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## Understanding and Addressing Barriers to Women's Progression into Managerial Positions

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### ABSTRACT

Women leaders offer unique perspectives and approaches to decision-making, fostering balanced and well-informed choices. Their perceived empathy and supportiveness contribute to higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. Despite advancements in gender equality initiatives, women remain underrepresented in managerial positions across various industries. This study explores the multifaceted barriers obstructing women's progression into managerial roles and suggests strategies for overcoming them. The study identifies systemic gender bias, limited mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, work-life balance challenges, and entrenched organizational cultures favoring traditional leadership traits as key factors contributing to the gender disparity in management. By comprehensively analyzing existing literature and empirical evidence, this study sheds light on the complex interplay of these barriers. To address these obstacles, organizations can implement targeted interventions such as inclusive recruitment and promotion practices, customized leadership development programs catering to women's needs, mentorship and sponsorship initiatives, and nurturing supportive work environments valuing diversity and inclusion. By tackling these barriers head-on, companies can cultivate more equitable and inclusive workplaces while maximizing the benefits of diverse leadership teams. Ultimately, promoting gender diversity in management not only enhances organizational performance and innovation but also fosters a more just and balanced society.

**Keywords:** Women leaders, Gender Equality, decision-making

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, significant strides have been made towards gender equality in the workplace, with increasing numbers of women entering various industries and attaining higher education qualifications. However, despite these advancements, a persistent

disparity remains evident in the representation of women in managerial positions. While women constitute a substantial portion of the workforce, their presence in leadership roles continues to lag behind that of their male counterparts. This disparity raises important questions about the barriers that hinder women's progression into managerial positions and the strategies needed to address these obstacles. Understanding and addressing these barriers is crucial for promoting gender diversity, fostering inclusive work environments, and maximizing organizational effectiveness. Numerous studies have identified a range of factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in managerial roles, including systemic gender bias, limited access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, work-life balance challenges, and organizational cultures that favor traditional leadership traits. These barriers not only impede women's career advancement but also hinder organizational performance by limiting the diversity of thought and perspectives at the leadership level.

Despite the challenges, there is a growing recognition of the benefits of gender diversity in leadership. Research has shown that companies with more women in managerial positions tend to outperform their peers financially, exhibit greater innovation and problem-solving capabilities, and have stronger employee engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, gender-diverse leadership teams are associated with improved corporate governance practices and a more positive organizational culture. In light of these findings, there is a clear imperative for organizations to proactively address the barriers to women's progression into managerial positions. By implementing targeted interventions such as inclusive recruitment and promotion practices, leadership development programs tailored to women's needs, and fostering supportive organizational cultures, companies can create pathways for women to achieve their full potential in leadership roles. Moreover, addressing these barriers is not only a matter of equity and social justice but also a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to thrive in an increasingly diverse and competitive global marketplace.

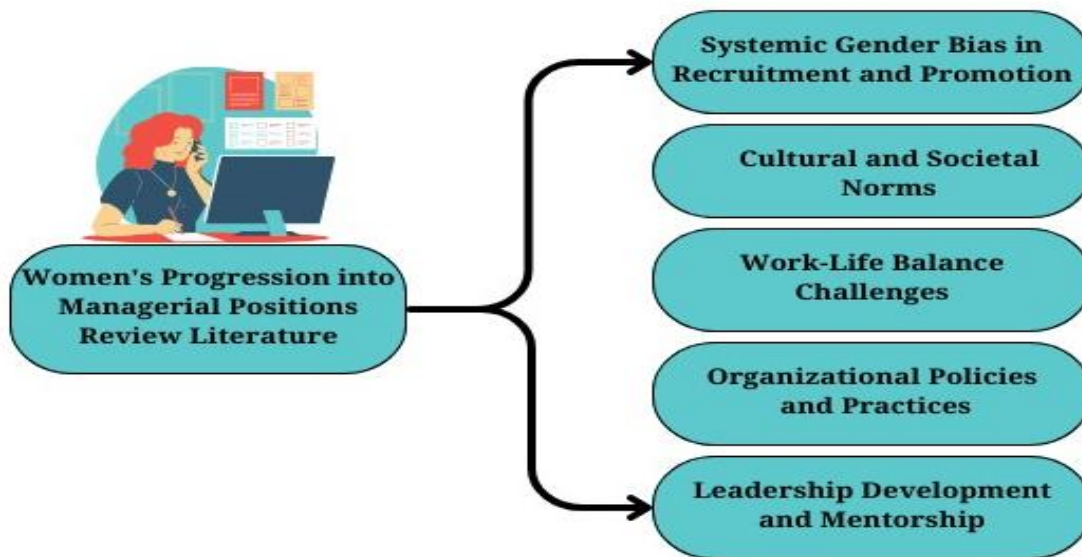
This paper aims to explore the multifaceted barriers that hinder women's progression into managerial positions, analyze the implications of these barriers for organizations and individuals, and propose strategies for effectively addressing them. By examining the root causes of gender disparities in leadership and identifying evidence-

based solutions, this study seeks to contribute to the advancement of gender diversity and inclusion in organizational leadership positions.

## 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in organizational leadership, women continue to be underrepresented in managerial positions globally, including in India. This review synthesizes literature that sheds light on the barriers hindering women's progression into managerial roles, particularly focusing on research shown in Figure 1.1 below -

**Figure 1.1**  
**Women's Progression into Managerial Positions: A Review**



Framed by Researcher

**Systemic Gender Bias in Recruitment and Promotion:** Research by Indian scholars such as Sengupta and Vemala (2017) highlights the prevalence of gender bias in recruitment and promotion processes in Indian organizations. Their study found evidence of gender stereotypes influencing hiring decisions, with women being perceived as less competent or committed compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, studies by Kapoor and Solomon

(2018) and Gupta and Sharma (2019) underscore the role of implicit biases and stereotypes in limiting women's access to managerial positions in Indian workplaces.

**Cultural and Societal Norms:** Indian scholars such as Chatterjee and Banerjee (2016) have explored the impact of cultural and societal norms on women's career progression in India. Their research highlights the pervasive influence of traditional gender roles and familial expectations, which often prioritize women's caregiving responsibilities over career aspirations. Additionally, studies by Singh and Kumar (2018) and Patel et al. (2020) have examined the intersectionality of gender with factors such as caste, class, and religion, which further compound barriers to women's advancement in managerial roles.

**Work-Life Balance Challenges:** Indian researchers, including Gupta and Agarwal (2017) and Pandey and Shukla (2020), have investigated the impact of work-life balance challenges on women's career trajectories. Their studies underscore the difficulties faced by women in managing dual roles of work and family responsibilities, particularly in the context of India's patriarchal societal norms. Factors such as lack of support for childcare and eldercare, inflexible work hours, and limited access to maternity leave provisions contribute to women's struggle to attain and sustain managerial positions.

**Leadership Development and Mentorship:** Indian authors like Sharma and Bhandari (2019) have explored the role of leadership development programs and mentorship initiatives in supporting women's career advancement. Their research emphasizes the importance of tailored leadership development interventions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by women in Indian organizations. Studies also highlight the significance of mentorship and sponsorship relationships in providing women with guidance, support, and networking opportunities critical for ascending to managerial roles (Nair et al., 2018).

**Organizational Policies and Practices:** Research by Indian scholars such as Verma and Srivastava (2017) and Maheshwari and Dhir (2020) examines the impact of organizational policies and practices on women's progression into managerial positions. Their studies suggest that while some Indian companies have implemented diversity and inclusion

initiatives, the effectiveness of these efforts remains limited due to a lack of accountability, inadequate implementation, and cultural resistance within organizations.

In summary, while progress has been made in understanding the barriers to women's progression into managerial positions in India, significant challenges persist. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies for addressing these barriers and advancing gender diversity in organizational leadership, with a focus on the unique socio-cultural context of India.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

1. To Identify the barriers hindering women's progression into managerial positions in organizations
2. To examine the association between career advancement and demographic profile of the women employees.
3. To suggest the effective strategies for change to promote gender diversity in managerial positions.

### **4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite strides in gender equality initiatives and increased female workforce participation, a persistent gap remains in the number of women holding managerial roles. This disparity raises significant concerns about fairness, diversity, and organizational success. The issue is complex, involving multiple barriers hindering women's advancement into managerial positions. Systemic gender bias plays a major role, affecting recruitment, promotions, and decision-making within companies. Stereotypes and unconscious biases often undervalue women's skills, limiting their career opportunities. Moreover, the lack of mentorship and sponsorship further complicates women's progress. Without support and guidance, it's challenging for women to develop the necessary skills and networks for advancement. Work-life balance issues also hinder women's career growth, especially when balancing caregiving responsibilities with inflexible work environments. Organizational cultures that prioritize long hours may disadvantage women, who often family responsibilities. Traditional leadership norms add to the hurdles, with traits like assertiveness valued over qualities typically associated with women. Addressing these barriers demands a thorough understanding and

targeted solutions. By recognizing and tackling these obstacles, organizations can create more inclusive workplaces, enhance leadership diversity, and bolster overall effectiveness.

## **5. RESEACRH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study will employ a Descriptive Research Design, incorporating quantitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. Quantitative Method determined through statistical analysis, used to gather numerical data on the prevalence and magnitude of identified barriers, as well as to examine associations across different variables.

### **5.2 SAMPLE SIZE**

The study employed a purposive sampling to select 100 participants who were relevant to the research objectives, including women in IT and ITES Company.

### **5.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Quantitative data collected through online surveys distributed to a participants, capturing demographic information, perceptions of barriers, and attitudes towards proposed strategies for change.

### **5.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Quantitative data analysis encompassed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to rigorously explore the dataset derived from questionnaire responses. Inferential statistics were utilized for deeper analysis, employing techniques such as frequency and percentage analysis to elucidate the prevalence and distribution of responses across various categories. Furthermore, one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed to investigate potential associations between variables and to test hypotheses formulated within the study.

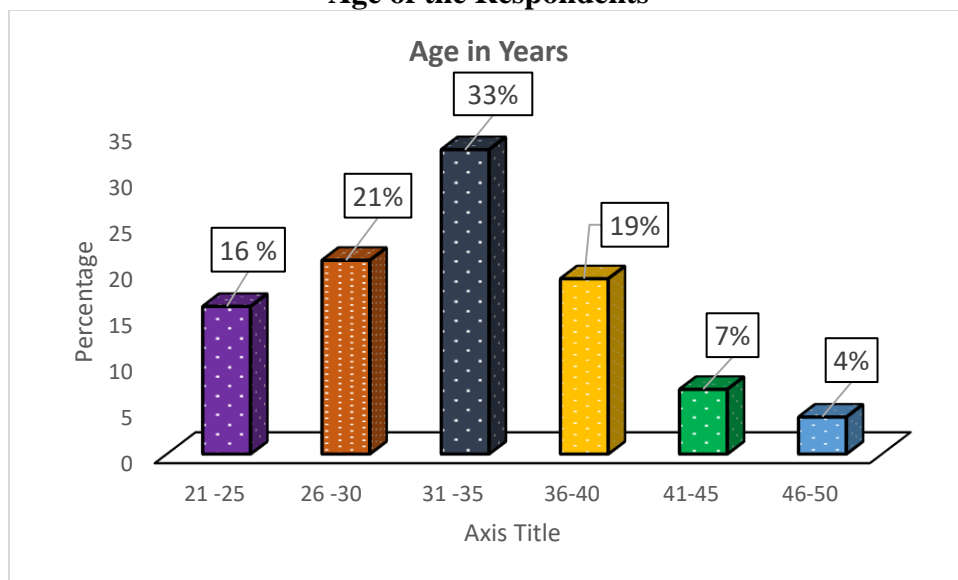
### **5.5 Ethical Considerations**

The study have adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving the professional participants, ensuring the informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants' responses. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and their data will be handled with sensitivity and respect for privacy.

## 6. ANAYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive statistics provided a concise summary, revealing key features of the dataset. These descriptive statistics collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of the dataset's central tendencies, variability, and distributional characteristics, providing valuable insights into the nature of the data.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Age of the Respondents**



Primary Source

The above Figure 1.2 shows the age distribution of women employees shows variations across different age groups: the 21-25 age group 16 percent primarily consists of newcomers or recent graduates; the 26-30 age group 21 percent includes a mix of newcomers and experienced individuals the 31-35 age group 33 percent represents mid-career professionals, often with valuable skills and potential for promotion; the 36-40 age group 19 percent comprises mid-career professionals, possibly experiencing career shifts; the 41-45 age group 7 percent witnesses a

decline, likely due to career plateaus or personal choices; and the 46-50 age group 4 percent is the smallest, possibly due to retirement or succession planning.

**Table 1.1**  
**Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unmarried	32	32.00
Married	52	52.00
Divorce	16	16.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Primary Source

The above Table 1.1 depicts the distribution of marital status among the employee's offers valuable insights into the diversity within the workforce. Among the 32 percent unmarried individuals, there may be a focus on personal development and career growth. In contrast, the 52 percent married employees likely navigate a balance between work and family commitments, seeking stability and long-term fulfillment in both spheres. The 16 percent individuals who are divorced bring unique experiences, potentially including resilience and personal growth following the end of a marriage. Understanding these diverse backgrounds allows organizations to tailor policies and support systems to accommodate the varied needs and experiences of their workforce, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment.

**Table 1.2**  
**Current Job Role**

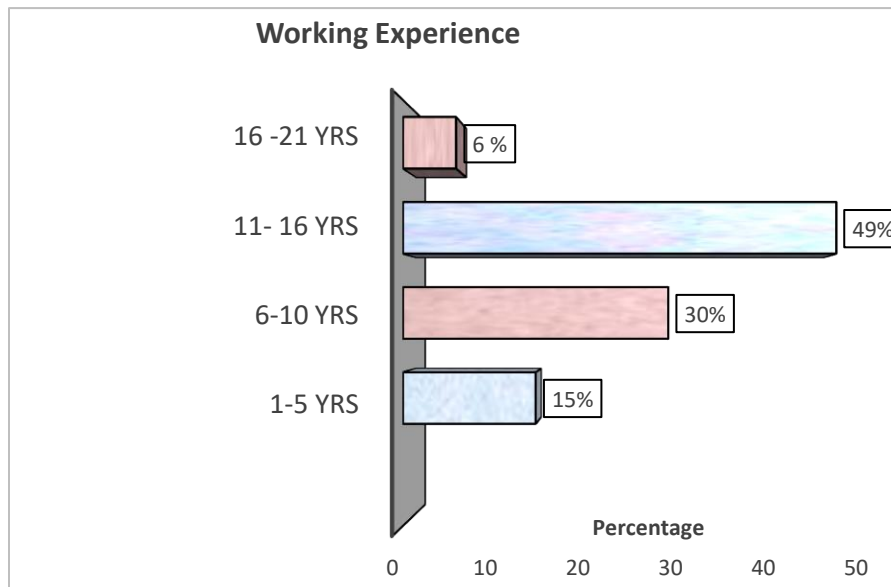
<b>Current Job Role</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Associates	73	73.00
Team Leaders	20	20.00
Managers	3	3.00
Executives	4	4.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Primary Source



The data shown in the Table 1.2 presents the distribution of employees across different job roles within the organization. Among the employees surveyed, 73 percent hold the position of Associates, indicating a significant portion of the workforce at this level. Team Leaders account for 20 percent of the workforce, suggesting a substantial representation in leadership roles. Managers make up 3 percent of the total, indicating a smaller but essential group overseeing teams and operations. Executives comprise 4% of the total, representing a smaller yet influential segment of high-level management. One matter of concern highlighted by the data is the disproportionate distribution of employees across different job roles. While Associates constitute the majority of the workforce, there is a notably smaller number of individuals in leadership positions, such as Team Leaders, Managers, and Executives. This imbalance may raise concerns about succession planning, leadership development, and potential gaps in managerial oversight.

**Figure 1.3**  
**Working Experience in your Current Organization**

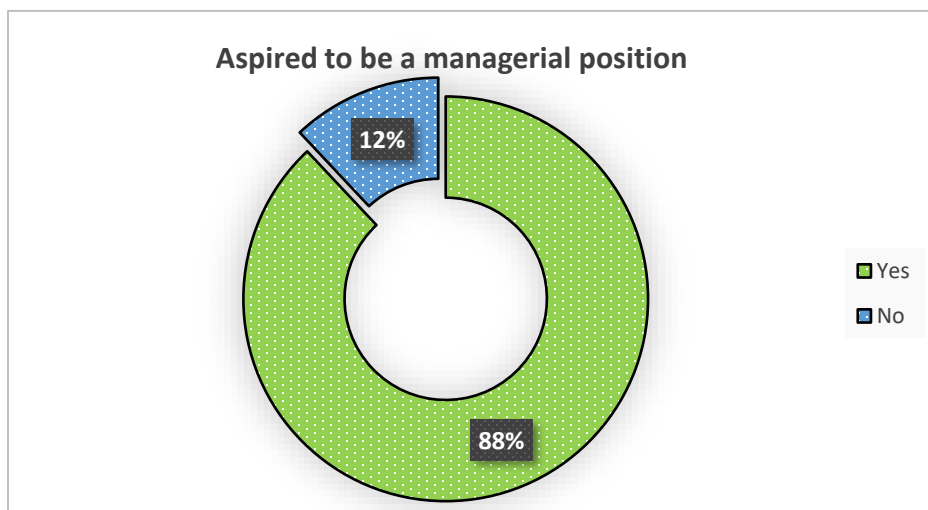


Primary Source

From the Figure 1.3, data depicts the distribution of employees based on their working experience in the current organization. Among the surveyed individuals, 15 percent have 1-5 years of experience, indicating a relatively small portion of newcomers to the organization. A larger segment, comprising 30 percent individuals, has 6-10 years of

experience, suggesting a significant workforce with moderate tenure. Furthermore, 49% individuals have 11-16 years of experience, indicating a substantial portion of employees with long-standing tenure within the organization. Lastly, 6 percent individuals have 16-21 years of experience, representing a smaller yet notable group of seasoned employees. Understanding this distribution allows organizations to assess employee retention, tenure trends, and potential areas for talent development and succession planning.

**Figure 1.4**  
**Aspired to or pursued a managerial position**



Primary Source

The above Figure 1.4 portrays that among the surveyed individuals, 88 expressed aspirations for or pursued a managerial position, while 12 did not. This indicates a strong interest or willingness among the majority of respondents to take on managerial roles within their careers. Understanding employees' career aspirations is crucial for organizational development, succession planning, and talent management initiatives. Organizations can leverage this insight to provide appropriate training, mentorship opportunities, and career advancement pathways to support employees in achieving their professional goals while also ensuring a robust leadership pipeline for the organization's future success.

**Table 1.3**

**Barriers hindering women's Advancement into managerial positions**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Frequency N=100</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Due to my Gender	65	65.00
Lack of Technical Knowledge	45	45.00
Male Domination	88	88.00
Lack of Acceptance	7	55.00
Family Responsibility	68	68.00
Not being available in Office	71	71.00
Lack of confidence	23	23.00
Health Concern	66	66.00

Primary Source

Table 1.3 illustrates the barriers hindering women's advancement into managerial positions, based on a survey of 100 respondents. The data reveals a range of challenges faced by women in their professional journeys. Notably, gender discrimination emerges as a significant obstacle, with 65 percent of respondents citing it. This finding underscores the persistent biases and stereotypes that women encounter in the workplace. Additionally, the lack of technical knowledge is identified by 45 percent of respondents, indicating a need for greater access to skill-building opportunities. Male domination looms large, with a striking 88 percent of respondents noting its impact, highlighting the pervasive nature of male-dominated work cultures. Lack of acceptance, mentioned by 55 percent of respondents, underscores the struggle women face in gaining recognition and respect. Family responsibilities, cited by 68 percent of respondents, pose challenges in balancing work and personal life. Non availability in the office 71 percent and health concerns 66 percent further compound these challenges. Despite these barriers, only 23 percent of respondents mentioned lack of confidence, suggesting that while internal factors play a role, external barriers are more pronounced. Overall, the data emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies to address systemic biases, provide skill development opportunities, create inclusive workplaces, and support work-life balance to facilitate women's advancement into managerial positions.

## 7. SCALE FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

"Scale for Career Advancement" is essential, emphasizing three core elements. Firstly, it should prioritize career growth and provide abundant opportunities for professional development. Secondly, decision-making processes must be transparent and

fair, ensuring equal access to promotions and assignments. Lastly, addressing gender bias is crucial, fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of gender, has equitable chances to advance in their careers.

**Table 1.4**

**8. KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT SCALE**

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		<b>0.814</b>
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	968.708
	Df	98
	Sig.	0.000

Source - Primary data

From the above Table 1.4 describes the recorded Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for the Working Environment Scale observed as 0.814 with a Significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) at 1% level which can be taken into consideration and acceptable to execute a data reduction approach. The results showed that Bartlett’s test of Sphericity was significant, and KMO was greater than 0.8, which is good and indicate that the items have relatively high internal consistency for further analysis.

**Table 1.5**

**Scale Items details**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Scale Statement</b>
<b>Career Advancement</b>	I feel that my career is progressing in a positive direction
	I am satisfied with the advancements I've made in my career
	Opportunities for advancement are clear and attainable in my organization.
	I get chances to learn new things important for my job
	I can try different jobs in my company
	My company helps me go to conferences or classes
	I can choose things that affect my job
	I feel sure I can choose the right job for me
	I can get advice when I need help with my job choices
	I feel treated unfairly because of my gender.
	I notice differences in treatment based on gender in my workplace.
	Opportunities for growth and advancement seem influenced by gender.
	I feel respected and valued regardless of my gender.

### 8.1 Career Advancement at workplace and demographic variables – ANOVA

The findings from the ANOVA analysis highlight significant differences between demographic variables and career advancement within the workplace. Based on the results, several hypotheses has formulated -

**H0<sub>1</sub>**- There are no significance differences between Career Advancement and various demographic variables of the women professional.

**Ha<sub>1</sub>**- There are significance differences between Career Advancement and various demographic of the women professional.

**Table 1.6**  
**Career Advancement at workplace and demographic variables**

Variables	Components	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Value p= Value
Age (In Yrs.)	21 -25	2.05	0.896	F <sub>(5,94)</sub> = 8.151 p = 0.006 <b>Significant</b>
	26 -30	2.05	0.989	
	31 -35	2.09	0.866	
	36-40	2.05	0.850	
	41-45	2.20	0.843	
	46-50	2.35	0.713	
Marital Status	Unmarried	2.50	0.897	F <sub>(2,97)</sub> = 12.581 p = 0.010 <b>Significant</b>
	Married	2.56	0.957	
	Divorce	2.42	0.979	
Current Job Role	Associates	3.00	0.768	F <sub>(3,96)</sub> = 5.221 p = 0.020 <b>Significant</b>
	Team Leaders	1.56	0.623	
	Managers	2.50	0.667	
	Executives	2.00	0.875	
Working Experience	1-5 yrs	2.00	5.56	F <sub>(3,96)</sub> = 4.151 p = 0.012 <b>Significant</b>
	6-10 yrs	2.15	6.98	
	11- 16 yrs	2.20	8.66	
	16 -21 yrs	2.50	6.87	

Primary Source

- **Age**

The hypothesis that age influences career advancement is supported by the significant differences found (F<sub>(5, 94)</sub> = 8.151, p = 0.006). It is hypothesized that older employees may

face barriers or biases in career progression compared to younger counterparts due to age-related stereotypes or perceived differences in adaptability. Further research could explore the specific factors contributing to age-related disparities in career advancement and identify strategies to mitigate these challenges.

- **Marital Status**

The hypothesis that marital status affects career advancement is supported by the significant differences observed ( $F_{(2, 97)} = 12.581, p = 0.010$ ). It is hypothesized that unmarried individuals may experience greater career advancement opportunities compared to married or divorced individuals, potentially due to differences in work-life balance priorities or perceived commitment levels. Future investigations could delve deeper into the mechanisms through which marital status influences career advancement and assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting equitable opportunities for all employees, regardless of marital status.

- **Current Job Role**

The hypothesis that job role influences career advancement is supported by the significant differences identified ( $F_{(3, 96)} = 5.221, p = 0.020$ ). It is hypothesized that employees in certain roles, such as Associates, may have greater access to advancement opportunities compared to those in higher-level positions like Team Leaders, Managers, or Executives. Further research could explore the underlying factors contributing to disparities in advancement opportunities across different job roles and evaluate strategies to promote fairness and transparency in the promotion process.

- **Working Experience**

The hypothesis that working experience influences career advancement is supported by the significant differences found ( $F_{(3, 96)} = 4.151, p = 0.012$ ). It is hypothesized that employees with longer tenures may have an advantage in accessing career advancement opportunities compared to those with shorter tenures, potentially due to accumulated skills, experience,

and organizational knowledge. Future research could investigate ways to ensure equitable advancement opportunities for employees at all experience levels and identify strategies to recognize and leverage the contributions of early-career professionals effectively.

In conclusion, there is a significance difference between Career Advancement and various demographic of the women professional. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

## **9. RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendations are proposed to promote fairness, inclusivity, and equitable opportunities for all employees:

- **Diversity and Inclusion Training and Mentorship and Career Development Programs** Develop mentorship programs that pair employees with mentors who can provide guidance, support, and advocacy for career advancement opportunities. Implement comprehensive diversity and inclusion training programs aimed at raising awareness of unconscious biases, stereotypes, and barriers related to age, marital status, job role, and working experience. Provide managers and employees with the tools and strategies to recognize and address these biases effectively in decision-making processes, including promotion and career advancement opportunities. This integrated approach fosters a culture of inclusivity, fairness, and support, empowering employees to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential within the organization.
- **Transparent Promotion Criteria** Establish clear and transparent promotion criteria and pathways for career advancement across all job roles and experience levels. Ensure that these criteria are communicated effectively to all employees, fostering a sense of fairness, trust, and accountability in the promotion process. Encourage open dialogue and feedback mechanisms to address any concerns or perceptions of favoritism or bias.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements** Implement flexible work arrangements, including remote work options, flexible scheduling, and family-friendly policies, to accommodate the

diverse needs and priorities of employees, including those related to marital status and work-life balance. Provide support and resources for employees navigating caregiving responsibilities, transitions in marital status, or other life events that may impact their career trajectories.

- **Performance Evaluation and Recognition** Ensure that performance evaluation processes are fair, objective, and aligned with the organization's values and goals. Recognize and reward employees based on merit, contributions, and achievements, rather than tenure or demographic characteristics. Provide opportunities for employees to showcase their skills, leadership potential, and commitment to continuous learning and professional growth.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it's really important to understand and deal with the things that stop women from getting into managerial jobs. When we break down these barriers, we make workplaces better for everyone. This means creating fair opportunities and getting rid of things like unfair treatment or stereotypes that hold women back. By doing things like mentorship programs and being aware of biases, we can help more women succeed in leadership roles. This isn't just about being fair – it's about making companies stronger and more successful by including different perspectives and talents.

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