



Exploring Barriers to Career Advancement for Female Employees in the Hospitality Industry – A Case Study of Pune

Garima Malik¹, Dr. Baljit Kaur²

¹Research Scholar, CT University, Ludhiana (India)

²Associate Professor, CT University, Ludhiana(India)

Abstract

This research paper aims to investigate the various obstacles encountered by female employees in the hotel industry, particularly in Pune, India, hindering their progression towards career advancement. Despite advancements in gender equality initiatives, women continue to face significant challenges in breaking through the glass ceiling within the hospitality sector. A structured questionnaire was used to adopt a quantitative methodology in this study. The researchers gathered data from 297 females working in 4-star and 5-star hotel in Pune city of Maharashtra, India. The data analysis involved descriptive analysis and exploratory factor analysis test. The four key factors have emerged, each revealing distinct obstacles faced by women in advancing their careers. The identified factors encompass issues ranging from insufficient organizational support and gender bias to work-life balance concerns, familial responsibilities, and societal challenges. The study's limited sample size and cross-sectional design may limit the generalizability and temporal insights of its findings.

Keywords: Female Employees, Career Advancement, Gender Bias, Hospitality Industry, Pune, Glass Ceiling, Work-Life Balance, Discrimination, Mentorship

DOI Number: 10.48047/NQ.2022.20.20.NQ109318

NeuroQuantology2022;20(20):3216-3224

3216

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the issue of gender equality in the workplace has gained significant attention worldwide. While progress has been made in various sectors, disparities persist, particularly in industries like hospitality. The hospitality industry, encompassing hotels, restaurants, tourism, and related services, remains marked by gender inequities, especially concerning career advancement opportunities for female employees. Despite comprising a substantial portion of the workforce, women continue to encounter barriers that hinder their

progression into leadership roles within this sector.

The city of Pune, located in the Indian state of Maharashtra, boasts a vibrant hospitality industry, attracting tourists, business travelers, and students alike. With its rich cultural heritage, educational institutions, and burgeoning IT sector, Pune's hospitality industry plays a crucial role in supporting its economic growth. However, behind the facade of bustling hotels and thriving businesses, lies a reality where female employees face multifaceted challenges in advancing their careers within this domain.



One of the primary barriers faced by female employees in the hospitality industry pertains to pervasive gender bias. Research indicates that women encounter prejudice and stereotyping, both overt and subtle, which adversely impact their career progression (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). In a male-dominated industry like hospitality, traditional gender roles often dictate perceptions of leadership capabilities, leading to the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions (Appelbaum et. al., 2003). This bias manifests in recruitment practices, promotion decisions, and allocation of challenging assignments, further exacerbating the glass ceiling effect for female professionals (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). Another significant obstacle for female employees in the hospitality sector relates to work-life balance issues. The demanding nature of hospitality jobs, characterized by irregular schedules, long working hours, and high-pressure environments, often conflicts with familial responsibilities and personal obligations. Balancing professional aspirations with caregiving duties can prove particularly challenging for women, leading to career stagnation or opting out of the workforce altogether (Shockley & Allen, 2007). The lack of flexible work arrangements and supportive policies further exacerbate this dilemma, constraining women's ability to advance in their careers while maintaining a fulfilling personal life.

Mentorship and sponsorship play pivotal roles in facilitating career advancement by providing guidance, support, and opportunities for skill development and networking. However, female employees in the hospitality industry often encounter limited access to mentors and sponsors who can advocate for their career progression. The scarcity of female role models in leadership positions perpetuates this cycle, depriving women of essential mentorship

relationships that could enhance their professional growth and visibility within the organization (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Moreover, the absence of formal mentorship programs exacerbates the disparity, leaving female employees without structured support systems to navigate the complexities of career advancement in the hospitality sector.

Discriminatory practices and organizational culture contribute significantly to the barriers faced by female employees in the hospitality industry. Studies have highlighted instances of sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and hostile work environments prevalent in hotel settings. The normalization of such behaviors perpetuates a culture of inequality, wherein women feel undervalued, marginalized, and excluded from decision-making processes (Ineson et al., 2013). Discriminatory practices not only impede career advancement but also undermine the overall morale and productivity of female employees, creating a toxic workplace environment detrimental to organizational success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The hospitality industry has long grappled with gender inequality and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Despite an increasing number of women entering the hospitality workforce, they encounter significant barriers to career progression, as evidenced by several studies. Mooney (2009) conducted a study exploring how the intersectionality of gender and age influences perceptions of career barriers among women managers in the hotel industry. The research identified organizational culture, the influence of the "Old Boy Network," working hours, conflict between work and family obligations, geographical mobility, the availability of

role models, and the trajectory toward the position of General Manager as key issues hindering female career advancement. Li and Leung (2001) investigated female managers within the Singaporean hotel industry, revealing that work-family conflict, lack of networks, and family support were significant challenges. The study highlighted the personal sacrifices women make in pursuit of career advancement, with cultural and societal norms playing a substantial role in hindering their progress. Yang (2011) examined career development in the mainland Chinese hotel industry, uncovering a "glass ceiling" for women in attaining the role of General Manager. Career-family conflict and gender stereotypes were identified as major obstacles, with certain roles traditionally dominated by men being overlooked by women. Sen, Kandpal, and Tinani (2013) focused on barriers to career progression for women in the hospitality sector in Oman. Their research revealed issues such as lack of equity in promotion decisions, irregular work hours, and childcare responsibilities as significant hindrances. Karunarathne (2015) studied female executives in Sri Lankan five-star hotels, highlighting organizational culture, gender equity, insufficient support systems, and personal characteristics as obstacles to career advancement. The research extended beyond the hotel industry, addressing cross-industry challenges and the need for individual initiatives. Nyataya and Kiage (2016) found that women in the Rwandan hotel industry faced stereotypes, recruitment biases, and family responsibilities contributing to gender disparities. Patwardhan, Mayya, and Joshi (2016) explored challenges faced by women managers in Indian five-star hotels, identifying family responsibilities, lack of flexible work arrangements, and gender stereotypes as major barriers.

Dinakaran (2018) surveyed female chefs in Bengaluru, India, identifying obstacles such as limited upward mobility, experiences of marginalization, and reduced career ambition due to marital status. Alemada (2019) reviewed literature on challenges confronting female employees in the hospitality industry, including managing irregular working hours and balancing work with familial commitments. Srivastava (2020) investigated obstacles to women's career advancement in the hospitality sector in Jaipur, India, highlighting issues such as long working hours, gender discrimination, and the glass ceiling. Overall, these studies underscore the multifaceted nature of barriers hindering the career advancement of female employees in the hospitality industry, encompassing organizational culture, work-family balance, gender stereotypes, and societal norms.

3218

Purpose of the Study

Given the aforementioned challenges, there is a compelling need to explore the barriers hindering the career advancement of female employees in the hospitality industry, particularly within the context of Pune. This research aims to investigate the various obstacles encountered by female employees in the hotel industry, particularly in Pune, India, hindering their progression towards career advancement.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative approach to investigate the barriers to career advancement for female employees in the hospitality sector, focusing on a case study of Pune. A cross-sectional survey design was utilized to collect data from a sample of female professionals working in 4-star and 5-star hotels across Pune.

The study targeted female employees currently employed in the hotel within Pune.

A total of 297 participants from twenty-nine hotels were participated for the survey, from various departments within 4-star and 5-star hotels in the city. A self-administered online questionnaire was developed based on insights gleaned from a thorough review of existing literature on gender disparities and career advancement within the hospitality industry. The questionnaire aimed to assess participants' perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to career advancement. The questionnaire was structured into two sections to capture relevant information comprehensively. The sections included demographics (e.g., age, education, tenure in the hotel), alleged barriers to career advancement (e.g., gender bias, work-life balance challenges, lack of mentorship), and attitudes towards organizational culture and diversity initiatives.

The online questionnaire was hosted on Google Forms to facilitate easy accessibility and data management. Participants were invited to inclusive the survey via email, WhatsApp, and personal visits to the hotels. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and instructions for completing the questionnaire was provided along with the survey link. Ethical considerations were dominant throughout the research process. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Once data collection was complete, the collected responses were exported from Google Forms to a statistical analysis software package for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were computed to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables of interest. Exploratory factor analysis was employed to explore the predictors of career advancement barriers for female employees in the hospitality sector.

4. RESULTS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The analysis of the demographic profile of female employees in Pune's hospitality industry reveals insightful patterns. Predominantly, the majority of respondents fall within the youthful age bracket of 18-25, comprising 60.3% following by middle-aged individuals (26-45 years old) is accounting for 39.3% and above 45 is markedly low, constituting only 0.7% of the sample. Marital status presents another facet of diversity among respondents, with a substantial majority (59.9%) being unmarried, while a significant proportion (39.1%) are married. This dichotomy suggests a mix of personal circumstances among female employees, influencing their experiences within the sector. Moreover, the revelation that 35.7% of respondents are mothers underscores the presence of caregiving responsibilities among a considerable segment of the workforce, potentially impacting their career trajectories and work-life balance. 53.9% of respondents belonging to joint families and 46.1% to nuclear families. This diversity in familial setups reflects varying support systems and societal dynamics that may influence women's career choices and progression paths.

Educational attainment paints a picture of a highly qualified workforce, with the majority (51.2%) holding undergraduate degrees and a notable proportion (24.9%) possessing postgraduate qualifications. Additionally, the significant representation (16.8%) of respondents with certificate or diploma programs suggests a commitment to specialized training relevant to the hospitality industry, potentially enhancing career prospects and skill sets.

Workplace characteristics reveal a concentration of female employees in upscale establishments, with 83.2% working in 5-star hotels following by 16.8% in 4-star hotels. The largest proportion of respondents

(43.8%) reported earning 20,000 or below 20,000 rupees per month. This inference that a significant portion of female employees in the hotel sector in Pune, as represented in the sample, earn relatively low incomes. While there are respondents earning higher salaries, such as those in the 60,001-80,000 and above 80,001 rupees per month brackets, they represent smaller percentages of the sample. The majority of respondents (62.0%) are in entry-level positions. While a substantial number of respondents are in entry-level positions, there is a lower representation of female employees in managerial roles, comprising 23.2% of the sample. Despite the lower representation in managerial roles, there is a notable proportion of respondents (14.8%) in supervisor-level positions. The majority of respondents have relatively limited experience, with 27.6% having less than 1 year of experience and 38.0% having 1-3 years of experience. This suggests that a significant part of female staff in the sector are in the early stages of their careers. As the years of experience increase, the frequency of respondents decreases. This indicates a gradual decrease in the number of female employees with higher levels of experience, with smaller proportions having 4-6 years

(22.6%) and 7-10 years (11.8%) of experience.

Factor Analysis

In assessing the adequacy of sampling for each variable in this study, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was employed, following the guidelines outlined by Field (2009). Generally, KMO values are expected to exceed 0.5 to ensure suitability for analysis (Field, 2009). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (.963) indicates that the dataset is extremely appropriate for conducting factor analysis. This high value suggests that the variables incorporated in the analysis are highly correlated, which is crucial for conducting reliable factor analysis (Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 1999). Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result ($\chi^2 = 10645.382$, $df = 435$, $p < .001$). This suggests that correlations between variables in the dataset are sufficiently large for conducting a factor analysis (Stevens, 2009). In other words, there are significant relationships among the variables, justifying the use of factor analysis to investigate underlying structures or magnitude within the data.

3220

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .963 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 10645.382 |
| | df | 435 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

The rotated component matrix provides insights into the underlying factors or magnitude present in the dataset, which are extracted through Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and rotated using the Varimax method with Kaiser Normalization. The measurement scale encompassed 30 items pertaining to barrier of Career advancement by female employees. Adhering to the latent root criterion in factor analysis, it is crucial to take into account Eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, as recommended by Pett et al. in 2003.



| Rotated Component Matrix^a | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | Component | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Factor 1: Organizational Support and Career Development Challenges | | | | | |
| 1 | The organization's insufficient support in facilitating mobility by providing assistance in job placement for accompanying part | .676 | | | |
| 2 | Others(backlash, networking, establishing independence) | .674 | | | |
| 3 | Unclear career path | .649 | | | |
| 4 | Lack of support system at workplace | .624 | | | |
| 5 | Conflicts with boss | .610 | | | |
| 6 | Lack of fairness in training | .575 | | | |
| 7 | Conflicts among each other (Female employees) | .574 | | | |
| 8 | Under representation of female/isolation and lack of camaraderie /mentoring | .548 | | | |
| 9 | Gender biased promotions | .544 | | | |
| 10 | Work-life imbalance | .542 | | | |
| 11 | Difficulty in establishing one' own credibility | .520 | | | |
| 12 | Negative social images of the industry | .517 | | | |
| Factor 2: Work-Life Balance and External Stressors | | | | | |
| 1 | Time management/workload balancing with another work-related task | | .782 | | |
| 2 | Commuting to the workplace | | .662 | | |
| 3 | Career Break due to maternity/parenting | | .621 | | |
| 4 | Lack of mentoring | | .594 | | |
| 5 | Sexual harassment at workplace | | .574 | | |
| 6 | Lack of safety/security issues at workplace | | .549 | | |
| 7 | Inadequate job knowledge | | .518 | | |
| Factor 3: Family and Caregiving Responsibilities | | | | | |
| 1 | Being Married | | | .784 | |
| 2 | Children Responsibilities | | | .732 | |
| 3 | Being a single parent | | | .640 | |
| 4 | Dual/two career problem (balance with partner's career) | | | .619 | |
| Factor 4: Work Conditions and Societal Challenges | | | | | |
| 1 | Irregular and Long working hours | | | | .695 |
| 2 | Job restrictions (location, salaries, etc.) | | | | .645 |
| 3 | Unequal pay (Male and female) | | | | .579 |
| 4 | Lack of role models | | | | .564 |
| 5 | Lack of family support | | | | .555 |
| 6 | Family Responsibilities | | | | .825 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 15 iterations. | | | | | |



5. DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore the career advancement obstacles faced by female employees working in hotels in Pune. The results of factor analysis showed the five factors that are the barriers career advancement for female employees. The first factor is “organizational support and career development challenges.” This factor encompasses issues related to organizational support, career development challenges, and gender bias within the workplace. It includes concerns such as insufficient support from the organization, unclear career paths, conflicts with superiors, and gender-biased promotions. This study's results are also consistent with past findings (Deiana, 2020; Mooney, 2009; Patwardhan, Mayya, and Joshi, 2016; Zhong et al., 2011). These challenges suggest a need for greater support structures and fairness in career advancement opportunities within the hospitality industry in Pune. The second factor is “Work-Life Balance and External Stressors,” which highlights challenges related to managing work-life balance and external stressors. It includes issues such as time management, commuting, career breaks due to maternity or parenting, lack of mentoring, and workplace harassment. These findings underscore the importance of addressing work-life balance issues and creating supportive environments to mitigate external stressors faced by female employees in the industry (Alemada, 2019; Li and Leung, 2001). The third factor (Family and Caregiving Responsibilities) revolves around family and caregiving responsibilities that can impact female employees' career advancement. It includes factors like being married, having children, being a single parent, and balancing dual careers with a partner. These findings emphasize the need for policies and support systems that accommodate the

family and caregiving needs of female employees to enable their professional growth. This study's results are also consistent with past findings (Sen, Kandpal, and Tinani, 2013; Yang, 2011; Zhong et al., 2011). The last factor (Work Conditions and Societal Challenges) relates to challenges stemming from work conditions and societal factors. It includes issues such as irregular working hours, job restrictions, unequal pay, lack of role models, and insufficient family support. These findings highlight systemic issues within the industry and broader societal challenges that hinder the career advancement of female employees. This study's results are also consistent with past findings (Alemada, 2019; Li and Leung, 2001; Sen, Kandpal, and Tinani, 2013; Zhong et al., 2011).

3222

Limitations

Despite rigorous methodological considerations, this study may be subject to certain limitations. The sample size, though sufficient for the purposes of this research, may not fully represent the entire population of female employees in the hotel industry in Pune. Additionally, the self-administered nature of the questionnaire may introduce response bias, as participants' responses are subject to their perceptions and interpretations. Moreover, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality between variables, necessitating caution in interpreting the findings.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study "Exploring Barriers to Career Advancement for Female Employees in the Hospitality Industry – A Case Study of Pune" illuminates critical challenges hindering the progression of female workers in Pune's hospitality sector. Through robust analysis, four key factors have emerged,

each revealing distinct obstacles faced by female in advancing their careers. The identified factors encompass issues ranging from insufficient organizational support and gender bias to work-life balance concerns, familial responsibilities, and societal challenges. These findings echo past research, emphasizing the persistent nature of these barriers across the industry. The implications of this study are profound. Addressing these barriers is not merely a matter of equality but also essential for maximizing organizational potential and fostering industry growth. Organizations must prioritize implementing supportive policies and initiatives to mitigate these challenges. This includes promoting gender-inclusive leadership, providing mentorship programs, offering flexible work arrangements, and implementing measures to combat workplace discrimination and bias. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for industry-wide collaboration to address systemic issues such as unequal pay and lack of role models. Collective efforts from stakeholders, including employers, industry associations, policymakers, and academia, are crucial for effecting meaningful change. By dismantling these barriers, the hospitality industry can unlock the untapped talent and potential of its female workforce, leading to improved productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. Ultimately, creating an inclusive and supportive environment benefits not only female employees but also organizations, customers, and the industry as a whole. It is imperative that action is taken now to create a more equitable and thriving hospitality sector in Pune and beyond.

7. REFERENCES

1. Alemada, J. (2019). Work-Family Issues among Women Employees in Hospitality Industry: Obstacles and Fostering Strategies. *Employee Social*

Responsibility & HR Practices eJournal.

2. Appelbaum, S.H., Audet, L. and Miller, J.C. (2003). Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(1), 43-51. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730310457320>
3. Deiana, M., & Fabbri, C. (2020). Barriers to the success of female leaders in the hospitality industry. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 10(2), 85–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869461>
4. Dinakaran, U. (2018). Barriers to Career Advancement of Women Chefs Leading to their Poor Visibility in Hotel Industry: A Study with Special Reference to Bengaluru. *Asian Journal of Managerial Science*, 7(2), 32–37. <https://doi.org/10.51983/ajms-2018.7.2.1325>.
5. Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership>
6. Field, A. (2009). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS: Introducing Statistical Method* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
7. Hutchenson, G, D., & Sofroniou, N., (1999). *The Multivariate Social Scientist: An Introduction to generalized linear models*. London: Sage Publications.
8. Ineson E.M., Yap M.H.T., and Whiting G. (2013). Sexual discrimination and harassment in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 35, 1–9.

3223



9. Karunarathne A.C.I., D. (2015). Internal Barriers for Women Career Advancement in Sri Lankan Hotel Industry (with special reference to five-star hotels). *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(9), 1-5.
10. Lathabhavan, R., & Balasubramanian, S. A. (2017). Glass Ceiling and women employees in Asian organizations: a tri-decadal review. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 9(3), 232-246
11. Li, L., & Leung, R.W. (2001). Female managers in Asian hotels: profile and career challenges. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13(4), 189-196. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110110389511>
12. Mooney, S.K. (2009). *Career Barriers for Women Hotel Managers*. VDM Verlag
13. Nyataya, I.P.K. and Kiage Ma N.C. (2016). Constraints Facing Women's Career Advancement in the Hospitality Industry in Rwanda: Case of Selected Hotels in Kigali. *International Journal of Research in Sociology and Anthropology*, 2(2), 43-52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-8677.0202006>
14. Patwardhan, V., Mayya, S., & Joshi, H. (2016). Barriers to Career Advancement of Women Managers in Indian Five Star Hotels: A Gender Perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 6(2), Pages 248-271. [doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v6i2.9720](http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v6i2.9720)
15. Pett, M.A., Lackey, N.R. and Sullivan, J.J. (2003). *Making Sense of Factor Analysis: The Use of Factor Analysis for Instrument Development in Health Care Research*. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412984898>
16. Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2007). The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics surrounding the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 549-572.
17. Sen N., Kandpal D., Tinani K. (2013). A Study on Career Advancement of Women in the Hospitality Sector in Oman. *EXCEL International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies*. 3(9), 154-166.
18. Shockley, K. M., & Allen, T. D. (2007). When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 71(3), 479-493. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.08.006>
19. Srivastava, M.K. (2020). Study of Challenges faced by Female Employees in their Career Progression in the Hospitality Industry of Jaipur city. *Adalya Journal*. 9(5), 536-544.
20. Stevens, J.P. (2009). *Applied Multivariate Statistics for the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203843130>
21. Yun Yang. (2011). Gender and Engineering Career Development of Hotel's Employees in China. *Systems Engineering Procedia*, 1, 365-371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sepro.2011.08.055>
22. Zhong, Y. G., Couch, S., & Blum, S. C. (2011). Factors affecting women's career advancement in the hospitality industry: Perceptions of students, educators and industry recruiters. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 23(4), 5-13. DOI: 10.1080/10963758.2011.10697015.

