Unit 2 - Essay

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**Women's barriers in the workplace: Barriers: Stereotypes and Self-esteem**

Women comprise more than half of the world's total population but unfortunately, their aggregate income is still low as compared to men's. In the past, very fewer women were given the chance to display their skills in the business sector due to that, very few women opted for employment. This was because females used to receive very less pay for the same work undertaken by men. The gender inequality was at a peak in all the sectors. Women were forced to choose the professions that were stereotypic for their feminine nature. But in the past few years, things have rapidly changed in the favor of women. There are now many options available for women to choose from in their professional careers. They are now paid justified enough in many business firms. Many females have risen to top management posts due to their competency. But despite all these positive changes, there are some issues that have remained the same for women. Women still face some barriers in the workplace that men have the privilege of. There are many invisible barriers for females on their way to success and this is why they are still lacking behind men in the corporate sector. Below is the list of these significant barriers that are faced by the women in the workplace out of which only four will be talked about in detail.

1. Glass Ceiling effect
2. Communication barrier
3. Lack of Mentors
4. Perceived low commitment in women
5. Imbalance work life
6. Stereotyping
7. Sexual Harassment
8. Gender Biases in leadership
9. **Glass ceiling effect**

There is always invisible barrier built for them that never let them reach the top positions in the corporate sector. Glass ceiling effect is the term used to explain the invisible barriers created for the less privileged groups of society to stop them from rising beyond a certain level in the hierarchy of management. This is the most significant barrier that is still present for women in today's world of global business. There are many reasons behind the attempt for creating such barriers one of which are sexism, gender inequality, and biases in roles etc. Sexism is one of the leading reasons behind this obstacle in this male-dominated society. Men view themselves as superior to women and underestimate their capabilities and skills. They judge her on the basis of her gender and not the competence she has for the role she is kept away from. Santovec (2010) best describes this metaphor of a glass ceiling to more like Labyrinth. Similarly, it is also assumed that women are happy under this glass ceiling and does not show as much commitment and effort for top management as men (Clark, 2006). The study revealed that the pay gap is not the issue anymore for women but the quality of work life and desire for a better role in management. It is justified that even ambitious women do not desire more because they want to maintain a balance in their lives.

1. **Stereotyping**

Stereotyping is a very common dilemma for women which will not end in the workplace no matter how many odds prevail to question this issue. Women are associated with roles that require fewer technicalities, intellectuality, and authority because it is perceived that they might not handle high-risk tasks efficiently enough (Boyce & Herd, 2003). They are always prioritized on feminine roles in the organization but never given the options to explore for themselves and prove their compatibility. From many years, it is believed that women are more good at subordinates than at equal positions with men. Due to this reason, when a woman opts for a compatible position she is told that she lacks enough qualification and experience.

1. **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is another addition to the barriers that exist only for women in the workplace. From the start of their professional careers to the peak of their careers, they have to struggle with the unethical issue of sexual harassment. Almost every woman faced sexual harassment in her work life at one point or another. This issue is quite serious as women have to leave the workplace and shift to another job but ultimately hires there in a relatively low position (Plimmer& Schmidt, 2007). They start facing depression and this is why their productivity at work declines to give the signal to male employees that she is incompetent for this job.

1. **Gender Biases in Leadership**

There are numerous examples of female leaders that have shown a negative impact on the people around her. It is due to the reason that people often put labels on women whenever leadership is concerned. Female leaders are perceived to be rude, difficult to work with, complicated and not professional. In the areas where the males have more authority and power in command, it becomes difficult for women to compete with them due to the labeling factor because of their gender. There is always an unconscious bias towards females that have strong roots connected with stereotypes and sexism. Culturally, females are shown to be a much friendly, nicer sex that is very caring and supportive whereas males are reflected as bossy, hard, aggressive and tough. This is why leadership is more connected to men in this culture and women are discouraged for leadership positions from society. But when women strive for leadership, she is automatically assigned two labels from society (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2007). One is nice and warm but rather incompetent and the second one is competent but not favorable and pleasant. This way women fails to acquire the positions in top management in the workplace because this becomes a barrier in their way to go further in their professional careers.

**The difference in Leadership styles between Men and Women**

Men and women are quite different as far as leadership is concerned and in many cases, men are preferred over women to lead the team because of their symbolism with being the leader in the male-dominated society. People like to see men more in a leadership role because of some qualities that are in abundance in men and perceived to be less in women. Despite the fact that woman leadership is always questioned, shreds of evidence suggests the otherwise. Over the past few decades, many quantitative studies have shown women leadership to be more effective than men in the corporate sector. In the companies where more females are in leading roles, the net profit is always 1% or more is greater than the organizations where there is no female to lead (Eagly, 2013). According to many evidence-based studies, many researchers agree that women have more enhanced skills for leadership which are due to their encouraging and supportive attitude towards their subordinates. While men are found to be more good in decision making and problem-solving skills. Their authoritative and aggressive attitude towards work makes them a good leader in this area. Therefore, women often face a conflict regarding their role in leading and this is why they try to adopt a more masculine behavior in leadership for which they are also often criticized (Eagly, 2013). The main difference between the men and women leadership style is that men are more transactional leaders whereas women follow the transformational style of leadership. Women are better in team participation, mentoring, building good relations with employees but this trait often makes problems for the performance of the organization (Eagly, 2013). Men are concerned about the achievement of goals whereas women are more focused on how the goals can be achieved. Female leaders are collaborative and efficient in sharing new ideas for the organization. They are more democratic than authoritative unlike men (Eagly, 2013). However, this trait is not always beneficial for women as studies have revealed that efficiency increases if the middle way is followed between the directive and participative approach towards leadership. Women's leadership improves the financial performance of organizations based on empirical evidence.

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