

Reasons for the Low Percentage of Female Executives in Asian Workplaces

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Abstract: The underrepresentation of women in executive positions within the Asian workplace has garnered significant attention and concern within social circles. Despite the substantial economic advancements witnessed throughout Asia in recent years, there persists a prevalent issue concerning the limited status and participation of women inside the workforce. This study aims to examine the causes contributing to the underrepresentation of women in executive positions, specifically focusing on political, educational, and socio-cultural aspects. The research will employ various methods, including literature analysis, data comparison, and exposition. The examination and comparison of data from other foreign countries provide more evidence to support the notion that there remains potential for enhancement in the representation of female CEOs within the Asian workplace. The research presented in this paper aims to highlight the complexity of the issue surrounding women's low status and limited participation in the workplace. It emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts from all sectors of society to address this problem. The study specifically focuses on the social factors contributing to the low proportion of female executives in the Asian workplace. Enhancing the status and engagement of women, as well as attaining gender equality within the workplace, can be facilitated by implementing various strategies. These include challenging conventional mindsets, expanding educational and professional prospects for women, optimizing corporate frameworks and decision-making processes, and advocating for the establishment and enforcement of policies and legislation pertaining to gender parity.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Asian Workplace, Female Executives

1. Introduction

The advancement of the global economy and the increased level of education among women have contributed to the progressive enhancement of women's status and function inside the workforce. Nevertheless, there is a pressing issue with the relatively low representation of women in leadership positions within Asian workplaces. Despite the implementation of several initiatives aimed at enhancing women's engagement in the labor force within certain Asian nations, women continue to encounter numerous obstacles and impediments inside the professional sphere. The investigation into the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in executive positions within the Asian workplace necessitates a comprehensive examination from multiple perspectives. The phenomenon under consideration is mostly attributed to the significant impact of traditional culture and social notions. Traditional gender norms in numerous Asian countries continue to be strongly ingrained,

resulting in women being predominantly assigned familial duties rather than occupying significant positions within the workforce. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the social structure and work patterns prevalent in many Asian countries can potentially impede the progress of women in their professional pursuits. Working women frequently have significant difficulties when it comes to achieving a harmonious equilibrium between their professional obligations and familial commitments. They are often compelled to assume a larger share of domestic chores and childcare duties, which can have an impact on their progression and prospects for career advancement. This study uses research methods such as literature analysis, data comparison, and exposition to investigate the proportion of women in the workforce in Asia, the factors contributing to the low representation of women in executive positions, and the corresponding strategies for change. To address the challenges encountered by women in the professional sphere, it is imperative to use a range of strategies. In order to foster gender equality and respect, it is imperative to initiate a transformation in traditional attitudes. The promotion of social attitude transformation necessitates collaborative endeavors from the government, enterprises, and other sectors of society. This can be achieved through strategies such as public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. The examination of factors contributing to the limited representation of women in executive positions inside Asian workplaces holds considerable importance. Such research endeavors can furnish policymakers and businesses with valuable insights, aiding them in fostering the advancement of women in professional settings.

2. Analysis of current situation

The issue of gender role stereotyping within Asian corporate culture is multifaceted and delicate in nature. As societal progress continues and Asian companies undergo further development, an increasing number of organizations are recognizing the significance of gender equality. However, it is noteworthy that old gender role assumptions persist in numerous instances and continue to exert a significant influence on corporate culture. In the context of traditional Asian business culture, there exists a prevailing perception that men assume the role of primary earners, while women are predominantly associated with the responsibility of familial caregiving. The division of roles is present not just within the context of the family unit, but also within the realm of corporate operations. In many organizational contexts, there is a prevailing perception that male employees predominantly assume the roles of primary decision makers and implementers, whereas female employees are primarily associated with coordinating activities and facilitating communication.

The allocation of tasks based on gender not only restricts the advancement of women in their professional pursuits, but also contributes to the exacerbation of the disparity in remuneration between genders. In numerous Asian corporations, there exists a discernible disparity in the prospects for career progression across genders, leading to a notable discrepancy in average remuneration levels between women and men. This tendency is not only prevalent in Asian countries, but it is also a widespread issue on a global scale. Nevertheless, an increasing number of Asian firms are acknowledging the significance of gender equality and implementing various initiatives to further this objective. Certain firms have initiated efforts to offer more training and development opportunities aimed at enhancing the skills and capabilities of female employees, thereby enabling them to access improved career growth prospects. Furthermore, several organizations have initiated the adoption of flexible working hour arrangements and family care policies in order to assist female employees in achieving a more optimal work-life balance.

Despite the advancements that have been achieved, further endeavors are required to eradicate gender role preconceptions within the corporate culture of Asian societies. The achievement of this objective necessitates the endorsement and advancement of corporate leadership, alongside the collective endeavors of the entire society. The recognition of the significance of gender equality and

the fostering of an inclusive and equitable corporate culture can be achieved by means of ongoing education and heightened awareness among individuals.

In numerous Asian countries and locations, there persists a disparity in average salaries between female and male employees. In the context of mainland China, it is observed that despite a gradual improvement in the average wage of women in recent years, there persists a notable disparity between the remuneration of female and male employees, with the former often receiving lower compensation. The gender wage gap can be attributed to a combination of established gender norms influencing women's career advancement and the presence of subtle forms of discrimination and obstacles encountered by women in professional settings. Asian women continue to face significant constraints when it comes to accessing opportunities for career progression. Despite the notable accomplishments of certain women in their professional pursuits, they frequently meet intangible obstacles that impede their progression towards higher-ranking roles. The impediments encompassed within this context consist of doubt pertaining to the leadership capabilities of women, gender-based discrimination, and a dearth of suitable resources and chances for the advancement of women's careers.

3. Analysis of influencing factors

3.1. Policy factors

Globally, there is a notable disparity in the representation of women in leadership roles, indicating a relative underrepresentation of females in comparison to males. Globally, the representation of women in leadership roles in industry and politics is somewhat less than 40% when compared to their male counterparts. In the Asia-Pacific area, the ratio of women to men in leadership roles is 1:4. In several East Asian nations, the ratio of female leaders to male leaders stands at approximately 12-20 per 100 individuals [1].

According to a poll conducted by McKinsey, executives identified the "anytime, anywhere" performance model as the primary barrier (45%) hindering women from attaining leadership positions. The primary obstacle, accounting for 32% of the total, was identified as the "double burden" experienced by women. This weight entails the simultaneous responsibilities of caring for a family and engaging in paid employment. This challenge is most pronounced in countries where women are still predominantly assigned the full responsibility for familial and domestic tasks.

In recent years, there has been a discernible amelioration in this particular circumstance. The Asia-Pacific area witnessed a notable increase in the proportion of women serving on boards, with the average representation rising from 6% in 2011 to 13% in 2016 [2]. This positive trend can be attributed, at least in part, to the implementation of rules and corporate policies during this timeframe.

3.2. Educational factors

There are numerous primary educational elements that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the Asian workforce. Firstly, it is important to consider the impact of conventional beliefs. In numerous Asian nations, there exists a longstanding belief that women should prioritize familial and domestic responsibilities over professional pursuits. The aforementioned view serves as a constraint on women's opportunities to pursue advanced education and impedes their progress in professional settings. Furthermore, the issue of uneven educational resources arises as a significant concern in many Asian countries, leading to a disparity in the distribution of educational opportunities for women, thereby limiting their access to high-quality educational resources. Simultaneously, the career advancement of female students is constrained by the societal and educational expectations imposed by certain institutions and families.

Thirdly, there exists a significant economic strain within certain Asian nations, leading numerous women to opt for employment in low-wage sectors as a means to provide for their families.

Consequently, they forego the chance to pursue higher education. One contributing factor to the underrepresentation of women in Asia is the limited presence of prominent female figures who have achieved notable accomplishment. As a result of this situation, a significant number of women are deprived of exposure to various professional opportunities, leading to a dearth of incentive to pursue advanced degrees of education.

Furthermore, the impact of geographic location and urban-rural differences on education in Asia should not be overlooked. Women residing in rural or isolated regions may encounter less access to educational opportunities compared to men, primarily as a result of economic circumstances and resource limitations. Firstly, it is worth noting that early marriage and the subsequent assumption of family obligations have a significant impact on female education in numerous Asian civilizations. This circumstance can potentially hinder females from pursuing higher education or necessitate the suspension of their academic pursuits in order to fulfill familial and childcare responsibilities.

Resolving these issues necessitates a profound societal shift in perspectives and attitudes towards women, aiming to provide equal access to educational and professional prospects on par with their male counterparts. This encompasses the development and execution of policies aimed at combating sex discrimination, enhancing the provision of educational resources, fostering a greater understanding among women on the significance of education, and promoting the pursuit of advanced studies among women. Simultaneously, it is imperative for both families and society to provide support to women in their pursuit of personal careers and growth, so facilitating the genuine achievement of gender equality.

3.3. Socio-cultural factors

Asian women encounter various obstacles in their transnational professional endeavors, including cultural disparities and linguistic hindrances. The presence of diverse backgrounds and values across countries and cultures poses challenges for Asian women in terms of adjusting to various work situations and effectively interacting with coworkers. Furthermore, it is imperative for Asian women to consistently enhance their language proficiency and domain knowledge throughout their professional trajectories due to the variation in language and terminology employed across many businesses and areas.

4. International comparison

4.1. Proportion of female executives in the United States, Europe and other countries

The present global mean stands at 20.6% in terms of female representation on corporate boards. The aforementioned data point has had a twofold increase over a span of ten years and has an upward trajectory from its last recorded value of 15.3% in 2016.

There are notable disparities that exist throughout various regions. The Asia-Pacific area (excluding Japan) has had a notable upward trend in gender diversity on boards, with an initial percentage of 11.6% in 2015, which subsequently increased to 14.4% by 2019. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there exist notable variations in gender diversity across different countries and regions. For instance, the percentage of gender diversity ranges from 3.1% in South Korea to about 30% in Vietnam, Australia, and New Zealand. The Asia-Pacific area is home to three countries, namely South Korea (3.1%), Pakistan (5.5%), and Japan (5.7%), which are ranked at the lowest ranks globally. Europe, a region that has seen challenges in addressing the issue of insufficient female diversity on corporate boards, has emerged as the leader in this regard, with a notable diversity percentage of 29.7% [1].

4.2. Comparison of the proportion of female executives in Asia and other international regions

In contrast to previous studies conducted in 2009 and 2011, the present analysis reveals a consistent rising trajectory observed across all markets, with particularly noteworthy advancements observed in Mainland China and Malaysia. There is a significant prevalence of female representation at the junior and mid-level positions. With the exclusion of India, all markets exhibit a majority of women, comprising over 50% of the workforce at junior levels. Mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore have an average representation of over 40% women at mid-level positions. The achievement of gender parity is within reach. Numerous organizations are increasingly adopting a 50/50 gender parity approach across all markets, aiming to achieve equal representation of both genders at all organizational levels. A significant proportion of enterprises in Mainland China (65.5%) and Malaysia (52.9%) have successfully attained gender parity, or even beyond it by having a higher representation of women than men, at the intermediate level [3]. A significant proportion of organizations in Malaysia, specifically 35.3%, have successfully attained gender parity at their highest leadership levels. There is an observable trend of increasing disparities in performance among various markets, with certain markets exhibiting superior performance compared to others. This phenomenon serves to accentuate the divergence between the highest and lowest performing markets. The countries that have had the most notable advancements, particularly in terms of gender representation at upper echelons, are Mainland China with a 35.6% increase and Malaysia with a 34.0% increase [3]. Nevertheless, the proportion of women in top positions in Japan and India had minimal growth, with Japan reaching 11.0% and India reaching 10.6%, remaining in the double-digit range. The average performance in Asia continues to be rather low, despite improvements observed in certain markets. Overall, the Middle and Top tiers in the six markets continue to exhibit subpar performance. The mean score for the intermediate tier was 39.0%, whilst the upper tier experienced a decline to 24.3%. Asian markets are persistently confronted with the issue of attrition, wherein the departure of women from various hierarchical positions stays notably substantial. In the Asian region, it has been observed that the attrition rate stands at 30.7% for junior to mid-level positions, while for mid-level to senior level positions, the attrition rate is recorded at 37.8%. India exhibits the most unfavorable attrition rates (-45.9%) at the junior-middle level, while Japan experiences the highest attrition rates (-61.3%) at the middle-high level. Companies should be praised for their active efforts in fostering inclusive settings for female employees [3]. Maternity leave, paternity leave, and flexible working options are widely offered across the six markets by most enterprises. Companies regularly employ measures such as women's networks, re-entry help, and various professional development courses. There is not necessarily a direct correlation between the number of projects and the gender ratio. In comparison to other regions, companies in Japan and India exhibit a relatively higher degree of commitment towards assisting working parents and implementing professional development initiatives. However, it is noteworthy that both regions continue to experience the lowest average representation of women in their middle and senior management positions. In contrast, it is noteworthy that Malaysia provides the shortest duration of maternity leave and exhibits a very limited provision of women's networking, re-entry support, and professional development initiatives. However, despite these factors, Malaysia demonstrates a commendable representation of women throughout various hierarchical levels.

In the present investigation, subjective judgments regarding causation were deliberately avoided, and instead, the interpretations were solely based on the empirical evidence obtained from the data. A significant correlation has been identified between gender diversity and company performance [4].

Strategies for fostering the development of female leaders through educational and training initiatives. It is imperative for governments and corporations to implement initiatives, such as training

and assistance programs, aimed at bolstering the proficiency and competitiveness of Asian women in professional and societal domains. It is recommended that these programs incorporate language instruction, cultural sensitivity training, and communication skills training in order to facilitate the successful integration of Asian women into diverse work environments and cultures. These initiatives aim to improve their professional capabilities and foster effective communication with colleagues from various backgrounds [5].

It is imperative for governments and enterprises to enhance the provision of career development opportunities and resources specifically tailored for Asian women. This encompasses the formulation of equitable recruiting and promotion protocols, the provision of training and professional growth avenues, and the establishment of a conducive work atmosphere and comprehensive welfare framework.

Establishing an equitable workplace climate throughout organizations. In order to enhance career development possibilities and resources for Asian women, it is imperative for both the government and enterprises to establish role models for women in leadership positions, while also actively supporting their participation in technology and leadership roles. It is imperative for society at large to collaborate in order to cultivate a conducive environment that facilitates the professional advancement of Asian women [6]. This encompasses the eradication of gender discrimination and stereotypes, the promotion of women's involvement in decision-making and leadership roles, and the facilitation of women's entrepreneurship and innovation. The genuine achievement of gender equality and equitable treatment of professional development for all necessitates the collective endeavors of society as a whole.

5. Conclusion

Despite some advancements, Asian women continue to encounter substantial obstacles in the professional sphere. The issue of women being underrepresented in senior management positions is a matter of significant concern due to its potential to perpetuate gender bias and foster inequality within the organizational context. The aforementioned phenomenon not only has implications for women's prospects of career progression within the professional sphere, but also has the potential to result in the forfeiture of significant opportunities and resources for the organization.

The increasing trend observed in the labor force participation rate signifies a favorable indication of the growing inclusion of women within the labor market. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the state of women in the professional sphere has experienced substantial enhancements. Hence, it is imperative to implement additional strategies aimed at fostering gender equality and enhancing career advancement prospects for women within the professional sphere.

This study exclusively examines the causes contributing to the underrepresentation of female CEOs in the Asian workplace. Specifically, it focuses on political, educational, and socio-cultural issues. It is important to note that the data used in this study are derived solely from internet questions and do not involve any further investigative measures. The study's comprehensiveness is limited by the extent of reading and research, indicating a need for additional expansion in terms of both breadth and depth. Future efforts should focus on strengthening this component.

The underrepresentation of female CEOs in the Asian workplace can be attributed to both historical and practical factors. Addressing this issue and achieving gender parity in leadership positions will need a comprehensive and time-consuming procedure. Engaging in the study of this subject matter will facilitate the cultivation of a broader range of perspectives, so enabling the expansion of the benefits experienced by women from their familial roles to the professional sphere. Further research on this subject will facilitate the attainment of more definitive findings regarding strategies for promoting equity and inclusivity within the job market.

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