

Handbook of Research on Promotion Women's Careers

Edited by Susan Vinnicombe, Ronald Burke, Stacy Blake-Beard and Lynda Moore

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The *Handbook of Research on Promoting Women's Careers* is an edited collection that covers themes related to human resource management, such as gender discrimination and stereotypes, diversity management, talent management, career management and advancement, cross-cultural perspectives and how these factors influence women's career advancement to senior positions. The volume follows a chronicle structure and examines the implications of women's roles in the global workforce. It presents women's perceptions and lived experiences in leadership positions, committees and boards, examining career barriers and suggesting possible solutions and strategies. The volume is edited by Susan Vinnicombe, Ronald Burke, Stacy Blake-Beard and Lynda Moore, who are renowned scholars in the field of gender and management, and the handbook is informed by theories, lens and methodologies from different disciplines, such as organisation psychology and economics.

The handbook is organised in 24 chapters, grouped around four parts. The first part, setting the scene, consists of four chapters. This part of the handbook lays out a number of promising approaches. The chapters in this part focus on leadership styles used by female leaders. In addition, ethnicity issues that disadvantage the women's managerial careers are examined using new methodologies. Avivah Wittenber-Cox stresses that business should improve the gendered patterns prevailing in organisations, rather than attempting to fix women managers. The specific chapter of these chapters poses leadership as key to the success of women's careers. Despite setting the scene, this part of the handbook could have perhaps used with a title that set out more clearly what the key argumentation is in the chapters, which is that careers and organisations are gendered.

Part two of the handbook places attention on "challenges facing career women". This part consists of eight fascinating chapters that identify career barriers, focusing on many of the topics we have seen discussed in gender and organisation literature, such as workplace harassment, gender stereotypes, motivation, ineffective organisational policies, gendered communication styles in organisations and glass-based networking. Notable attention is paid to theoretical advancement of perspectives, where fresh

theoretical frameworks such as the Biopsychosocial lens and sex voice are presented effectively. This is particularly helpful for researchers involved in similar work, as it maps out the key developments in these discussions. The chapters show us that persistent, gender-related issues, such as occupational motivation and queen bee syndrome, as well as the struggles of women leader with politics in managerial roles, have not changed significantly over time. Authors emphasise that organisational policies need to be reviewed and made more effective to support women's success in their careers.

Third part of the handbook examines the women's career in specific sectors (firms and businesses) over six chapters, looking at different contexts (e.g. Canada, the USA, UK and India) showing struggles and barriers that affect women's career advancement. Camilla Quental's study on women in service firms highlights the experiences of women in management consulting firms, where gender is constructed around the notion of ideal (worker) consultant that matches with men's lives. Bilimoria *et al.* examine academic careers of women at different stages, and their findings suggest that women are involved in fewer developmental activities and earn substantially less compare to their male counterparts. Williams, Barnett and Sumner examine STEM professions in the US context, which is still very challenging for women professorship because of the tension between tenure track systems. Sealy examines ways to increase the presence of women on corporate boards. The study conducted in an Indian multinational corporation stood out to me, as it showed that while the company's policies were encouraging, the family role and socio-cultural factors also presented challenges for the women. The chapter in this part concludes with the powerful statement that international management positions and assignments disadvantage women more than men, stressing the importance of organisational initiatives to support women on expatriate assignments.

The fourth and final part of the book contains six chapters. It focuses on strategies that need to be taken to support women's career advancement. These chapters identify that the success of career development programs in organisations is linked to the efforts of mentors and sponsors. In addition, it is argued that challenges specific to particular groups of women (e.g. women of colour) need to be addressed through companies' advancement programs. Vinnicombe *et al.* note that women's leadership programs in UK and US schools need to be reviewed, suggesting that a way forward is that these programmes are designed and used in academia. In their chapter, Hartel *et al.* state that women migrants and minority women in the Australian context need accessibility to career advancement programs, and that these programmes need to include a thorough examination of HRM practices. The authors found that informal networking and mentoring are key to improve the situation and suggest a need for close examination of the barriers faced by women migrants and minorities groups. Alix and Hornoer discuss the consistent impact of organisational factors on women's careers, noting that the gender gap in CEO positions in the USA can be improved with appropriate training programs, mentoring, internal networking accessibilities, social equity and job assignments between male and female. Interestingly, in the final chapter, Hunt and Fielden discuss the use of e-coaching to help individuals research their personal and professional career goals. They argue that e-coaching programmes are cost-efficient due to flexible timeframes and type of programme reporting, which also allows the option of external networking and group support. Female entrepreneurs specifically can get support from it for to support their business. The final part of book reviews existing

programmes in organisation and their effectiveness. These developmental programs are women leadership, coaching and mentoring, work and family initiatives and succession planning.

Overall, the handbook offers some conceptual frameworks to gain understanding of women's careers, but it is generally highly applied. Chapters are thoroughly researched, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, and arguments are well developed and supported by robust references. The book could have perhaps provided a more balanced overview of women's careers in different contexts worldwide; aside from India, non-Western contexts are not given much attention. In addition, some of the issues are not longstanding for instance glass ceiling. Generally, the book is a comprehensive volume that covers rich research on gender management.

This handbook accurately lives up to its title. It is an excellent resource that covers the burning issues and challenges of career advancement faced by women. Chapters included in the handbook are adequately supported with of statistical tools and procedures, and figures and tables that complement the text, alongside relevant conclusions and useful references to expand the reading of issues discussed in each chapter. The volume does not ignore any area that may influence women's career advancement, so this is not just a volume for a library; it should have a permanent place on the bookshelf of every woman who wishes to progress in her profession. The volume speaks to occupations within a variety of sectors – academia, media, sports and settings – multi-national corporations and corporate boards. The volume is outstanding as a reference for CEOs, managers, gender scholars, academics, researchers, organisational behavior scientist, HR practitioners, policy makers and students.

Safia Bano

*Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK
and Institute of Management, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan, and*

Kaneez Fatima

Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan