# Chapter 2
# Women in Organizations:
## Challenges for Management

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## ABSTRACT

*There has been a retreat from the "conventional" work organization to new forms of contemporary organizations. Parallel to this shift in organizational forms, the composition of the workforce also changed. Greater numbers of women entered the labour market and began occupying managerial positions. Despite the increase of women in the workforce, progress towards equality lagged behind. The intention of this chapter is to provide an overall picture of the representation of women in organizations and to acquaint the readers with some of the major issues that play role in women's career advancement. The chapter begins by introducing macro and micro level barriers that hinder representation of women in the contemporary workplace. Some of these major barriers, such as stereotypes attached to women, occupational segregation, the gender pay gap, and discrimination are then detailed and theoretical and practical implications are provided. The chapter also covers studies on the leadership of women in organizations and outlines the need to unravel the potential of women.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the key drivers of industrialized societies over the past century is the shift in women's social and economic position. Women have since been increasingly moving into the labor market, into employment and work organizations. According to the PWC report (2014), nearly 1 billion women have entered the global labor force depicting a reality that requires greater effort in communicating the importance of women's representation in the work arena. Various organizations and interest groups have since engaged in research and policy-making activities such as preparing incentive programs, designing organizational change programs for the integration of women into the system (Aycan, 2004). However, there is a long way to go since there are a number of issues remaining to be tackled such as under-representation of women in decision-making positions (Kirton, 2006), the gender pay gap (Misra and Murray-Close,

2014), sexual harassment (Rogers and Henson, 1997), sex (in)equality (Acker, 2011), gendered hierarchy (Murray and Syed, 2010), gendered power relations (Townsley, 2003) and male dominated work cultures (Dellinger, 2002).

Contemporary organizations are those structured to adapt and innovate in order to meet society's expectations. Unconventional forms of organization are proved to be ill suited to fit the changing external forces surrounding organizations creating a need for alternative organizational forms, which are more organic and less bureaucratic opening space for new ideas, creativity and diversity to flourish (Child, 2015). Diversity and creativity in which contemporary work organizations lean against are intertwined with the representation of women in the work arena placing women in the spot as agents for success, well-being and existence of contemporary organizations. This chapter examines the position of women in organizations and outlines the representation of women in the workplace. In this context individual level characteristics that distinguish women leadership and other issues preventing women from attaining and/or occupying managerial positions are investigated. The chapter will present both theoretical and empirical studies pertaining to an understanding of the importance of women in contemporary work organizations.

## REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORK ARENA

Women are well documented to be especially underrepresented in managerial jobs in higher levels. This implies a strong gender gap in terms of formal power and authority, high status and high incomes (Alvesson and Du Billing, 2009). Many factors influence the representation of women in organizations. Various disciplines including economics, sociology, psychology, industrial relations have investigated explanations for women's lower representation in management and have found evidence in support of labor demand- and labor supply-related factors (Orser and Leck 2010; Blau, Ferber, and Winkler 2014). Demand-side factors encompass labor market conditions and organizational influences, such as gender-based employment discrimination whereas supply-side explanations include differences in men's and women's human capital and job preferences (Graham, Belliveau and Hotchkiss, 2017). The supply-side approach takes rather an individual-oriented stance, focusing on the psychological and personal characteristics that distinguish men and women.

One type of individually oriented, but non-psychological explanation is the human capital theory (Alvesson and Du Billing, 2009). Investments in education, training and other forms of qualifying experiences are seen as key factors behind careers. Women's disadvantaged position is attributed to less relevant education and lacking qualified work experience associated with working at different sites, including working abroad. Educational choices of women seem to strongly follow gender-stereotypical divisions. Traditional gender cultures also create resistance of women in the workplace (Maddock and Parkin, 1993). Cockburn (1991) has powerfully shown the extent of resistance to women that persists in British organizations. Women were held back either by stereotypical prejudices or well-accepted structural barriers of long working hours, inflexible working patterns and expensive or no childcare (Stone 1988; Maddock, 1999).

In a study by Vogel and colleagues (1975) it was documented that men held a very stereotyped view of women as workers. Women were seen as dependent, passive, non-competitive, illogical, less competent and non-objective. A similar finding emerged from Kanter's study (1977) where she observed that male managers treated their female subordinates with a mixture of patronizing humour, sarcasm and indif-

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