WOMEN MANAGERS IN DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC SPACES: A REPRESENTATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This review paper, based on survey of literature in the field of women in management, presents a panoramic view of the geographic component of spatial themes that recur in research during the past about four decades. The field of women in management spans a variety of disciplines ranging from feminism to gender studies and the role of women in society, family and organisations. Coupled with the fact that women increasingly play an important role in all these areas, research in the field has traversed a number of themes and issues.

This review article identifies broad geographic spaces in the literature and the issues related to women managers in those geographies. The geographic spaces are in terms of continents of Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. While many studies reported may be confined to one geographic space yet there are a number of studies that transcend one specific space and incorporate elements of the other prevalent research themes in women in management such as behaviour and organisations. This results in a rich tapestry of research studies. In view of the abundance of studies reported in literature, this paper picks up some representative research studies to demonstrate the nature, content, and direction of research in this challenging field.

Keywords: women studies, women managers, women as managers, women in management, research on women managers, women managers and geography.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary research literature on subject of gender in management has been nurtured by intellectual contributions coming from several different streams of knowledge. Among these are debates in and around feminism, the burgeoning field of women's studies and critical studies on gender, and on recognizing women and their experiences, situations and viewpoint in organizations and management. Research in the broad field of women in management has attracted considerable attention in recent years picking up particularly after the launch of the feminist movement. Interest in women's studies around the world has also led to increasing focus on working women in organisations.

Research on 'women managers' or 'women in management' leads one to several overarching themes. These themes recur throughout the literature on the

subject. A scheme of identifying the overarching themes has been evolved in the present research project from which material for this paper is drawn. This scheme identifies three broad directions of research in the area of women in management. These are: behavioural themes, organisational themes, and spatial themes. Organisational themes include the significant issues of work-life balance, gender inequality, and glass ceiling syndrome. Behavioural themes identified are attitude, communication, leadership, motivation and personality. Spatial themes include women in different geographies and in different industries and types of organisations. Women managers in different geographic spaces are the subject matter of this paper.

An overarching theme in literature on women in management is the issue of women managers in different geographies including regions, countries, and cultures. Thus, there are a plethora of studies in women managers in broad regions such as European countries or Arab societies or sharper, focused studies on black women in American organisations.

This review examines some representative studies in five continental geographic areas. These areas cover almost the whole world. Among these areas representative countries have been selected such that the review provides as comprehensive a picture as possible. While doing so, an effort has been made to locate and choose cross national studies in a particular area. For instance the survey picks up studies in the African continent from South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria. While some of these studies are limited to one country others cut across several countries.

This review is based on a comprehensive search of databases available in library databases including ProQuest's ABI/Inform Global, EBSCO's Academic Search Complete, Emerald Fulltext Plus, ScienceDirect, and Social Science Research Network; and search engines such as Google Scholar and Directory of Open Access Journals. Since the repertoire of sources is large, it has been possible to include only a small set of representative studies on each of the geographic space identified in the research review. These could be indicative of the trend in research directions in a particular geographic space. Critical comments follow each of the sources accessed for inclusion in the review.

II.   WOMEN MANAGERS IN AFRICA

Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009 opine that while the empirical literature on leadership and management in Africa is sparse, the literature on African women in

leadership and management is even sparser. They offer a critical examination of the current state of knowledge on African women in leadership and management drawing on an extensive review of existing published research to summarise what has been studied and is currently known about their status, leadership styles, and the influence of gender on their experiences as leaders and managers. Based on this review, an integrative framework, drawing from African feminism and postcolonial theory, is proposed to advance the study of African women in leadership and management. Thus we note that the world's second largest and populous continent does not fare well in research on women managers.

South African women occupy only 5% of top CEO positions in large organisations. As with most other developing countries, a stereotype exists in the South African organisations that, both in public and private sectors, men should dominate top leadership positions. Results of a South Africa study indicated that organizations are liable to create alignments that in most cases are unfavourable to women in the workforce (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Statistics in another study by Bonorchis (2008) supports the results indicating that women in South Africa make up just 25% of the executive class, with just 14% of bank directors being women and 7% as CEOs or board chairpersons. Therefore, in South Africa glass ceiling occurrences are common, created in part by organizational structures and policies.

The reasons for women facing the glass ceiling are not far to seek. Women's biggest problem is patriarchal and male domination as they were brought up to fear their fathers or males and this culture is inculcated in their so upbringing. In the absence of role models in the managerial levels, those who occupy positions of power in the corporate, tend to apply the prevailing male norms and values to themselves. Male manager stereotype and negative female stereotype dominate the organisational landscape. (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). Thus it can be noticed that in South Africa, male role models dominate the corporate culture.

Mangatu (2010) found in her thesis that despite the seemingly remarkable progress, available statistics portray a situation where qualified women are unable to transcend structural and cultural barriers to rise to higher positions. She outlined nine reasons for the glass ceiling prevalent in Kenyan banking industry which prevented women from rising to higher positions. The belief that women are not capable of providing effective leadership in formal environments is still strongly inherent in Kenya's social network (Republic of Kenya, 2003).

This finding corresponds to several others especially those from developing societies.

A cross-national study in South Africa and United Kingdom on women heads of academic departments in universities found that apart from lack of mentorship and formal preparation for the position, women did not experience any major obstacles prior to becoming head of department. Women were confident about several skills related to managing an academic department. They were not certain, however, about stress management, delegation and entrepreneurial skills. (Zulu, 2007) This finding demonstrates the fact that in certain types of profession such as academics, health and services women managers are found in larger number though their numbers at higher levels of organisation are still lesser compared to their male counterparts.

Wakahiu, (2011) observes that adaptation of new leadership styles and models in workplaces take place, innovative projects implemented and measurable economic benefits realized Utilizing local and international instructors enhances instruction by facilitating intercultural cross-fertilization. Thereby, lack of leadership skills can be overcome by training is demonstrated in the work in the context of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria.

Overall, research on women in management in Africa seems to focus on leadership, entrepreneurship, gender inequality and glass ceiling issues. Regional focus on studies is apparently on South Africa as other countries appear in fewer studies that were reviewed.

III. WOMEN MANAGERS IN AMERICAS

Research on women in management in the United States has a long tradition. An evidence of this observation is an early study on the attitude of male managers towards working women (Bass, et al., 1971) as well as a questioning attitude on why there were so few women managers. (Szymborski, 1996).

Much of the research on professional and managerial women in the United States actually describes the experiences of white women, excluding those of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. An exploratory qualitative study focuses on the life and work experiences of Hispanic women in managerial and professional positions and how those experiences influence their career possibilities. The study on first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic women in the USA illustrates a framework of career possibilities that reflects both cultural and

personal perspectives. (Hite, 2007) This study is illustrative of several others that show the focus of research mainly on the dominant majority in a country. Thus, we have more research focus on white, Christian women managers in the United States as compared to those of minority groups such as Asians, Hispanics and others.

A study that explores the differing views of black and white female managers regarding access to key career opportunities for white women and women of colour. Issues addressed include access to hiring, promotions, key assignments, salary increases, and acknowledgment for work, and mentors. Access to each is described by comparing white women and women of colour to one another, to white men, and to men of colour. In contrast, most of the black participants indicated that disparity exists in career opportunities available to women of colour compared to white men and women. (Hite, 2004). The results revealed that most of the white respondents consistently perceived equal access to career opportunities for women of colour. A study of this nature is significant for the fact that it offers a comparative picture of two sub-groups within a broad spectrum i.e. black versus white women managers.

There are not many references available on women managers in Latin America despite the fact that studies on women managers in non-English speaking countries have proliferated in recent years. A probable reason could be that the work environment is clearly machista, or one characterized by an extreme view of male supremacy common to Latin American societies and even more extreme in the remotely located areas. An early study offers a preliminary analysis of Mexican women managers by placing women managers within the context of gender relations and managerial ideology in Mexico and analysing several factors that enable a select group of senior-level Mexican women to hold influential positions. The findings suggest that women have a non-traditional Mexican management style and successfully manage the work-family interface. Nevertheless, women still encounter obstacles to their advancement such as discrimination and stereotyping. (Muller & Rowell, 1997)

A cross-cultural study comparing men and women managers in the U.S. and Chile, using the Women as Managers Scale, investigated their perceptions of women managers. The results showed that men in both cultures had more stereotypical and negative perceptions of women as managers than did females, and the U.S. participants (both male and female) had more positive and less stereotypical perceptions of women as managers than the Chilean participants. (Owen, et al., 2003). It was clearly noted that gender and culture effects were

identified at both the multivariate and univariate levels. Cross-cultural studies with a sharp contrast, such as the one included here in this research review, offers interesting insights in terms of similarities and dissimilarities and poses challenging research questions.

It can be observed that literature on women managers in the Americas focuses on race and ethnicity besides the other prevalent issues such as leadership or gender inequality. A special feature is of studies focusing on attitudes to women managers seen from the perspectives of white and coloured men and women to women managers.

IV. WOMEN MANAGERS IN ASIA

In the United States, parts of Europe and Australia, women typically make up 10-20% of upper management and company boards. Women in Asia lag far behind as a McKinsey Consultancy report points out. The McKinsey report's authors, Claudia Sussmuth-Dyckerhoff, Jin Wang and Josephine Chen (Report available here: http://www.mckinseychina.com/2012/07/02/women-matter-an-asian-perspective/) surveyed 744 large companies and quizzed 1,500 executives in ten Asian countries and concluded that, unlike their Western counterparts, nearly 70% of Asian senior managers did not see gender diversity as a strategic priority. ("Untapped Talent")

In contrast to the McKinsey survey, another 2013 survey by accounting firm Grant Thornton International shows that half of senior management roles in Chinese mainland companies were held by women, more than double the 25 per cent from a similar survey in 2012. United States and United Kingdom lagged at 19   and   20   per   cent.   (Reference   to   survey   here: http://www.scmp.com/news/article/1185834/mainland-chinese-women-top-world-holding-senior-business-roles-survey-shows) Thus, there is a mixed picture presented by popular media that could be misleading either way. This is also symptomatic of the fact that popular surveys by consultants may not be very reliable as a basis for research purposes though they do serve a purpose in highlighting issues that could be taken up further for in-depth research.

Comparative studies point out the differences and similarities pertaining to women manager issues across different geographic spaces. A research study compared gender discrimination experienced by women in workplace in three geographies of United States, China mainland, and Hong Kong. Across geographical regions, women reported significant differences in all constructs.

Several relationships between gender discrimination and the job-related outcomes were moderated by geographic region (Shaffera, et al. 2000). It can be observed that gender discrimination was negatively associated with job satisfaction and affective commitment and positively associated with turnover intentions and life stress.

An older research, however, pointed a grim picture of women managers in China. The study of Chinese women managers contrasted with their counterparts in United States and Southeast Asia showed that the former had little job mobility, pursue careers appraised by the Party and influenced by central government planning, work the most hours per week, and recommend the political/ideology path as the fastest route to the top. They are comparatively less educated, progress under a patrilineal tradition, recommend business courses as a means of preparation for managerial responsibilities, and slowly are gaining opportunities in fob selection. (Hildebrandt & Liu, 1988) Studies of this nature are eye openers for researchers as they offer a very different milieu than that which is more highlighted. They also demonstrate the deep impact of socio-cultural environment on organisations and their policies towards employment of women managers.

The Arab sub-culture in spread over the Asian and African contexts offers an interesting variance with that in the Western context. There are several studies reported in recent years in different countries across the Arab World as well as in individual Arab countries.

Awamleh, Evans, and Mahate (2005) compared transformational and transactional leadership styles of men and women in United Arab Emirates banks to address the question of men versus women's leadership skills. The findings confirmed that indeed men and women have different leadership styles. Women are portrayed as possessing soft and human relations skills. Conversely, in a qualitative study in the United States, men were found to be controlling and assertive (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

In a quantitative study on Lebanese banks, Jamali, et al. (2007) sampled women in middle management posts in 12 different banks to gauge the participants' perceptions on the relationship between women representation on management boards and the board's performance effectiveness. Overall, 85% of the participants in Jamali's study attributed the low numbers to structural barriers and impediments while 88% of middle level managers believed that glass ceiling barriers are the reason for the low number of women on boards, while 24% of

senior level women bankers perceived the reason to be lack of interested and qualified women.

Attesting to the structural problem, a qualitative research study to gather and analyze views of women achievers in Oman, described women as being in a double bind with societies expecting women to simultaneously display male and female traits to qualify as successful leaders. In Oman, cultural and structural obstacles significantly contribute to the under representation of women in upper management positions and over representation at lower grades. (Al-Lamky, 2007). As observed most organizational cultures have internalized mindsets that give preferential treatment for men over women, especially in the financial sector.

In Pakistan, a study aimed at identifying trends in the social, economic, or educational backgrounds have bearing on the types of women likely to pursue a managerial career reports that managerial profession still remains the domain of upper-middle-class women where women's chances of obtaining a senior managerial position increase if they have been educated at schools or institutions at which the medium of instruction was English. (Arifeen, 2011). An observation that comes across is that women managers in private sector organisations are reported to follow the general trend as elsewhere in the region of valuing personal and family commitments more than their career.

An early study on women managers in the Indian context focuses on the opportunities and challenges facing women managers in corporate India based on the attitudes of male and female managers. It examined key gender issues regarding company hiring practices and remuneration equity; the perceived competencies of women in management; the attitudes of men towards women managers and company initiatives to reduce the gender gap. The findings revealed that the majority of managers believe that employment in their organizations is based on merit and not gender, however, the results also identify less encouraging attitudes which together indicate that there is still a long way to go before gender discrimination is eradicated. (Gupta, et al., 1998)

A recent study on women managers in public sector explored the values, attitudes and beliefs of the women and the challenges faced by them in their careers and within the family system. Parents encourage women to opt for careers but the budding career is often compromised by marriage and demands of motherhood with the family priority being the husband's career. Women too aspire to be ideal mothers and a role model for their children and lack the

confidence to dream of higher positions in the organisations they work in. The biggest challenge faced by women managers today is managing their dual role as organisational managers and as housewives. (Naqvi, 2011) Thus, studies in the context of South Asian societies show the profound impact of socio-cultural environments on the ways women managers are treated within organisations.

As presented in this part of the article, women managers in different cultural contexts, regions, and geographies have been extensively studied as some of the representative studies quoted above demonstrated.

V.   WOMEN MANAGERS IN AUSTRALASIA

Australasia including Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific islands has a heterogeneous cultural profile. But the majority of the region has a deep impact of the Anglo-Celtic male profile that results in gender discrimination within organisations.

There has been a slow rise in the number of women in the workplace with a slower pace seen in the case of senior management positions as reported in several surveys as well as government publications. (See, for example, 2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership available at http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2012_CENSUS%20REPORT.pdf) The author opined that it may take time to change people's perceptions of women in management, to overcome discrimination, and to develop structures at work and in the community that will aid women's move into management. (Vilkinas, 1991) It is noted that the representation had increased lately still their numbers in senior positions was still very low

The relationship between sex role stereotypes and the characteristics perceived necessary for managerial success was examined in the context of New Zealand where it was found that both male and female commerce students surveyed perceived successful middle managers as possessing the characteristics, attitudes and temperaments commonly ascribed to men in general and, to a lesser degree, women in general. (Sauers, et al. 2002) Thus a point to be noted here is that gender discrimination is present in both Australia and New Zealand organisations. Studies of this nature tend to support the overall view that gender discrimination is a widespread malaise often irrespective of the nature of societies and regions.

Work life balance issues come to the fore in some studies where Australian women are seen as struggling to juggle their work and personal lives. An example of such a study is the cross-national study on challenges in career progression. The findings indicate that women in Australia and Malaysia still have significant responsibilities for performing family duties, and bringing up children. Hence, they are unable to contemplate both careers and families, a view strongly supported by the Australian women as well. (Jogulu & Wood, 2011). It was concluded that family and personal responsibilities emerged as strong impediments to attaining senior management positions. This finding may seem quite familiar to researchers in other societies such as South Asia or South America demonstrating the fact that spatial differences do not really impact the ways women managers are treated in organisations.

An interesting perspective is offered in a study on migrant Muslim women employees in Australian organisations. The point made is that diversity management aimed at balancing the number of women and men in organisations should not be perceived only as an organisational duty and challenge but should be seen in the wider societal context. (Jawad & Pio, 2010) This type of study offers a global perspective rather than merely a regional one as it places a migrant community into the local context to look into their experiences.

VI. WOMEN MANAGERS IN EUROPE

There are several studies available on women in management in the European context. A representative example is of Grisoni and Mick, (2007) who undertook an inquiry into the decision-making behaviour of leaders in the United Kingdom to determine if leadership is impacted by gender, The results established the possibility of a barrier where female leaders failed to express feminine forms of leadership when in the company of men, instead opting to conform to perceived male traits. Dunn's (2007) research on leadership within the U.K. Army found a distinct difference between male and female leadership styles where women officers portrayed a gender management aspect to their leadership. Therefore it was observed that women leaders did face a threat from male leadership and they opted to surrender to the male power instead of being assertive. This finding seems quite common in literature on women in management where the women manager is expected to act manly if she is to be taken seriously.

An ILO study found that in the United Kingdom and United States women comprise between 33% and 45% of managerial positions, whereas Swedish women only hold 29% (ILO, 2004). Such a situation is likely to dampen women

employees' desire for employment in Swedish banks (Foroohar, 2006). According to Wirth's study, only 2% of senior posts in French key corporations were held by women. Germany reported 3%, the United Kingdom had a mere 3.6% and Australia had a low of 1.3%. (Wirth, 2001) In Sweden, despite being rated one of the top countries in gender equality initiatives by international bodies, women still struggle to hold key leadership positions.

A cross-cultural study in Europe on the perceptions of managers from four Western European cultural groups about women's and men's leadership revealed that participants from every cultural group perceived reliable gender-based differences in leadership effectiveness. While some stereotypes varied across cultures, stereotyping patterns were more often linked to participants' gender than to their cultural beliefs. Unexpectedly, gender stereotypes of leaders were least prevalent among Latin respondents compared to those from more egalitarian cultures. In the Nordic and Anglo groups, male participants' stereotypes disparaged women's performance at the most valued leadership competencies. (Prime, et al., 2008)

Research on Russian women shows that definitions of sexual harassment at work are different from those in the United States and that when it occurs there is a preference for dealing with it informally rather than through institutional channels. (Stuchevskaia, 2011). This might seem to be a common approach to deal with sexual harassment at work and is found elsewhere in the literature on women in management. Although research about the factors linked to the acceptance and success of women as managers in different countries is available (Broadbridge, 2010; Daily and Dalton, 2003; Huse and Solberg, 2006), comparative cross national studies are relatively scarce (Punnett et al., 2006).

VII. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Global research on women in management has traversed a long road from the time when attitudes towards women in organisations were the subject of enquiry. These attitudes were examined from the perspectives of both men and women towards women managers. Later research went into issues related to gender discrimination and inequality. As more women kept entering the workforce the issue of work-life balance came up. There is increasing focus on glass ceiling syndrome preventing women from moving to higher positions in organisations and into the corporate boards.

Research issues in the area of women in management across the world seem surprisingly similar across different geographic spaces. The issues such as

leadership and entrepreneurship or rather their perceived absence in women is the subject matter of studies across different regions and countries. Work-life balance is observed almost everywhere among women managers whether it is an advanced nation or a relatively underdeveloped economy. Gender inequality is present more or less in most societies seeping into the organisations creating dysfunctional cultures. The under-representation or under-utilisation of women managers in corporate boards or senior management is a concern spanning national boundaries. Sexual harassment at work is endemic yet dealt with in diverse ways in different contexts

At the same time that the research issues seem similar across the world, there are subtle differences in emphasis and focus. Thus we find race and ethnicity of concern in the context of United States which is a melting pot of immigrant cultures or the impact of oppressive political system in China. Stereotyping, on the other hand, seems to be a 'natural' differentiator with masculine attitudes and values dominating organisational cultures. Women managers respond to this type of culture by either trying to be like men or withdrawing into their shells. Seen in this light, there is concern about leadership lacunae in women managers and the need for inputs to make them more competent to aspire for leadership positions. Here one can also observe the relative importance given to women representation in higher levels of management and corporate boards. Several researches in the Western context, including in Australasia have their focus on assessing the level of such representation with government policies geared to enhancing the quantum of representation. Oman presents a peculiar problem of over-representation of women at lower levels with men still dominating the higher echelons in organisations. This raises the possibility of women pushing out men out of lower-level jobs a phenomenon that might be underway in some geographic regions. As compared to this, there is the phenomenon of women themselves giving greater importance to personal and family commitments as compared to that given to work in the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia as a consequence leading to the possibilities of missing out on opportunities for promotion.

It is clear that women managers face discriminatory attitudes not owing to some random occurrences but because of historical wrongs, cultural sanctions, social biases, educational and developmental barriers, legal and quasi-legal restrictions and dysfunctional organisational cultures. Each of these causes may not be operating in isolation but as a collective leading to a situation where women managers find themselves in a disadvantaged situation.

Hope lies in a plethora of steps being taken at different levels. Attitudinal changes are, perhaps, the most basic level at which changes can be noticed albeit those changes might be slow. At the other end are the myriad policy initiatives being taken by international organisations and national governments to mitigate the problems of women in organisations. This is done through striving to provide representation by affirmative action as well as through organisational processes. Research into issues is moving into finer issues beyond just measuring attitudes or questioning whether gender inequality is there. There are cross-cultural and cross-national as well as global studies on women managers and their concerns. Interest in research on women managers is likely to pick as we move further towards the age of enlightenment.

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