

A STUDY ON CAREER MANAGEMENT ISSUES OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN INDIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Vidya Patwardhan

*Sr. Lecturer,
Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel
Administration(WGSHA),
Manipal University, Karnataka.
E-Mail: vidya.patwardhan@manipal.edu*

Dr. V. Balaji Venkatachalam

*Reader,
Welcomgroup Graduate School of
Hotel Administration (WGSHA),
Manipal University, Karnataka.
E-Mail: balaji.v@manipal.edu*

ABSTRACT

During the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who have entered the work place in both developed and developing countries (Davidson & Burke, 2004). The major contributing factor is the increasing amount of education women have pursued, coupled with increasing number of women undertaking professional studies. The hospitality industry overall faces a worldwide shortage of trained hospitality staff (Robinson, 2007) and it appears that employment in this sector is advantageous for talented and career oriented women.

With this background, this paper aims at providing a profile of women managers in Indian Hospitality Industry determining their positions and investigating the challenges faced by them throughout their career. The purpose of the study is to examine women manager's perception of factors that facilitate and constrain their career advancement and find out if there are any significant differences among them. Efforts are made to find out the barriers that may exist to women's career advancement and also to determine differences between men's and women's opinions regarding the essential competencies and behaviors required for advancement in the industry.

The existing literature on various career related aspects of women managers at different levels provided the theoretical background for the study. Using the random sampling method, a sample of 52 women managers from some of the leading hotels of India completed questionnaires on the study. The results show that even if these managers are able to enter into management cadre and move upwards, the difficulties faced in attaining high level positions are many. The different factors affected are gender issues, job characteristics, work life balance, family concerns, relationships at work, long work hours, mentoring, work environment and glass ceiling. Information provided by the respondents confirms that women in hospitality industry continue facing challenges in their career.

KEYWORDS: Hotels; Indian Hospitality; Women Managers; Career Development; Barriers

Introduction

The hospitality industry has experienced tremendous growth within the past decade and it is expected to continue beyond the year 2010. As a result, the industry overall faces a worldwide shortage of trained hospitality staff (Robinson, 2007) and job opportunities are continuing to increase. Although the hospitality industry has

embraced many aspects of modern technology, the provision of services in hotels has not changed radically from the last century. They are dependent on the critical human elements of service and what (Korzensky,2002) calls 'customer sovereignty' to ensure a successful and profitable operation.

With a lot of hotels opening up in the country, India is being touted as the next destination for the hospitality industry. As shown in figure 1 the foremost contribution of the organized hotel industry comes from 5 star hotels. According to figures from the World Travel and Tourism Council, by 2019, there would be 275 million jobs pertaining to the hospitality industry. Though there are still opportunities in the west, a lot of jobs will be generated in countries which include Brazil, Russia, India and China. The present and future of the hospitality industry is in these countries. At present, in India, there are about 90,000 hotel rooms and given to the new hotels coming up, these numbers are bound to increase. The figures could go up to over 2, 40,000 hotel rooms in India, which would also mean a lot of opportunity for hotel management graduates (The Hindu, Sep 6, 2010).

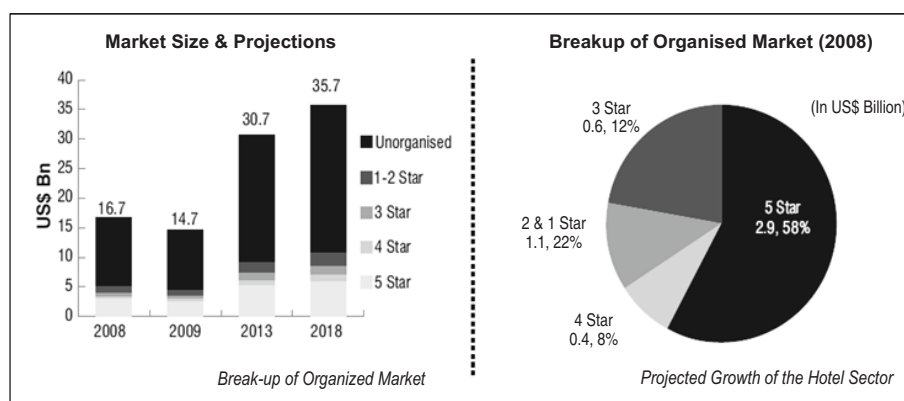


Figure 1: Hotel industry in India Source: Dissecting the Indian Hospitality Industry: Technopak analysis, 2009-10

During the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who have entered the work place in both developed and developing countries (Davidson & Burke, 2004). One contributing factor is, the increasing amount of education women have pursued, coupled with increasing number of women undertaking professional studies. This has resulted in greater number of women pursuing professional managerial careers.

The proportion of women in jobs overall has also increased substantially in recent years. Over the past several decades, women have become a larger percentage of the workforce: 33% in 1960, 43% in 1980 and 45% in 1990. In

2003, 40% of the world's 2.8 billion workers were women, an increase of about 200 million compared to the last decade, according to an analysis of female employment by the international labor office (ILO, 2004). Women comprise about 20-25 per cent of the total organized workforce in India (Business Standard, 2010). Also there has been an improvement in the numbers of women promoted to higher positions: women represented 20% to 40% of management positions in about 60 countries (ILO).

Why has the proportion of women in management overall increased in recent years?

Powell (2000) offers some reasons for gains that women have enjoyed.

- Women have increased their human capital through increasing their education;
- Societal norms regarding women's roles have facilitated women's move into management;
- Equal opportunity, along with organizational programs that support women's advancement, have played a role;
- In addition, women at more senior levels influence the number of women at junior levels of management.

With this background, an effort was made to know more about career aspects of women at the management level of a professional field like hospitality.

Review of Literature

Studies indicate that today's successful organizations are team-oriented, agile, flatter, flexible and holistic in their vision and strategy (Appelbaum et al., 2003). As a result, organizational leaders need to be non-coercive, comprehensive thinkers-individuals who are skilled at building work relationships and fostering collaborative teams. These are the traits and behaviors most frequently associated with women's management style (Birute and Lewin, 2003).

But review of literature also indicates that women have to work twice as hard and do twice as good a job as their male colleagues in order to prove that they deserve a position. This view is strongly supported by some the women managers as quoted in an article "Are women better bosses?", Hindu, Aug 25, 2010 which said "men get that shoulder pat easily, while women have to work twice as hard for recognition. Women often have vast responsibilities with little or no authority."

Since the available literature was very vast, especially from Western Countries, for broader coverage, the findings of various researchers are identified and compiled in the table form.

Studies on career issues of women in Workplace

Author/ Organization	Career factors	Findings
Babaria (2010)	Career success	Despite all the hurdles, many women have become successful in their works. They have made name and wealth for themselves with their hard work, diligence, competence and will power.
Chawla (2009)	Women in Management-Success factors	Women are more visible in management roles and other key positions. Growth opportunities for women has increased with the business growth and demand in India. Women are natural networkers & terrific communicators. They have extensive multitasking abilities as evidenced by women who manage business and families at the same time.
Stockdale & Crosby (2004)	Success factors	Number of women at more senior levels influences the number of women at junior levels of management.
Vigil (2002)	Women representation	12% of corporate level positions, 5% of top management jobs & half of 1% of the highest positions
Wood (2001)	Women representation	In food service industry women comprise 44% of managers but only 4% of top level executives
Sharon (2010)	Long work hours	Hours are not the traditional 9/5 – job roles can be 24/7 and is difficult to carry out senior positions part time. As a result since 2004 the number of women in management positions in the sector has dropped from 49% to 46%, the number of female chefs from 50% to 40%.
Accenture (2006)	Mentoring	Internal support mechanisms like mentoring and coaching are not tailored to women's individual needs
Kattara (2005)	Glass ceiling effect in Middle east	An interview of female managers of 5 star hotels in Egypt revealed that they were not positioned to move to the top management level.

Taylor (2004)	Work life balance	Because of long and inflexible work hours as well as its boundary less crossover between work and non-work life women are leaving their positions to pursue more flexible entrepreneurial ventures
Burgess (2003)	Work life balance	Dual managerial roles makes women temporarily leave their careers to take care of family needs, hoping to re-enter some time in future
Bierema (2002)	Factors affecting career development	Gender role, homemaking responsibilities, alternative work arrangements
Yoder (2002)	Gender stereotyping	Cowboy mentality exists in some organizations that perpetuates the notion that leaders must be pioneering, take-charge individuals who make a decision and they forge ahead
Dickerson (2000)	Gender stereotyping	40% of women surveyed had been denied a promotion or raise because of their gender related attributes
Powell (1999)	Bias & Discrimination	Objective credentials at these levels are less important and male decision makers use gender based models of selection
Bierema (1998)	Traits	Male dominated environment requires women to imitate male traits in order to develop their careers
Purcell (1996)	Old boy networks	In hospitality women are mostly excluded from informal communication structures, those that shape critical organizational practices such recruiting and succession planning
Flanders (1994)	Glass ceiling	To sum up the frustrations of working women at every level who could see where they wanted to advance to but found themselves blocked by an invisible barrier that prevents them from moving up the hierarchy
Brownell (1994)	Old boy networks	In her study both senior and middle women managers ranked the old boy network and limited access to information is the significant obstacle to their career advancement

Some of the above studies have also identified the difficulties the women face in climbing to top management positions including the old boy network (Brownell, 1994; Diaz & Umbreit, 1995), working family conflict, and poor childcare support (Brownell, 1998).

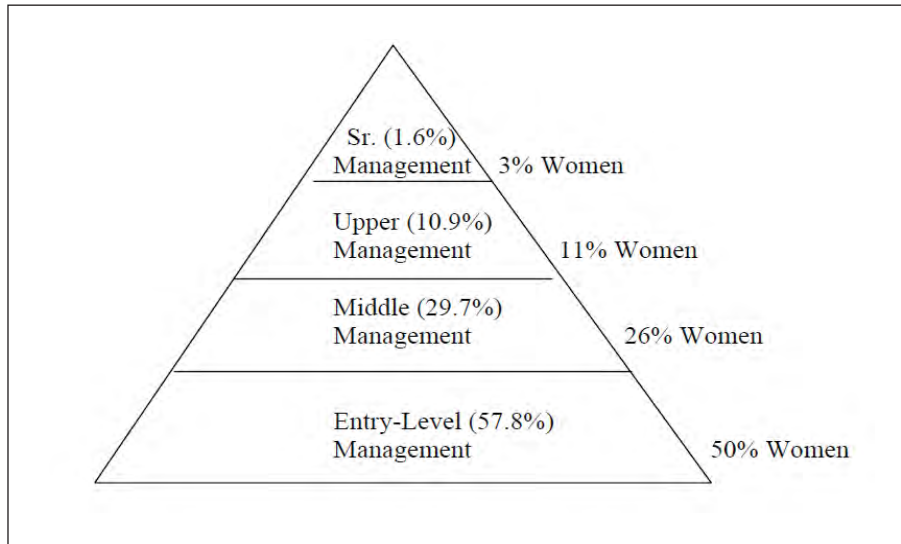


Fig. 2: Women in management positions

Source: Schwartz, F. N. (cited in Bily&Manoochehri, 1995). *Breaking with Tradition: Women and Work; the New Facts of Life*, Warner Books, p. 155.

Methodology

A sample of female managers in 5 star hotels from all over the country was randomly selected and a total of 99 managers were identified, questionnaires were sent online, of which 52 of them from various departments of these hotels responded to the survey. The questionnaire was designed by identifying what factors promote and impede the development of career of women in hospitality industry. It consisted of 5 sections that included background information, job related information, gender issues, contributing factors for career advancement and barriers for career advancement. The final part of the questionnaire was open ended questions concerning their opinions on factors that have contributed to their career advancement and challenges faced by the women managers in Indian Hospitality industry. The questionnaire was designed based on the one developed by Li and Leung (2001) and Yan Zhong (2006). The data was analyzed using percentages to know their responses on the various issues concerned.

Data Analysis and findings

Profile of respondents

The average age level, education level and job related information of the respondents is shown in figure3, figure 4 and figure 5 respectively.

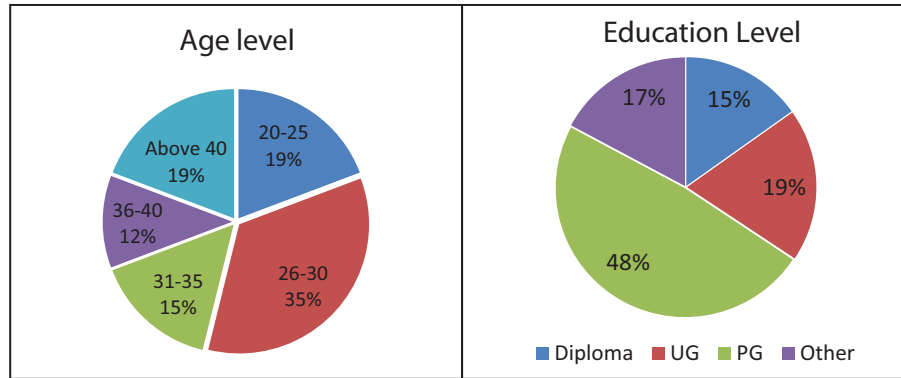


Fig. 3: Age level of respondents

Fig. 4: Education Level

Current job position	Asst. Mgr.		Manager		Middle Mgmt.		Top Mgmt.		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	11	21.2	25	48	11	21.2	5	9.6	52	100
Department	Kitchen		F&B		Accommodation		Sales & HR		Total	
	5	9.6	2	3.8	20	38.5	25	48	52	100
Yrs of service in current position	1-2 yrs		3-5 yrs		6-9 yrs		10 & above		Total	
	8	15.4	20	38.5	18	34.6	6	11.5	52	100
No of subordinates	1-5		6-10		11-15		<15		Total	
	17	32.7	15	28.8	5	9.6	15	28.8	52	100

Fig. 5: Job related information of women managers

The demographic makeup of the respondents shows that most of the women managers were in the age category of 26-30. Concerning the educational background, 48% of them held post graduate degrees and 19% of them have undergraduate degrees. The distribution of women managers in different departments and positions revealed that they were remarkably dominant in accommodation (38.5%), Sales and Marketing and Human Resource departments (48%). Majority of them (48% & 21.2%) are above the junior management level and in Middle management level with an experience of 3-5 years (38.5%) and 6-9 years (34.6%)

Gender Issues

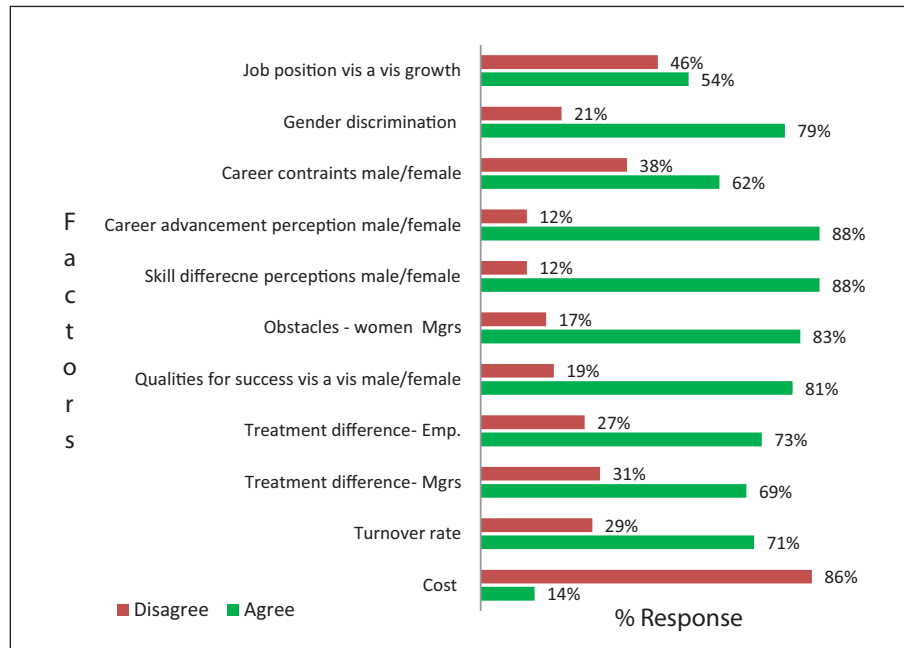


Fig. 6: Gender issues

86% of the respondents strongly disagreed on one issue: “cost of hiring women is more than the cost of hiring men at higher levels”. Five gender issues were found to be significant for the respondents: “factors facilitating career advancement are different for men and women” (88%), “there is a substantial difference in skill requirements of men and women managers” (88%), “women managers face more obstacles to career advancement than male managers” (83%), “personal qualities required for success in career for women managers are different than male managers” (81%) and “gender discrimination still exists in hotel industry” (79%). Even for the remaining factors as mentioned in figure 5, many of the female managers agreed with the researcher.

Contributing factors for career advancement

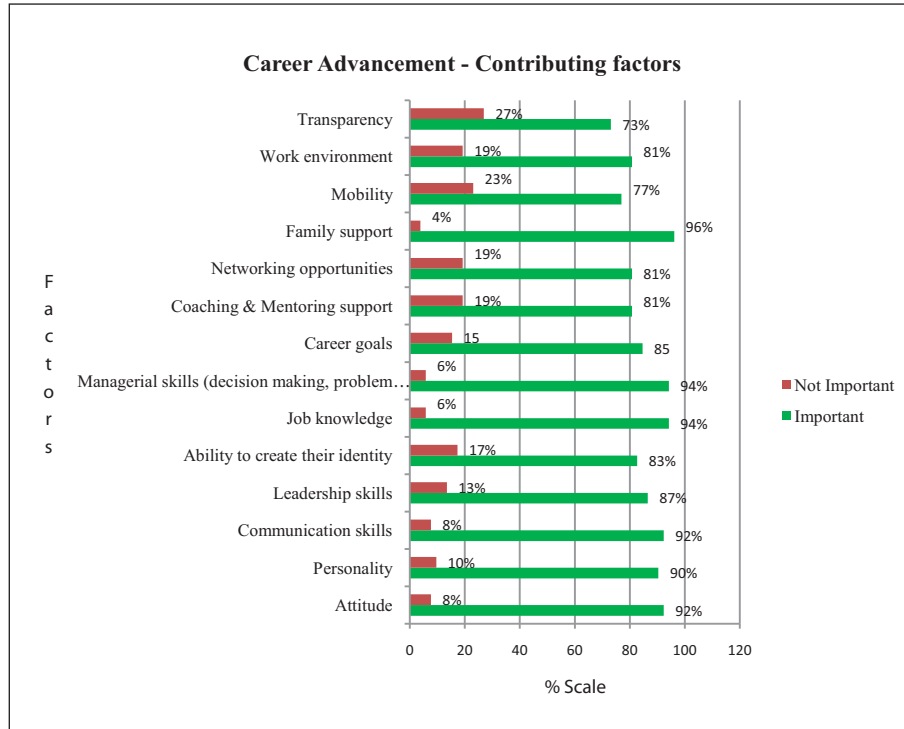


Fig. 7: Contributing factors for career advancement

Respondents have ranked “family support” first (96%), “managerial skills and job knowledge” second (94%), “attitude” third (92%), “personality” fourth (90%) and “leadership skills” fifth (87%). They have ranked “transparency” (73%) and “mobility” (77%) as less important factors.

But in general they rated all the factors mentioned in figure 7 as important for career advancement in hospitality industry.

Barriers to career advancement

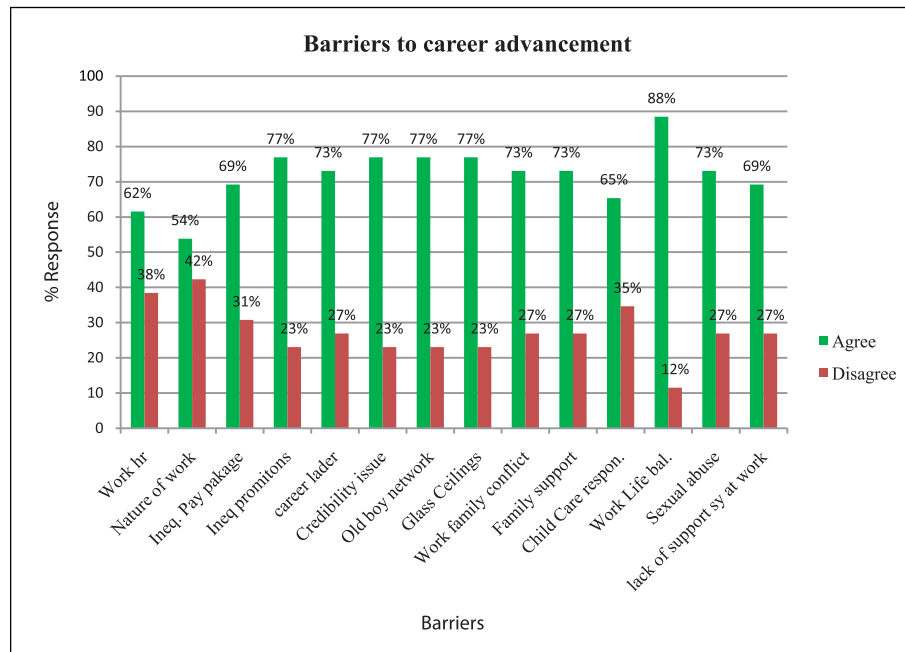


Fig. 8: Barriers to career advancement

The respondents ranked “work life balance” as a major constraint (88%) followed by “unequal promotional opportunities”, “difficulty in establishing credibility”, “old boy network” and “glass ceiling” (77%). The next important barriers were “career ladder”, “work family conflict”, “family support” and “sexual harassment/abuse” (73%). They ranked “nature of work” as least important barrier. The remaining factors, even though not a major barrier, were still considered as important and more than 60% of the respondents agreed that these are barriers that cannot be neglected.

Open-ended questions

Some of the representative comments from the respondents’ for the open ended questions are as follows:

What in your opinion is the reason for less representation of women in hospitality industry?

“It could be because we live in an egotistical society where women are generally considered to be taking care of their families rather than work and also a lot of men are intimidated by women in top positions. It could also be due to the lack of support from family members and juggling both home and work life together can prove to be a challenge, which many women unfortunately are not able to do.”

“The hotel industry is very demanding and you have to be there 24/7 (especially the kitchen) and be completely dedicated to your work. Due to these attributes most women are not able to cope with the pressures of long working hours and irregular timings. So most women generally quit to have a family and children.”

What do you think is the current status of women in hotel industry?

“Better than few years ago in terms of finding women at senior positions but would like to see more women in mainstream operations than support functions. Also, at times women need to put up with lewd comments/conversations of male colleagues as at higher positions we are fewer in number a lot of times the only female member among many men as they seem to ignore your presence or take it for granted that indecent conversations are acceptable.”

Is there any difference in the outlook of Gen Y women managers of Hotel Industry?

“The difference is that women managers today are go getters and are not subdued or pressurized by men in the work place. Women are ambitious, competitive and want to excel in their field of expertise. Gen Y women managers really don't have any barriers in their mind of being a women, they equally do everything a man does. They are very competitive, outgoing and have high rate of success. Gen Y actually doesn't have a “big picture” They approach their roles as a “job”

Discussion and Implications

As revealed in the analysis among 11 issues related to gender, most of the women managers, opined that, women do face more obstacles to career advancement, they need different sets of personal qualities, there is a substantial difference in skill requirements and the factors contributing to their career advancement is quite different than men. Therefore when discussing the issues that affect the career management of women, it is important to note the intersection of gender, age and time in life with career progression and their combined impact on the progression of women managers in hotels.

When addressing the issue of factors that contribute career advancement, women managers have mostly agreed that all the 14 factors are important, with the highest rating for “family support”. This shows that women managers in India are slowly learning to become vocal about what they want and deserve both at home and workplace. To add more value to this, the hotel industry should think of extending maternity leave, the introduction of statutory paternity leave and a right for the parents of young children to request flexible working hours. Because Brownell (1998) suggested that family problems that might become workplace problems are threats to a company's competitiveness and profitability.

The major barrier relating to women's career progression appears to be “work life balance”. This reveals that women always experience disadvantage because of their

duel role, so there is a need to respond with special benefits to help them balance their personal and professional life. Because a barrier such as long and irregular hours of work though impacting all women, would not be as critical to senior women as it would be to women with younger children.

The issue of less representation of women in top management, one reason may be that, when there are many interested and qualified male candidates for senior jobs, it is difficult to prevent bias and discrimination at these levels. Because objective credentials at these levels are less important and male decision makers at the top are more likely to use gender based models and criteria in selection. Although men and women both have proved their mettle in the corporate world globally but the fact remains that women are in the minority and invisible to quite an extent in leadership roles in India. An interesting aspect to be noted here is some of the obstacles for female career advancement are a function of cultural and societal sanctions and not related to organizational policies.

Some of the successful women managers say that they succeeded because they exceeded performance expectations; they developed a style which male managers were comfortable, and they were seeking out difficult or high visibility assignments. Many women managers believed that women must over perform to demonstrate their abilities in a male dominated environment. In addition to this they had to make men feel comfortable with them.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The findings from this study showed that more than the gender issues, “family support” and “work life balance” are the important indicators for their progress in career. The solution lies not only in better preparation of women to work hard to foster their abilities, but in the creation of a more equitable organizational culture in the industry. In terms of the antecedents of work and family conflict, the number of hours worked, flexible work hours, and need for a full-time domestic help have the greatest impact on time, organizational and personal related factors respectively. Partner and family support have the greatest influence in reducing the level of work and family conflict of Indian women managers. Even though this study may seem to present a somewhat negative picture for women’s advancement in hotels, based on the progress made by women over the last decade and by looking at the profile of female students ready to enter the industry, the reality appears more positive. However, it is imperative for the hotel industry to play a leading role in hiring and promoting women into various management positions by providing conducive work environment and growth opportunities because in today’s competitive global economy no hotel company can afford to waste valuable brainpower.

References

- Accenture (2006). *The Anatomy of the Glass Ceiling: Barriers to Women's Professional Advancement*. Retrieved from www.accenture.com
- Appelbaum, S., Audet, L. and Miller, J. (2003). *Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories*. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 24 (12), 43-51.
- Babaria, M. (2010). *Women entrepreneurs in India*. Accessed on 15 August 2011 from <http://www.ghallabhansali.com/admin/file/Women%20Entrepreneurs.pdf>
- Bierema, L. and Opengart, R. (2002). *Emotions in Women's Career Development: A merging of literatures*. Paper presented at 2002 AHRD Conference: the women and career development, Honolulu.
- Birute R., Roger L., (2003). *Third possibility leaders: the invisible edge women have in complex organizations*. *The Learning Organization*, 10(6), 347 – 352.
- Brownell, J. (1994). *Women in Hospitality Management : General Manager's perceptions of factors related to career development*. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 13(2), 101-117.
- Brownell, J. (1994). *Personality and Career Development: A study of gender differences*. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 35(2), pp 36-45.
- Burgess, C. (2003). *Gender and salaries in hotel financial management: it's still a man's world*. *Women in Management Review*, 18(1/2), 50-60.
- Business Standard (2010). *KIT: The women workforce and its impact*, Accessed from <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/kitwomen-workforceits-impact/390075/>
- Chawla, R. (2009). *Excerpts from an interview in 'Women special issue' of hospitality Bizz*. Retrieved from <http://www.hospitalitybizindia.com>.
- Diaz, P.E., & Umbreit, W.T. (1995). *Women leaders: a new beginning*. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 19(1), 47-57.
- Davidson, M.J. and Burke, R.J. (2004). *Women in Management worldwide: Facts, figures and Analysis*, Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Dickerson, A and Taylor, M.A. (2000). *Self-limiting behavior in women; self-esteem and self-efficacy as predictors*. *Group and Organization Management*, 25(2), 191-209.
- *Express Hotelier & Caterer*, Sep.5 (2007). "Status of Hospitality Management Education in India". Retrieved from <http://www.expresshospitality.com>.
- Flanders, M.L. (1994). *Breakthrough*. Paul Chapman Publishing, London, 1-11.
- Korczynski, M. (2002). *Human Resource Management in Service Work*, Palgrave, London.

- Li, L. & Leung, R.W. (2001). *Female managers in Asian Hotels: Profile and Career challenges*. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. MCB University press, 13(4), 189-196.
- Powell, G.N. (2000). *Women in Management: Current research issues, Vol II*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, pp. 347-70.
- Powell, G.N. (1999). *Handbook of Gender and Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Purcell, K. (1996). *The relationship between career and job opportunities: Women's employment in the hospitality industry as a microcosm of women's employment*. *Women in Management Review*, 11(5), 17.
- Robinson, R. & Barren, P. (2007). *Developing a framework for understanding the impact of deskilling and standardization on the turnover and attrition of chefs*. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol.26, No.4.
- Schwartz, F. N. (1992). *Breaking with Tradition: Women and Work*. *The New Facts of Life*, Warner Books, p155.
- Sharon, A. (2010). *Leadership tips for women*. Accessed on 16 August 2001 from <http://www.eileenmcdargh.com/2010/10/leadership-tips-for-women-from-deloitte-chairman-sharon-allen/>
- Taylor, M. and Walsh, K. (2004). *Developing in-house careers and retaining managerial talent: What professional want from their jobs in hospitality*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Vigil, J. (2002). *Women in Corporate America: does the glass ceiling still exist?.* *Diversity Career Opportunities and Insights*, 4(2), 18.
- Wood, R.C., & Brotherton, B. (2001). *Women in Hospitality*. *The sage handbook of Hospitality Management*. Sage, UK.
- Zhong, Y. (2006). *Factors affecting women's career advancement in the Hospitality Industry: Perception of students, educators and industry recruiters*. A dissertation in family and consumer science education, Texas Tech University.