

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL ROLES IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR IN INDIA: PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MANAGER COLLEAGUES**

*Abstract.* This article seeks to understand how female managers in public- and private-sector companies in India are perceived by their colleagues in terms of managerial effectiveness. It is based on a primary research study using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 1,260 managers of 60 companies in India and in-depth-interviews with 30 senior corporate executives. The majority of them think gender does impact managerial effectiveness. While the competencies of managers are considered to be the key determining factor of their effectiveness at work, men are preferred for certain vital roles such as top leadership, strategic decision-making, negotiation, handling risks and challenges. However, women are regarded as more effective in human resources, public relations, inter-personal relations and maintaining work-life balance.

**Keywords:** managerial effectiveness, women managers, gender impact, women in corporate sector, perceptions of managers

### **Introduction**

Women in India represent 48.5% the country's total population (Census of India, 2011). There are two groups of workers classified by the Census Survey of India- Main workers and Marginal workers. Main workers are those workers who had worked for a period of 6 months or more. Marginal workers are those who have worked for a period of less than 6 months. Main workers and marginal workers constitute about 78% and 22% of the total workforce (313 million), respectively, with significant gender differences. Only 23.3% of the main workers are female, while 87.3% of female workers are from rural areas. In the last four decades, there has been an increasing trend of women joining both the rural and urban workforces in India (Human Development Report, 2010; Agarwal, 2010). However, the representation of women in the

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total workforce in both rural and urban sectors in India is as low as 31% (UN, 2000). A positive implication of more women joining the corporate sector is foreseen in the rapidly changing global economic environment and liberalised gender-sensitive workplace management (Batliwala, 2007; Jhabvala and Sinha, 2002). Although more women are taking up managerial roles in the corporate sector, they are confronted with several contradictory social perceptions and contemporary workplace expectations. They are struggling to establish an identity and create a space for themselves in the corporate world (Naqvi, 2011). It is therefore necessary to know how effective women are while working in managerial positions. This research article aims to determine how women in managerial roles in the corporate sector in India are perceived by their male and female manager colleagues in terms of managerial effectiveness.

## **Literature review**

Globally, 7% to 23% of women are employed in industry compared to 12% to 34% of men in employment in all regions (Desai, 2010). Gender equity in employment is ensured by very few companies in the world (World Economic Forum's Corporate Gender Gap report, 2010). India ranks 87<sup>th</sup> in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap report 2016. Similarly, India ranks 125<sup>th</sup> out of 159 countries in the UNDP Human Development Report, Gender Inequality Index 2015. India's labour force participation rate (LFPR) for women is 23% against 75% for men while the workforce participation rate for women (WPR) is 21% against 72% for men (Economic Survey 2016, 2017).

Indian society is largely patriarchal and women are attributed with less importance than men in terms of the acquisition of social, political and monetary power, prestige and position (Rai, 2012). Male characteristics or masculinity are typically associated with managers and management in the organised sector (Schein, 2007; Bartram, 2005). In Fortune 500 companies, women comprise only about 10% of senior management positions (Chadha, 2002). Women suffer from a lack of career advancement to senior positions and are mentored whereas men are sponsored in the Indian corporate sector (Correll, 2015; Bagati and Carter, 2010). While the number of women joining the corporate sector in India has grown in the last four decades, their participation on corporate boards has not been substantial. A working paper by Vasanthi Srinivasan and Rejie George (2013: 18) attempts to define the pathways taken by women to reach Indian boards and indicates that the selection of women directors in India is "largely a non-structured and idiosyncratic process", one that depends on the woman candidate's personal network ties and reputation. The fact that gender characteristics are more

favourable for men for higher and powerful managerial roles also means that business managers' perceptions are less favourable regarding the effectiveness of women in managerial roles. Men are preferred for higher managerial roles because they are more aggressive in pursuing results, better risk-takers and decision-makers, more analytical, more capable of managing subordinates and available to work long hours (Ely, 1995). Women are mostly employed at the lower and middle levels. They often become a victim of circumstances, as happened to many women employed in the manufacturing sector who lost their jobs due to economic recession (UNIFEM Report, 2010). They are more vulnerable than men in terms of losing their jobs on the grounds of discontinuity in their position in the case of pregnancy (Johari, 2015). Employed women in India face the challenges of role-conflicts and role-overload due to the societal stereotypes and role identities that expect them to manage both their job and the family (Ely, 1995; Ely et al., 2011, 2013). This has given rise to what is popularly known as Second-Generation Gender bias and the self-created Glass Ceiling.

Women also suffer from gender-based wage differences with the gap ranging from 3% to 51% (ITUC Report, 2009). Two studies (Buvinic et al., 2008; Gatrell and Cooper, 2007; Varkhey and Rupa Korde, 2013) show that male managers occupy higher positions and are paid more than their female counterparts in different sectors of the economy. A research study by Mayra Buvinic, Andrew A. Morrison, Waafas Ofosu-Amaah and Mirja Sjoblom (2008) reveals that most female employees in the manufacturing and service sectors are paid a lower salary than their male counterparts. The wage for women is highest in the tertiary sector and lowest in the manufacturing sector. Although 60% to 90% of women work in export-processing zones, they suffer from low wages, a poor working environment and a high rate of attrition (UNIFEM, 2010). Wherever women are employed as managers, they are preferred because they can be paid a lower wage than their male counterparts. Between 1980 and 2007, the increase was highest in Latin America, followed by North Africa and modest in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But the gap declined in Europe and Central Asia (ILO Reports, 2002 and 2009). However, in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa the gender gap in labour force participation remains large. The percentage of women working in the agriculture sector in South Africa (women: 60%, men: 40%) is higher than men without a gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa (60% each).

On the contrary, a few research studies (Billimoria, 2000; Budhwar, 2005; Williams, 2012; Srinivasan and George, 2013; Ely, 1995) contrast such views and argue that modern organisations need the 'feminine' type of leadership and women managers since they are more effective than men due to their higher conscientiousness, greater concern for people, better collaborative

team-playing ability, better interpersonal relationships, superior calculated risk-taking ability and cohesiveness. The services industry across the developed world employs over 80% of women and 60% of men. In Latin America, just under 80% of women are in the services industry compared to 45% of men in a similar industry. As per the UNDP Report 2010, 60% of both men and women are employed in the services industry in North Africa and the Middle East. The employment of women in organised sectors of the economy, as one of the main factors of women's empowerment in the global scenario, was crystallised at world conferences held during the 1990s, especially the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (UNDP Report, 2010; Desai, 2010).

Due to the liberalised Indian economy and superior educational attainments, women are receiving better employment opportunities in the corporate sector (Chadha, 2002; Naqvi, 2011). A few research studies indicate that perceptions of the difference in the behaviour and performance of male and female managers has changed, while the number of women holding top managerial roles has increased in the last few decades (Wajcman, 1996; Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997). Billing and Alvesson (1994) found more similarity than dissimilarity in the behaviour of both male and female managers that was covered in their studies. However, research studies by Correll (2014, 2015, 2016) show how corporate managers encounter the dilemma of dealing with women in male-oriented job roles due to the changes in how women's stereotypical managerial roles are perceived.

According to the above review of the literature, several research studies reveal both similar and contrasting views about the effectiveness of women in corporate managerial roles. Only a few research studies in the Indian context are available to permit a clear understanding of this issue. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap in the research work on India to learn about women's effectiveness while holding managerial roles in both public- and private-sector companies in India.

## **Methodology**

This research study is based on an exploratory research design that asked the hypothetical question: "Are women more effective than men in managerial roles in the corporate sector in India?". The study used the stratified random sampling technique. With the objectives and large size of the universe of the study kept in view, a sample of 1,260 respondents (i.e. managers working at different levels) in both public- and private-sector companies in India was taken. While selecting respondents randomly from a company, due care was taken to ensure they were representative in terms of sex, age, managerial cadres, ownership and the nature of the business operations of the target companies.

As men and women constitute 68.4% and 31.6% of total working population, respectively, in India (Census, 2001), the gender-wise distribution of the sample respondents was proportionate with 879 (70%) males and 381 (30%) females. The male and female respondents were selected randomly from public- and private-sector companies. There were 513 respondents (41%), including 401 male and 112 female managers who were randomly drawn from 15 public-sector companies and 747 (59%) respondents, including 478 male and 269 female managers drawn from 45 private-sector companies, representing all major types of public- and private-sector companies in terms of the nature of their business operations. The sample includes 464 (37%) respondents from manufacturing, of whom 319 were from public- and 145 from private-sector companies. In addition, 434 (34%) respondents came from banking, of whom 181 were from the public and 253 from the private sector. The remaining 362 (29%) respondents were from other non-banking service sectors, with 349 from the private and 13 from the public sector. The respondents in these three broad categories of companies belong to 17 sub-categories in terms of the nature of their business operations such as power, steel, aluminium, petroleum, oil, gas, refinery, automobile and ancillary auto parts industries, roofing material, tea, banks, insurance, retail, consulting, IT, logistics, and real estate. Managers working at different offices of the target companies located in 16 states and 2 union territories (Delhi and Puducheri) of India were randomly drawn as respondents for the study. The manager respondents were taken from five different age groups i.e. less than 20 years, 20–29 years, 30–39 years, 40–49 years and 50 and above. Among the 1,260 in the sample, 32 respondents (9 female and 23 male) were below 20 years of age; 505 (205 female and 300 male) were in the age group 20–29 years; 343 (123 female and 220 male) were in the group 30–39 years; 187 (29 female and 158) were in the 40–49 age group; and 193 (15 female and 193 male) were aged 50 or above. The respondents' length of experience was considered while drawing the sample based on available data. Out of the 1,260, 173 females and 238 males (total 411; 33%) were managers with less than 5 years' experience. Among the others, 110 female and 231 male respondents (total 341; 27%) had 5–9 years' experience; 56 females and 113 males (total 169; 13%) had 10–14 years' experience; 13 females and 48 males (total 61; 5%) had 15–19 years' experience; 13 females and 70 males (total 83; 7%) had 20–24 years and 16 females and 179 males (total 195; 15%) had 25 or more years of experience.

A structured questionnaire containing 60 questions was used for the data collection. Roughly 5,000 target managers in 65 companies in different parts of India were approached both personally and by email for the primary data collection. The relevant data could be collected from 1,260 respondents from 60 companies (15 public- and 45 private-sector companies). After

a preliminary analysis of the primary data gathered through the questionnaire method, further verification and validation of some key findings were undertaken via in-depth interaction with selected senior executives (middle and top levels) from certain important companies covered in the study. An interview guide with 15 key questions was used while conducting these personal in-depth interviews with 30 senior executives, purposefully selected from manufacturing, banking and non-banking service sector companies. The questionnaire and interview guide were pre-tested before being used on a wider scale.

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analysed with the help of SPSS. The qualitative data and views audio-recorded during the in-depth interviews were transcribed and collated. Appropriate tests such as Pearson's Chi-square test, one-way ANOVA, t-test, Levene's test and Cohen's test 1989 were used.

## Limitations

While the study is based on the perceptions of 1,260 managers of 60 companies from different sectors, not all types of organisations are adequately represented, such as from the agriculture, agribusiness and development sectors. People holding non-managerial roles who may have had different views on the effectiveness of women were excluded. Further, it was impossible to obtain responses from managers working on all levels targeted as per the sample distribution since they had busy work schedules and there was difficulty in establishing contact with them. Therefore, the conclusions made in this paper may not fully reflect the views of the entire managerial workforce in India. Future research studies should thus focus on a single sector or on managers belonging to the Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y categories to establish deeper understanding of the perceptual differences on women in the corporate sector. The case method might also be used for a more in-depth study of women's effectiveness in discharging their roles in the corporate sector that covers competency, contextual and gender aspects.

## Discussion

### *Gender impact on managerial effectiveness*

Before presenting the how the managers perceived women's effectiveness in managerial roles in the corporate sector, it is important to examine their views on the impact of gender on managerial effectiveness. Out of 1,260 respondents, 771 (61.2%) held the view that gender impacts the

effective functioning of corporate managers in India. Of those 771 respondents, 492 (63.8%) come from the private sector and 279 (36.2%) from the public sector. About 66% of the respondents (492 of the total 747) from the private sector and 54% (279 of 513) from the public sector thought that gender impacts managerial effectiveness in the corporate sector in India. The Pearson's Chi-square test with an  $\chi^2$  value of 18.673 with  $df = 1$  and a  $p$  value .000 imply there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from public- and private-sector companies regarding how gender impacts managerial effectiveness. Of those believing that gender has an impact on managerial effectiveness, 265 (34.5%) are from manufacturing, 282 (36.5%) from banking and 224 (29%) from other service-sector companies. The share of respondents who thought that gender impacts managerial effectiveness is highest among those from banking and lowest among the manufacturing sectors, with a small difference in the share of those from other service-sector companies (57% manufacturing, 65% banking and 62% others). The respondents from manufacturing, banking and other service organisations also differ significantly on this issue given the  $\chi^2$  value of 7.386<sup>a</sup> with  $df = 2$  and a  $p$  value of .025.

Chi-square tests were also conducted on the respondents' perceptions of the impact of gender on managerial effectiveness as per their distributions in terms of sex, age, educational background and length of experience. The test results for each variable in terms of the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value are: the  $\chi^2$  value of .491 with  $df = 1$  and a  $p$  value of .484 shows there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on how gender impacts managerial effectiveness. The test ( $\chi^2$  value = 10.507<sup>a</sup>,  $p$ -value = .062,  $df = 5$ ) also shows that respondents from different age groups do not think differently on this issue. However, respondents with a different educational background vary in their perceptions ( $\chi^2$ -value = 10.045<sup>a</sup>,  $p$ -value = .018,  $df = 3$ ) on this issue. Similarly, respondents with different lengths of work experience differ significantly in their perceptions of the impact of gender on the effectiveness of corporate managers in India ( $\chi^2$ -value = 30.288<sup>a</sup>,  $p$ -value = .000 and  $df = 5$ ).

Out of the 771 respondents who believe that gender impacts managerial effectiveness, 454 (59%), including 357 males and 97 females, thought that men are more effective than women in overall functioning as managers in the corporate sector in India. The Chi-square test results imply that respondents from different sex, age and experience groups think differently about the overall managerial effectiveness of men and women in the Indian corporate sector. But there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents with a different educational background here. Those who supported the proposition of gender having an impact on managerial effectiveness were asked to determine whether males or females are more

effective in certain managerial roles. Women were considered more effective than men for middle-level leadership and customer relationship management jobs and in terms of maintaining work-life balance and a rational approach to work. In contrast, men were considered better than women for top- and lower-level leadership roles, strategic decision-making, problem-solving, business negotiation, grievance handling and managing risks and challenges.

### *Effectiveness of women in managerial roles*

On the question of whether women are more effective than their male counterparts in managerial roles, in general, only 429 of the 1,260 respondents (34%) considered women to be better, whereas 483 (38%) regard men as being more effective than women in their organisations. Further, 348 (28%) respondents felt that the effectiveness of women managers in their organisations is independent of gender, with 44% of male and 24% of female respondents considering men to be better than women whereas 51% of female and 27% of male respondents believed women to be better managers than men in their organisations. Concerning this issue, 29% male and 25% female respondents remained indifferent. A Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ -value = 76.638<sup>a</sup>, p-value = .000, df = 2) implies there is a significant difference in the perceptions of male and female respondents of women being better than men in managerial roles in their organisations. Similarly, the test results also indicate a significant difference in perceptions of respondents from different age and experience groups, respectively, on this issue. But there is no significant difference in the perceptions of people with a different educational background ( $\chi^2$ -value = 9.213<sup>a</sup>, p-value = .162, df = 6).

How the respondents perceived the effectiveness of women holding managerial positions was also studied using a five-point Likert scale, with a score of 1 for 'poor', 2 for 'good', 3 for 'very good', 4 for 'excellent' and 5 for 'outstanding'. The managerial effectiveness of women was measured on the basis of the following 13 criteria, with respondents being asked to use the Likert scale to rate the effectiveness of women regarding each criterion independently.

1. Productivity
2. Profit-making attitude
3. Quality concerns
4. Organisational growth consciousness
5. Organisational goal achievement orientation
6. Stability
7. Loyalty to organisation
8. Regularity in attending office



9. Adaptability and flexibility
10. Conflict management attitude and skills
11. Customer relationship management
12. Interpersonal skills
13. Overall performance as an employee

An independent samples t-test was conducted to establish the difference in the mean perceptive values/scores for the managerial effectiveness of women (with the maximum score = 65, minimum score = 13). The test result implies that both female and male respondents rated women's effectiveness in managerial roles fairly highly with female respondents' mean score of 40.1 with a standard deviation of 9.11 and male respondents' mean score of 39.66 with a standard deviation of 9.45. Levene's test on the same data with a p-value of 0.47 showed the variability among male and female respondents is similar. There was no significant difference in the thinking of male and female respondents given a t-value = 1.66, df. = 1258 and p-value = 0.098.

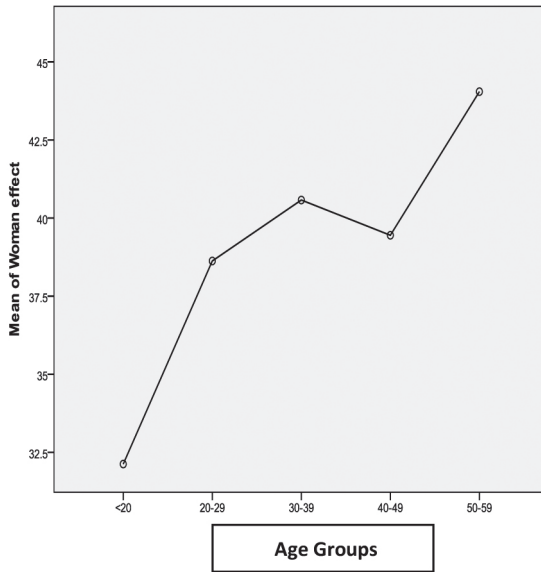
A one-way ANOVA test conducted on the respondents' perceptions of managerial effectiveness and their age (in five age groups: < 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50 and above) shows that respondents below the age of 20 years thought differently than their counterparts in other age groups. Perceptions of respondents in the 20-29 years age group are similar to those in the age group 40-49, but are different from all other age groups.

Respondents in the 30-39 age group are similar those in the 40-49 age group but differ from other groups in their perceptions regarding the issue of the managerial effectiveness of women. Respondents in the age group 40-49 differ from those in the below 20 and 50 and above age groups. The perceptions of respondents in the 50 and above and below 20 age groups on women's managerial effectiveness differ significantly, as shown in Graph 1. The association between respondents' perceptions of managerial effectiveness and their age is very small given  $\eta^2 = 0.002$ . ( $\eta^2$  value  $\leq 0.01$  implies that the difference is small, the association is moderate if  $0.01 < \eta^2$  value  $< 0.14$ , the association is high if  $\eta^2$  value  $\geq 0.14$ ) as per Cohen's test from 1989. The share of respondents below the age of 30 years (44%) who thought that women are more effective than men in managerial roles is the highest of all age groups and the biggest share of respondents (44%) who thought that women are more effective than men belongs to the age group 30-39 years.

The percentage of respondents who did not think women are more effective is highest (39%) among those who are post-graduates. The share of respondents who thought that women are more effective than their male counterparts in managerial roles is highest (45%) among those with 10 to 14 years' experience, followed by those with less than 5 years' experience. The percentage of respondents who thought that men are more effective than

women in managerial roles is highest (54%) among those with 20–24 years' experience.

Graph 1: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S EFFECTIVENESS BY AGE GROUPS



Source: Data from the author.

An one-way ANOVA test conducted on the perceptive scores given by respondents with a different educational background (Undergraduates, Graduates, Post-Graduates and Post-post Graduates) regarding women's managerial effectiveness shows that respondents with varied educational backgrounds held significantly different perceptions for this issue. The perceptions of post-graduate and undergraduate respondents are similar to the other groups on the effectiveness of women in managerial functions. However, the perceptions of those with an educational qualification above the post-graduate and graduate groups differ significantly.

Another one-way ANOVA test was conducted on the perceptions of respondents belonging to five experience groups (< 5, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24 and 25 and above) and implies there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from different experience groups on the issue of women's effectiveness in managerial roles in general. The multiple comparisons show that respondents from the group with 25 and more years' experience differ from all the other experience groups in their perceptions. There is a similarity in the perceptions of any other two experience groups.

Human relationship skills, sincerity, softly spoken, a caring personality, patience and the accommodating nature of women are the main characteristics that make them better than men in managerial roles. Perseverance, a pragmatic attitude and consistency in relationships are other factors contributing to women being seen as better than men for managerial roles. A Chi-square test implies a significant difference exists in the perceptions of male and female respondents ( $\chi^2$ -value = 108.244<sup>a</sup>, p-value = .000, df = 9) on the differentiating characteristics that make women better than men in managerial roles in their organisations. The respondents belonging to different age and experience groups differ significantly in their perceptions on this issue. Most of those who attributed human relationship skills to be a superior characteristic of women are below the age of 40 years and have experience of less than 15 years. But there is no significant difference in the observations of respondents with a different educational background about the special characteristics of women mentioned above.

The respondents who considered men better than women in managerial roles attributed this, in order of priority, to men's ability to work in a complex environment, better controlling power, responsible behaviour, dedication to duty and mobility as the major contributing factors. A Chi-square test implies there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents of different groups for sex, age, educational background and experience, respectively, on the special characteristics held by men that make them better than women in managerial roles in their organisations.

### *Women and functional areas of management*

Out of the 1,260 respondents, 543 (43%) considered women to be best suited for human resources functions, whereas 240 (19%), 143 (11%) and 98 (8%) respondents considered women as most effective in public relations, accounting and financial management, and marketing management jobs, respectively. A Chi-square test shows that respondents from different sex, age, education and experience groups differ significantly in their perceptions of women's suitability for different areas of managerial functions. The majority of respondents in all experience groups, especially those in younger age groups and with a higher educational background, thought that women are most effective in human resources management and public relations functions.

In addition, 65% of the respondents considered women best suited for middle-level managerial positions, whereas 18% had this view for junior-level and 17% for top-level managerial positions. A Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ -value = 37.576<sup>a</sup>, p-value = .000, df = 7) implies that male and female respondents perceive women's suitability for different levels of managerial positions

differently. Similarly, Chi-square tests were conducted on women's effectiveness in managerial positions in terms of the respondents' age, education and experience. The test results imply that respondents belonging to different age, education and experience groups differ significantly in how they perceive this issue.

The majority of the respondents with a post-graduate background or higher thought that women are most effective when they operate in middle-level positions such as regional managers, general managers or vice presidents, whereas most respondents who held a graduate or undergraduate education considered women to be best suited for lower-middle-level positions such as managers, executives, divisional managers or project heads in their companies. However, position titles or the nature of jobs vary from company to company, so such titles are only indicative of a particular level. Most respondents with less than 15 years' experience found women most suitable for middle-level positions whereas women were preferred for lower-middle-level positions by the majority of those with 15 or more years of experience.

#### *Preference for a female or male boss*

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Only 24% of the respondents, including 121 men, indicated they prefer working with a female boss whereas 31%, including 77 females, preferred working with a male boss. However, 45% of the respondents were interested to work with both male and female bosses. A Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ -value = 166.743<sup>a</sup>, p-value = .000, df = 4) implies that male and female respondents differ significantly in their preferences for male or female bosses. Similarly, Chi-square tests indicate there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from different age, education and experience groups, respectively, on the issue of working with a male or female boss. However, most of the respondents, irrespective of their age, length of experience and educational background, chose to work with both male and female bosses.

Respondents below the age of 50 years who did not think that married women are more effective in managerial roles than their unmarried counterparts outnumber those who believed married women are more effective. However, most of those in the age group of 50 and above thought that married women are more effective in managerial roles. The Chi-square test shows a significant difference in the perceptions of people belonging to different groups in terms of sex, age, educational background and experience on this issue. Namely, 42% of the respondents who are post-graduates, the highest of all educational groups (Post PG-34%, 33% Grad and 12.5% Undergrad), agree with the proposition that married women are more effective in managerial roles than unmarried ones.

### *Women and work-life balance*

Moreover, 874 out of the 1,260 respondents (69.4%), including 67% of males and 74% of females, considered that women are better than men in terms of maintaining a work-life balance. The Chi-square test values imply a significant difference in the perceptions of people from different groups in terms of sex, age, educational background and experience, respectively, on this issue. Further, 978 of the 1,260 respondents (78%), including 80% of male and 73% of female respondents, thought that both men and women should be engaged in household as well as official work as per their talents and interests. A Chi-square test indicates the male and female respondents differ significantly on this issue given the  $\chi^2$ -value of 15.125<sup>a</sup>,  $df = 4$  and  $p$ -value of .004.

### *Women at handling work pressure*

1256 of 1260 respondents responded to the questions related to women at handling work pressure. 647 of 1,256 respondents (51.5%), consisting of 67% of females and 45% of males, thought that women are more effective than men at handling work pressure in a composed manner. They are mostly from the 20–40 years age group, highly educated (PG and Post-PG) but with less than 15 years' experience, while 609 (48.5%) respondents, mostly graduates and undergraduates, from the higher age group (40–60) with experience of 15 or more years do not agree with that proposition. The Chi-square test results reveal a significant difference in the perceptions of people belonging to different groups in terms of sex, age, educational background and experience, respectively, on this issue.

### *Effectiveness of women in human resources management*

Moreover, 527 out of 1,260 respondents (42%), including 54% of the females and 36% of the males, found women to be more effective than men in managerial roles in the area of Human Resources Management in their organisations, whereas 333 (26%) respondents, including 31% males and 15% females, considered men to be more effective for such jobs. However, 31% of the respondents are indifferent on this proposition. Superior skills and ability to deal and engage with human beings are the main factors of women being effective in HR roles. A Chi-square test with an  $\chi^2$ -value of 47.169<sup>a</sup>,  $df = 3$  and  $p$ -value = .000 implies there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on women's effectiveness in HR managerial roles, whereas 741 of 1,260 respondents (59%), including 79% of female and 50% of male respondents, believed women are better

than men in HR-related decision-making. A Chi-square test with an  $\chi^2$ -value of 97.510<sup>a</sup>, df = 2 and p-value of .000 indicates that male and female respondents thought differently on the effectiveness of women in HR roles.

The respondents' perceptions on the effectiveness of women in HR functions was assessed on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 - Poor, 2 - Good, 3 - Very Good, 4 - Excellent and 5 - Outstanding). Women's effectiveness was rated on the five-point scale independently for each aspect of HR functions, such as HR planning, recruitment and selection, compensation management, training and development, performance management, industrial relations, employee career development, counselling, stress management and aligning HR functions strategically with other core business functions. A one-way ANOVA test conducted on the respondents' perceptions of managerial effectiveness and their age (in five age groups: < 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50 and above) shows a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from different age groups on the issue of women's effectiveness in human resources management functions. The multiple comparisons (Turkey HSD) test show respondents below the age of 20 years and in the group 20-30 years thought alike, but differ from their counterparts in the other age groups. The perceptions of respondents in the 30-39 years age group were similar to those in the 40-49 age group, but were different from all the other age groups.

Similarly, a one-way ANOVA test conducted on the respondents' perceptions of managerial effectiveness and their educational group (Undergraduates, Graduates, Post-Graduates and Post-post Graduates) implies that respondents with varied educational backgrounds differ significantly in how they perceive this issue. The perceptions of only undergraduate respondents are similar to all other educated groups on the effectiveness of women in HR managerial functions. However, those who are educated above post-graduate level held different views to the post-graduates and graduates. The perceptions of post-graduate respondents are similar to those of graduates and undergraduates but are different from the post-post graduate groups on this matter.

Another one-way ANOVA test conducted on respondents' perceptions of managerial effectiveness and their experience (in five groups: < 5, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24 and 25 and above) shows there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents from different experience groups on the question of women's effectiveness in human resources management functions. The multiple comparisons indicate that respondents with 15 to 19 years' experience held similar perceptions to their counterparts in other experience groups. The perceptions of respondents with less than 5 years' experience differ significantly from those in the 10-14 years' experience group but are similar to those in other experience groups.

Similarly, respondents in the 5–9 years' experience group held similar perceptions with all experience groups, except the group that has 25 or more years of experience. The 10–14 years' experience groups differ from the less than 5 years' group as well as the group with 25 or more years of experience and do not differ from the other groups on this issue. Yet, those with 20 to 24 years' experience differ only from those who have more experience. Respondents with 25 or more years of experience differ from all groups, except the 15–19 years' experience group.

Out of the 1,260 respondents 208 (16.5%) are graduates and 1,052 (83.5%) are post-graduates and higher-educated persons. The respondents' views on the impact of professional education with a specialisation in human resources management (e.g. an MBA with an HR specialisation) on the effectiveness of women in HR managerial roles were targeted; 992 of the 1,260 (79%), including 80% of males and 76% of females, respondents believed that women with a professional management education in human resources management are better in HR managerial functions than female HR managers without such an educational background. However, male and female respondents think differently on this issue given the  $\chi^2$ -value of 9.344<sup>a</sup>,  $df = 3$  and  $p$ -value of .025.

## Conclusion

While there is a rationale behind the associated competencies, but not the gender of a corporate manager with his or her managerial effectiveness, the majority of respondents still believed that gender does impact managerial effectiveness in India. Men are considered by many to be more effective than women as corporate managers in India. People still prefer men for key managerial functions such as leadership at the top and junior levels, and for strategic decision-making, business negotiation, sales and marketing, managing industrial relations, risks and challenges, and field operations. Women are considered more effective than men in human resources functions, middle-level leadership roles, customer relationship management jobs and in terms of maintaining a work-life balance. These study findings are similar to those of two earlier studies mentioned in the literature review (Naqvi, 2011; Khandelwal, 2002) which found men being preferred for sales, marketing and production functions and they were considered as good leaders, bosses and decision-makers whereas women, with marketable competencies, are mainly employed in human resources, public relations, information technology, administration and service activities. However, respondents from public- and private-sector companies differed significantly in their perceptions on this issue. While respondents from different age groups did not think differently, people with a different

length of experience and level of education held significantly different perceptions.

Similar to the findings of two more previous studies (Chadha, 2002; Naqvi, 2011), this study found that women are receiving better employment opportunities in corporate sector due to the increasing participation of women in higher and professional education and in the liberalised Indian economy. Superior interpersonal skills, and the ability to deal and engage with human beings are the main factors that make women effective in managerial roles, especially HR roles. A professional education such as an MBA with a specialisation in HR helps women be more effective in managerial roles. Both female and male respondents rated the effectiveness of women in managerial roles fairly highly with respect to several key parameters. Yet, there is significant difference in male and female respondents' perceptions of women being better than men in managerial roles in their organisations. Young managers agreed more with the notion of women's greater managerial effectiveness. Those in older age groups and with varied educational backgrounds differed significantly in their perceptions on this issue. People above 50 years of age found married women are more effective in managerial roles whereas those from younger age groups did not find any association between managerial effectiveness and experience from married life. There is a lower preference for a female boss, even among a good number of women respondents, compared to a male boss. Male and female respondents differed significantly in their preferences for a male or female boss. However, the demand for gender preference is not considerably stronger for the behavioural competencies of a boss in corporate organisations.

Unlike the findings of two previous studies stated in the literature review (Buvinic et al., 2008; Grown, 2010), the salary gap between men and women managers in the corporate sector was not found to be so significant in this study. Although women in the Indian corporate sector are generally perceived by their colleagues to be less effective than men, there are exceptions of women being more effective in a few individual cases. Women seem to be struggling to establish their identity as corporate managers equally effective as their male counterparts. While women have established a reasonable presence in the service and agriculture sectors, people believe it will take another 30 years or so to see both men and women being treated as equal in common parlance, in terms of the handling of all managerial roles in the Indian corporate sector.



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