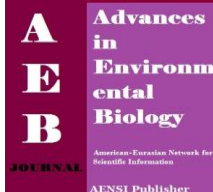




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Women As Manager: Challenges And Prospects In The Context Of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the socio-cultural determinants of women representation at the managerial positions in Bangladesh. The study presents the findings of research and women's advancement to the managerial positions. In this research, 'Gender Organization System' (GOS) model has been used for the study purpose. The main objectives of this paper are to take a look at the position of women as managers, to examine their strengths and weakness as competent managers and to find ways of improving their managerial skills, qualities, capabilities as part of women's manager in the changing socio-economic environment of Bangladesh. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been used for data analyses. The paper offers some policy measures to facilitate women managers toward their career advancement by reducing the impact of gender-bias in the management of different types of business, social, cultural, government organizations of Bangladesh in particular and in South Asian Countries in general.

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INTRODUCTION

From the dawn of the civilization, women played a complementary role with men to achieve all success of mankind. The Women folk in general in Bangladesh have a little share of development opportunities. They are often excluded from education or from the better jobs, from the political systems or from adequate health care. [1].

In Bangladesh, it was noticed in different five years plan that women work-force, in reality, remained outside the main stream of development programs. In the mean time, significant changes have occurred in the state policy of the country. Thus, to ensure a balanced socio-economic growth and development of the country equal participation of women is felt necessary. In different five years plan, developments of women have been given priority in order to bring women into the main stream of economic development. The first Five Years Plan (1973-1978) emphasized on rehabilitation of war affected women. In Second Two Year Plan (1978-1980) was characterized by a shift from welfare to development approach. In the five year plan (1980-1985) focused women participation in development through expanding opportunities for skill development. The Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990) had specific goals to reduce disparity between development of women and men. The Fourth Five Year plan (1990-1995) was characterized by the development of women through macro framework with multi-sectoral development. In the Fifth Five year plan (1997-2002) focused women involvement in different types of project development and management. Subsequently, in 2003-2005 and 2006-2009 plans highlighted women's participation in development framework and implementation of PRSP of the country. In Sixth five year plan of Bangladesh 2011-2015 emphasized women's participation in managerial activities in private sector as well as Govt. sector too. However, women have only recently begun to join to the ranks of managers in different organization in large numbers. The position of women in management is particularly important because a greater number of women are entering into the field of management and striving to make a career in it. [2]. The 4th World Conference on Women (1995) called for governments worldwide to "create a gender sensitive education system in order to ensure...full and equal participation of women in educational administration and policy and decision making" (BPA, 1995). Two experimental studies were conducted to measure the effects of contextual and situational factors on employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward female managers in traditionally male-oriented jobs.. The significant rise in women's participation in the job market at a global level may be characterized by a number of factors, such as: changes in the role of women in family, in society; movements of women around the globe, changes in work patterns, single parent families, dual career couples, delays in starting families and the likes. Moreover, women are extremely underrepresented

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in the managerial positions and it has been reported that only 14% of the managerial pool with certain variations are occupied by the women. So far our knowledge goes; no in depth study has yet been done on the subject in Bangladesh. This research gap has motivated the present author to undertake a research work on “Women as Manager: Challenges and Prospects in Bangladesh Perspective”.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To take a look at the position of Women as managers.
2. To examine their strengths and weaknesses as women managers.
3. To find the ways of improving their managerial skills, qualities, capabilities as part of women managers.
4. To analyze the opportunities of women manager in the changing socio-economic environment of Bangladesh.
5. To take the challenge of being as women managers.

GOS Model:

The study presents the findings of research and women's advancement to the managerial positions in Bangladesh. In this research, 'Gender Organization System' (GOS) model has been used to develop theoretical framework for the study. This model recognizes the simultaneous interaction between the person, the organization and the society. It incorporates the propositions and arguments of both the gender centered and organization structure perspectives. However, this perspective suggests that the limited advancement of women in organizations is not due either to their gender (gender-centered perspective) or to the organization structure (organization structure perspective), but that both jointly influence and shape women's behavior at work. The model exhibits an inter linkage in all three areas--gender, organization and managerial position. The study identifies them as an inventory of personal, organizational and systematic factors that have influence on women's mobility to organizational management. It is a generic model which has potential for providing useful insights to those who wish to adopt guidelines to study women's career related issues in Bangladesh in particular and globally in general.

Methodology:

Both primary and secondary data have been used for the purpose of this study. Its description in orientation and exploratory in nature. Primary data have been collected by direct interview method using a pre-designed questionnaire from the sample respondents. The samples have been selected in the light of the findings of the pilot survey. The sample selection was mainly convenience based. For secondary data, relevant material such as: text books, research articles, government policies and strategies regarding women motivation and opportunities as career managers were used in order to present the fact in the logical format.

The breakup of the sample respondents has been shown in the table-1:

Table 1: Breakup of the Respondents

| Breakup of the samples | Number of Frequency | Frequency in Percentage |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Banking Industries | 11 | 11% |
| Insurance Industries | 10 | 10% |
| Shipping Co. | 08 | 08% |
| Mobile Co. | 09 | 09% |
| IT Firm | 07 | 07% |
| Educational Institutions | 15 | 15% |
| Health Care Services | 08 | 08% |
| Entertainment Industries | 05 | 05% |
| Motel and Resorts | 06 | 06% |
| Beauty parlors | 12 | 12% |
| Airlines | 05 | 05% |
| Nursing Institutions | 04 | 04% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

Findings and their analyses:

The findings of the study have been analyzed as follows:

Profile of sample respondents:

In Bangladesh, women participation in the labour force has increased two-folds during the last decades. The significant rise in women's participation in the labour force at a global level may be attributed to a number of developments. As Such, the profile of sample respondents has been shown in table 2

Table 2: Profile of sample respondents

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Responses by marital status | | |
| Married | 70 | 70% |
| Single | 15 | 15% |
| Widower | 10 | 10% |
| Divorcee | 05 | 05% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |
| Responses by Age | | |
| Below 35 | 15 | 15% |
| 35-45 | 22 | 22% |
| 45-55 | 45 | 45% |
| 55 & Above | 18 | 18% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |
| Responses by Education | | |
| Undergraduate | 15 | 15% |
| Graduate | 20 | 20% |
| Post Graduate | 55 | 55% |
| Others | 10 | 10% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

Table 2 shows that most (55%) of the respondents are university post-graduates, 20% are graduates, 15% are under graduate and 10% are from others areas. A total of 70% are married, 15% single, 10% widower and 5% divorcee. Most (45%) of the respondents are the age category of 45-55, 22% are at the age of 35-45, 18% are at the age of above 55 and 15% are at the age of below 35. It has been reported by the qualitative research that all of our respondents are educated, living in the urban areas and belong to the middle class and upper class families of the society.

Factors Motivating Women Manager:

The Bangladesh economy is undergoing a period of deflation with high cost of living, inflation and competitiveness in the market. Thus, the optimum utilization of all factors of production such as man, materials, machines, money and market are essential. Effective human resources management especially women is a strategy that could be employed to improve the overall economic scenario of the country. Against this background, we were interested to know from our sample respondents regarding factors motivating women manager in the study areas. Data, thus, collected have been shown in table 3

Table 3: Factors Motivating Women Manager

| Factors | Managers Ranking Factors | | | Weighted Scores | Rating Percent | Rank No |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|------|-----------------|----------------|---------|
| | No 1 | No 2 | No 3 | | | |
| To gain social status | 55 | 35 | 21 | 256 | 44.21 | 1 |
| To be professional | 15 | 24 | 13 | 106 | 18.31 | 2 |
| To be decision maker | 13 | 18 | 09 | 84 | 14.51 | 3 |
| To contribute in economic development | 10 | 14 | 12 | 78 | 13.47 | 4 |
| To innovate and create | 07 | 09 | 07 | 55 | 9.50 | 5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 62 | 579 | 100 | |

(Source: Field Survey)

(Note: The ranking factor indicates 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The over-all ranking has been made on the basis of the percentage of total weighted score for each facilitating factor)

Table 3 portrays that 44.21% sample respondents' ranked social status as the most important factor for starting career as a manager. It also shows that the rating of the factors in terms of percentage ranges from 9.50% at the lowest to 44.21% at the highest. Other motivating factors are decision making, contribution in economic development, innovation and creativity, professionalism and the like. At this stage, we were interested to know from the sample respondents about the job culture, quality work life and congenial work environment etc.

Cooperation at work place:

At the personal level, dual commitment to family and career poses a great dilemma to women professionals. Further, the percentage of women manager in the organization is very low. They being token status are more visible among their fellow colleagues. As women manager, they become conscious of their performance and other values in career development of the professionals. We asked our sample respondents to know about the nature of cooperation received from their colleagues at work place of the sample organization. Data, thus, collected have been shown in table 4.

Table 4: Cooperation from Fellow Colleagues

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Very much co operative | 29 | 29 |
| Somewhat cooperative | 42 | 42 |
| Not cooperative | 08 | 08 |
| Somewhat not cooperative | 21 | 21 |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

(Source: Field Survey)

Table 4 reveals that most (42%) opined in favour of cooperation in the work place from their colleagues, 29% opined in favour of somewhat cooperation, 21% opined in somewhat non cooperation and 08% opined in favour of non cooperation. Qualitative research portrays that women do not like work with women colleagues for reasons of being too hard. The analyses show that women managers lag behind their male colleagues in terms of possessing some significant attributes required for managerial job, performance, values and ethical standards. It seems that women are naturally weak and unable to meet the demand of the managerial position like toughness in job nature, emotional stability, physical capability and the like.

Challenges of Women Managers:

The study identified that a number of factors that have influenced women managers career mobility in the study areas. Among the factors, qualitative research reveals that the important ones are social, cultural, organizational and religious. In the light of the literature review and quantitative, qualitative research found some challenges remain open for the career women managers in sample areas. Data, thus collected have been shown in table 5

Table 5: Challenges of Women Managers

| Problems/Challenges | Frequency in Percentages |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender streaming | 100 |
| Token status of women | 100 |
| Gender biased selection process | 77.77 |
| Absences of women friendly policies | 77.77 |
| Networking and Mentoring | 61.13 |
| Limited Training Opportunities | 61.13 |
| Domination of male decision makers | 52.17 |
| Political influence | 52.17 |
| Socio-cultural environment | 43.12 |
| Economic situation | 43.12 |
| Others | 17.16 |

(Source: Field Investigation)

Table 5 reveals that gender streaming and token status of women are the most important challenges for career women managers in the study areas. It has been reported that the next two important challenges for sample respondents are gender biased selection process and absences of women friendly policies. Networking, Mentoring and Limited Training Opportunities have been identified as impeding factors for career development as manager of sample respondents. Determinants of male decision maker and political influence are the most important factors for the development of women as manager either in the govt. organizational or in the public sector too. In addition, socio-cultural environment and unfavorable economic situation have been reportedly a constant problem for sample women manager. Other problems reported by the respondents include lack of appropriate information network for sample respondents in the study areas. Therefore, the sample women managers are deprived to receive right information at the right place. The qualitative research and descriptive statistics identified that some of the problems are clearly gender specific. Focused group study identified that the sample respondents are de-motivated by the negative attitude of the govt. as well as non-govt., male officials and top management of the concerned organization. Moreover, it has been reported that Purdah (means curtain used to ensure female modesty), Modesty (honor) as the persisting problem. It appears that most of the problems are gender specific and some of the problems observed in the study area are gender neutral. It seems that most of our respondents came from the upper class, educated and urban background that are considered in the most progressive class in the Bangladesh society in general and in study areas in particular.

Strategies for career development of women managers:

Working women encounter schedule conflict because of their greater family responsibility [7]. Literature reviews have shown that working women with non-standard work schedules have more time for housework [8,9]. Thus, in order to promote a conducive environment for women professional the following strategies may be suggested for the human resource development in general and the development of women managers in particular. The finding of the study reveals that there is a bright future for women professionals in the study

areas but they are facing a number of serious problems. Following strategies may be considered worthwhile for the purpose:

National Campaign:

A strong national campaign may be advocated against the traditional socio-cultural and religious norms to encourage and support the women population to seek different kinds of jobs like, male counters in general and professional managerial jobs in particular for establishing their rights as human beings based on equal opportunities and human rights.

Centre for Women Development:

Women professionals may be brought into a network by some agencies like “Centre for Women Development” to disseminate idea to establish and manage different types of venture with collaboration among women politicians, social workers, business leaders, academicians, researchers, religious leaders and the like. These institutions may create opportunities and supports for the development of women in different sectors of economy of the country either in govt., non-govt., multinational and global organizations too.

Network and Mentoring:

Information and mentoring are the most important prerequisites to the success of career development of women of the country. It has been reported that the sample respondents have little knowledge about the supportive, sustaining and other services for the career management of the women of the study areas. In such a context, the IT based media, radio, television and other mass media may play a positive role to provide such information. As a result, the network may be built up among the women in different socio-cultural structure and it may open up new opportunities for the women of the country.

Gender Sensitivity Training:

In the work place, remarks from male colleagues have surfaced as one of the problem faced by the some sample women managers. It seems that these may be due to insensitivity to the opposite gender. In order to build up consciousness of gender issues at work, gender sensitivity training may be advocated from grass-root level to high level indifferent organizations like garments industries, schools, colleges, universities, banks, insurances etc.

Selection Policies and Strategies:

Selection policies may be reviewed by the public service commission and other appointing agencies to increase women entry in the different types of jobs in the society. It has been gathered by the sample respondents that quota may be introduced in all levels of jobs either in govt. or private or other organizations based on merit basis.

Conclusion:

The study has been made to examine the challenges and strategies of women as job holders in general and career managers in particular. The results show that income and social status through job opportunities are the most important motivating factors behind the development of women managers in Bangladesh. The mentioned strategy can serve as a mile-stone towards country's journey to gender neutral relations. It is found that one stop service to the women managerial force needs to be improved to provide a quality service involving women in main stream of the national development of the country. In a word, we can say that the economy of Bangladesh can achieve a great success by mobilizing the potential women force at all levels of govt. and public enterprises and civil administration of the study areas in particular and in Bangladesh in general. A strong campaign must be made at the national level to grass-root level in order to promote women professionals throughout the country by providing generous support from the govt. agencies, non govt. organizations, political institutions, business leaders, religious bodies, families of the society and the like.

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