent males).

Data from the 66th round of the NSSO indicates that female work participation rate has decreased between 2004-05 to 2009-10. The share of women in usual status workers declined from 28.7% to 22.8%. In rural areas this has declined from 32.7% to 26.1% and in
urban areas from 16.6% to 13.8%. (XII Five Year Plan Report of the Working Group on Women’s Agency and Empowerment)

OBJECTIVE

The sole objective of this presentation is to know the basic factors that create gender discrimination in work place. As far as India is concerned women are actively participating and contributing in nation’s development but women do not enjoy equal status as men do, now time come when society needs to change. As working mothers women managing family emotionally and financially. Needless to say women are backbones of family as well as society. Corporate plays major role to boost economy by providing employment to every section of society. Although female employment may be increasing in India, female empowerment and the role of women in the workplace remains limited as a result of gender stereotyping, mental mind sets and social conditioning. CSR can play main role in changing the mind sets of the society towards women role in work place.

Remarkable CSR campaigns of companies for women empowerment

HUL’s SHAKTI

- SHAKTI means ‘Strength’. Project SHAKTI is HUL’s initiative to upliftment of standard of living in rural India by creating income-generating capabilities for underprivileged rural women
- by providing a small-scale enterprise opportunity, and to improving rural lives through health and
- Hygiene awareness. Project SHAKTI is taken up in rural areas only whereby women are the
- Distributors for HUL products and are called “Shakti Ammas”. This identity is ushering prosperity in their lives and most importantly self-respect.

Project DRISHTI

- where Whisper helped to restore eyesight to 250 blind girls through corneal transplant operations in which P&G contributed Re 1 for every pack of whisper sold
- Project open minds to support and educate children across the Australia, ASEAN and the India (AAI) region. For every large size pack of Vicks Vaporub, Whisper, Ariel Power Compact,
- Head & Shoulders and Pantene purchased by consumers during November 1999 to January 2000,

Avon

- Avon Cosmetics’ commitment to women runs deeper than the boundaries of business. Women are the heart of Avon’s success and Avon continues to support and understand their needs through Avon’s Breast Cancer Crusade. The goal of the Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade is to improve access to quality breast health care
for underserved, uninsured and low income populations, and to support biomedical research focused on prevention and improved methods of

- Diagnosis and treatment to Cure and prevent breast cancer.

There is a need of such valuable Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns from prominent companies which can surely change fate and face of women in Indian society in the significant areas of education, health, sports, cultural, political, employment and neglected as well as untouched areas of women empowerment which will boost them to live independent and dignified life which they deserve as they are vital and inseparable part of society. Development of corporate and society is unattainable without an active support of women. The government, media, NGOs should collectively join hands with corporate in common interest of upliftment of women.

**Factors That Affect Participation of Women In Workplace**

Gender inequality can be attributed to two main factors: (i) external factors such as the legal framework, social and cultural perceptions: and (ii) internal factors that reinforce gender inequalities such as corporate culture, values, human resources structure and CSR application.

**External Factors**

i. Legal Framework

The Indian preamble to constitution recognizes the basic principles of the “the equality of status and opportunity” for all its citizens in india(article 12 to 35). However, no provisions specifically prohibit gender discrimination in labor opportunities or in the workplace, and no provisions stress equal salaries for men and women who hold the same positions.

India has “special benefit” laws intended to lessen the work burden for women and to keep them safe from dangerous jobs (Factories Act 1948), which sometimes works against equal access to job opportunities. There are certain conditions on the professions women can choose to pursue. As a result, women's economic participation is concentrated in the socially accepted professions for women. According to Factories Act 1948 there are certain provisions which are exclusively for women, keeping in view of their soft and tender personality. these are given below

1. prohibition of employment of women during night hours.
2. Prohibition of work in hazardous occupations.

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3. Prohibition of employment of women in pressing cotton where a cotton opener is at work.
4. Fixation of daily hours of work at nine.
5. Provision of crèche

In reality, these restrictions serve to limit the competition between men and women in favor of men.

On the other hand, the labor laws provide for a certain degree of protection for women’s rights in the workplace i.e. maternity leave, childcare etc. However, these legislations are not sufficient to provide the adequate support or encouragement for women to enter the workplace. There are several loopholes that remain providing the private sector with an option or opportunity to discourage or limit the employment, opportunities and growth of women in the workplace. For example

1. companies will not employ married women or women likely to get pregnant to avoid providing the maternity leave.
2. companies would avoid employing women with children that fall under the provision of providing suitable separate rooms for their children i.e. women with children below the age of six.

ii. Social perceptions and interference

Society, in addition to the legislative framework, directly and indirectly enforces certain practices and “acceptable” standards i.e. the role of women, the time women can work, priorities for women etc.

Social discrimination against women is common in the field of labor and stems from popular notions that women need to be protected. Another popular belief in India is that women who enter the job market are doing so to supplement and increase their family's income rather than to become economically independent or to individually support their family. For example

1. Women can work in certain department only like it is socially unacceptable for women to work in maintenance department where only men work.
2. Women can work in 9 to 5 desktop job like banking, teaching, doctor etc.
3. Women cannot work late like BPO, KPO etc, it is socially not acceptable.
4. Parents prefer their daughters to serve government organisation then private although she is professionally qualified.

Internal Factors

In addition to the external factors that influence women in the workplace, there are internal factors that reinforce social perceptions and play on the gender inequalities, either by increasing them or marginalizing them. We can take few factors such as: corporate culture and values; human resource management and CSR.
i. Corporate culture and values

The corporate culture and values influence the overall situation of women and gender dynamics in a direct way; namely through the social perceptions, informal culture, recruitment policy and promotion policy of the organization.

Social perceptions

Social perception and interference create or reinforce within companies certain mindsets that affect the role of women in the workplace. There are a variety of mindsets that dictate the role of women in the workplace and these are:

1. The “traditional” role of women:

People in the company have mind setups that women should not take on late night shifts so they can be home for their husbands when they return from their work and have the opportunity to look after their children before or as they come back from school. They are traditional in their thinking regarding the role of women, as the housekeepers and child bearers.

2. The “appropriate” role of women:

The informal culture within the organizations was that women could take on certain posts whilst other posts were inaccessible to them. Because of the physical nature of the job or post. So the “traditional” stereotype job is preferred for them like sitting job.

3. The “priority” for women:

Women are clearly identified as individuals with a social role to play i.e. housewife, child bearer, and that a job in essence may not be acceptable - but if necessary the job is a secondary role. Also, there was clear skepticism of women’s commitment to their jobs because of the social role they play or are expected to play. This skepticism resulted in the perception that to women the job will never be their priority (and should not be), and as such they are temporarily in the workplace making focus or attention on their role in the workplace unnecessary.

4. Policy versus Practice

Multinational companies have strict policies aligned with international standards with respect to women in the workplace. However, it was clear in many cases that such policies, although well written and in some cases even effectively communicated, were not necessarily translated into practice or embedded within the company culture.

It appears that the cause of such disparity between policies and practices stems from the mind setups that in turn create an informal culture within which companies operate, creating practices that are misaligned with policies.

5. Recruitment policy

A criterion for employment is a set qualification without consideration of social, culture or gender issues. In implementation, this leaves much room for an informal culture to regulate the applicability of social, cultural or gender norms, making the recruitment policy a mere guideline but not a process or practice. For example, if a woman wanted to work as a technician, whose job description is gender neutral, the application may not be considered because of the stereotypical mental model and the resulting informal culture and perception that it is inappropriate for a woman to work as a technician.
6. Job Description Policy

Men and women performing the same jobs don’t in actual fact have the same responsibilities. For example, men and women with the same job title and position will perform different responsibilities because of stereotypes and gender differentiation.

For example, male accountants are expected to perform out of office work whilst female accountants are not. By policy their job descriptions are identical; yet in practice they are not because of the informal culture that dictates it is inappropriate for women to undertake out of office work.

This informal culture may be a result of a mental structure that implies the need to protect women in the workplace. Such actions are often perceived and expressed as positive discrimination in favour of women. However, in its entirety this protective mind setups results in limiting the potential performance of women and in turn their opportunities for promotion in the workplace.

7. Promotion Policy

Policies and practices, as they relate to promotion, are difficult to ascertain since they reflect on a conglomerate set of actions.

For example, all companies were clear in that promotions are directly tied to defined criteria based on performance. However, performance is based on being able to effectively perform ones responsibilities. This may require out of office work for the female accountant, late night shifts for the female manager or experience and know-how in non-traditional female posts, all of which are activities women have limited access to because of the informal cultures.

For example, Kiran bedi was a senior officer but she could not be promoted to police commissioner of Delhi, although she works for 16-18 hours a day. Her junior has been promoted to this post because of gender discrimination.

ii. Human Resource Management

A key asset to any business is their human asset. It would be difficult to ascertain growth, success or sustainability without good human resources and effective human resource management. Accordingly, it is important to review human resource management as it may influence gender roles, rights and opportunities in the workplace.

SUGGESTIONS

Many actions are necessary if gender equality is to be achieved and CSR is to play a part in affecting gender equality in the workplace. There are recommended actions which can be taken to improve the situations of women in work place.

1. Encourage more women in the workplace through:
   - Participation in job fairs
   - Facilitating easier shifts for women

2. Training: Training is key to influence, raise awareness and provide employees with the tools to manage the necessary change. Training can take many different formats as follows:
   - Diversity training
• Training of managers on how to deal with gender diversity and encourage and support gender equality in the workplace
• Training of women on how to be more proactive in the workplace
• Raising awareness on employees rights
• Employee training on handling conflict, sexual harassment and complaints
• Training of men to raise their awareness on the importance of diversity
• Equality training for recruitment and selection staff to ensure the incoming employees can neutralize or create a more balanced workplace
• Training on gender sensitivity and the importance of women in the workplace

3. Culture shift: The organization needs to invest in a culture shift to value women’s skills and contributions in the workplace more. This shift may be accomplished through actions to influence or re-direct informal cultures that negatively affect the role of women in the workplace.

4. Current Balance: Gradually increase the number of female decision makers within an organization to potentially affect the corporate culture, mindsets and informal models.

5. Create an equal playing field by providing support for women entering the workplace, taking into consideration their social responsibilities of childcare by providing childcare facilities.

6. Actively advocate and encourage female applicants to non-traditional posts by:
   • Supporting them and enabling them to work in groups to overcome the traditional mindset and stereotypical mental models; or
   • Amending job descriptions to encourage female applicants to non-traditional posts.
   • Recruiting more than one women in a male dominated department to avoid isolation

7. Encourage increased female executive training and non-traditional training for women i.e.:
   • Mentoring of women to prepare them for senior posts, more responsibilities etc.
   • Accelerated training techniques that provide women with the option to grow within an organization quickly.
   • Career development guidance for women to help them identify their needs, their skills (strengths and weaknesses) and how to maximize on them.
   • Designed and focused training initiatives that help women in lower level blue collar positions to move into non-traditional jobs.

8. Make already available training more accessible by providing transportation or making it possible for training to be undertaken online etc.
9. More pro-active actions to reflect the senior buy-in for more women in the workplace i.e.
   - Actively pursue applications of women
   - Provide the necessary support structure for women in the workplace
   - Create a welcoming environment for women by eliminating the notion of departments exclusively for men

10. Ensure that practices are more transparent. This can be achieved by ensuring (i) there are at least two people managing or handling the process; (ii) a balanced gender representation on selection committees; and (iii) practices and processes are reviewed and audited regularly.

11. Establish a structured interview process that is consistent regardless of the sex of the applicant or the committee reviewing the application.

12. Create a form of accountability for decisions made within the organizations by department heads i.e. who they choose for training and why?

13. Integrate gender sensitivity and consciousness in performance criteria for promotion i.e. overtime work is not part of the evaluation criteria and is rewarded separately.

14. Invest in strategic CSR that will promote gender equality in the organization and community

15. A strategic approach to CSR to address gender in the workplace would include:
   - A committee on how to attract and retain more women
   - Partnerships with local communities
   - Monitoring the impact of policies, procedures and activities on male and female actions

16. Take advantage of the potential social and economical impact of female employment and empowerment as part of the CSR strategy.

17. HR data that reflects number of applicants per post by sex, number of interviews per post by sex etc. including employment, promotion, training, termination etc. to ensure accountability for the process.

18. Gender disaggregated data in terms of performance, training and promotions to show return on investment for men and women and avoid basing conclusions and decisions on stereotypes or informal cultures.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has been written to know the factors that are responsible for gender discrimination in the work place. Positive discrimination towards female empowerment needs to be revisited.

Initiatives and practices in place to support female empowerment or employment often hinder the development, growth and advancement of women as they are often based on positive discrimination; such initiatives and practices need to be revisited to ensure they are in fact supportive and are without any negative impact on women’s career choice and
development. Education, training and awareness are required to effectively implement gender equality in the workplace.

Education is key to creating a balanced workplace in terms of gender equality, and to build awareness of its importance and value to the companies and society. Although female employment may be increasing in India, female empowerment and the role of women in the workplace remains limited as a result of gender stereotyping, mental mind sets and social conditioning.

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