Gender Stereotype and Workplace Bias: A Case of Nepalese Commercial Bank

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Abstract

This study examines the gender stereotype and workplace bias: A case of Nepalese commercial bank. Workplace environment is selected as the dependent variable. Similarly, education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor and glass ceiling are selected as the independent variables. This study is based on primary data with 122 observations. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of different factors influencing gender stereotype at workplace in Nepalese commercial bank.

The study showed that education has a positive impact on workplace environment. It means that higher the education, better will be the workplace environment. Similarly, self-interest has a positive impact on workplace environment. It indicates that rise in self-interest correlates with an improvement in the workplace environment. Moreover, influence of reference group has a positive impact on workplace environment. It means that increase in influence of reference group leads to increase in workplace environment. Likewise, cultural factor has a positive impact on workplace environment. It shows that increase in cultural factor leads to increase in workplace environment. Similarly, glass ceiling has negative impact on workplace environment. It shows that higher the glass ceiling, lower would be the workplace environment.

Keywords: education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor, glass ceiling, workplace environment

1. Introduction

Workplace discrimination is associated with such negative consequences as stress, fatigue, demoralization, loss of professional commitment, tension and conflict at work and resignation (Zarekhafri *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, Gender stereotypes refers to participants use of socially constructed gender norms and stereotypes of jobs culturally characterized 'men's' or 'women's work' (Gauci *et al.*, 2022). Further, Brody (2016) stated the gender stereotype has been traditionally male-dominated but society has progressed and nowadays, the context has changed, at least in Europe, where the presence of woman in the banking profession is overwhelming. Workplace and large auditing firms organized as partnership rely on hierarchy and the standardization of

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processes control work and create a stable environment (Carrington *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, workplace is making steps towards diminishing the gender impact. The workplace, as any other working environment, is a gendered one since one cannot separate the individual traits from the professional that create a stable complex bureaucratic gendered environment (Haynes, 2016).

Bhatti (2010) stated that gender stereotype refers to the equal participation of men and woman in an organization. That sound simple but there are variety of differences between people in the banking firms. It involves race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, organization function, education, background and more. Similarly, Ellemers (2018) stated that gender roles are the social traits and behaviors that society may assign to men or women. Any difference between women and men is caused by society, and therefore women pay a higher cost than men for their careersdue to society's gender roles, which assign the caring role to woman. Moreover, idea of assigned gender roles can be explained through the idea of descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes that are stereotypical assumptions of what men and women are like and are consistent through time (Heilman, 2012). Moreover, Uddin *et al.* (2023) revealed that no considerable difference indicating the responses were typical of the target population. Mirza and Jabeen (2020) explained that women representation in organizations and their share in national development has gone through a tremendous change in the last three decades of the 20th century.

Specific roles assigned to and accepted for each gender indicate that women should be communal, which conveys a compassionate concern for others that includes caring and nurturing qualities, and men should have agentic qualities, which convey assertion, control, aggression and dominant behaviors (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Further, Costigan (2007) defined that gender discrimination ideas are dangerous and reinforce perceptions rooted in gender stereotypes that are inherently wrong. Moreover, women are expected to behave "nicely" and if they do not, they receive the backlash effect and face workplace discrimination (Hacker, 1951). Similarly, the association with these accepted roles for gender creates obstacles for women to rise in leadership, and therefore women find themselves walking a fine line between the two opposing sets of expectations (Andrews, 2019). Kong *et al.* (2020) revealed that disproportionately lower representation of women in stem fields is a reflection of underlying issues rooted in gender bias and discrimination.

Women are found to meet more resistance and isolation as they move up the ranks and research in psychology has shown over and over that one key

obstacle to women's leadership is unconscious or implicit bias (Akram, 2018). Further, Gender stereotype practices enhance the productivity, effectiveness and sustained competitiveness (Kaur and Mittal, 2014). Moreover, Mazur (2010) stated that organizations need equality to become more creative and open to change. Gender stereotype remains a significant challenge in banking firms. Managers need to learn the managerial skills needed in a multicultural work environment. Moreover, Adel and Alqatan (2019) showed that the initial interview template included the following themes: work environment, including working hours and support for mothers, recruitment and selection process, promotions, training, pay, differences between Islamic and conventional banks, and nationality discrimination.

Burgess and Bordida (1999) discussed the ways in which the components of gender stereotypes may provide a context for thinking about the role of gender stereotyping in sex discrimination and sexual harassment Further, Rogus (2018) explained that implicit gender bias is present in all individuals, regardless of gender, due to exposure to stereotypes through common socialization experiences. Similarly, Fiske and Lee (2008) explained that intergroup stereotypes and prejudice as key forces that hinder minority groups' attainment of career goals and, of more global impact, hinder workplace diversity. However, Workplace patterns, salary, and promotion ladders have been traditionally constructed mainly by and for men, thus creating bias structures that are supportive of men's experience and life circumstances (Opoku and Williams, 2018). Consequently, there are two factors that motivate a woman, first the driving of frustration, job dissatisfaction, divorce and boredom. Second is the pulling factor that is the factor of freedom, independence, education, and family security (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017).

Lowe *et al.* (2003) found gender gap in managing profession remains high in many economic around the world and gender stereotype and individual difference on perception of career progression in managing professional. Further, Bielby (2000) explained that minimizing gender and racial bias in the workplace need not be a utopian project. Moreover, Similarly, Sogra (2014) concluded that change has been noticed in recent years with increasing participation of women in the workplace, which is affecting the present condition of society. Moreover, Mulvey *et al.* (2015) concluded that there are theoretical attempts to break away from such a system by challenging existing patriarchal norms and values based on gender stereotypes with the help of 'theory of mind'. Further, Heilman (2012) discussed that how

descriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias because of the negative performance expectations that result from the perception that there is a poor fit between what women are like and the attributes believed necessary for successful performance in male gender-typed positions and roles. Stephens *et al.* (2020) found that providing counter-stereotypic information have reduced the activation of stereotypes, suppress the expression of prejudice, and reduce discriminatory behavior. Hebert *et al.* (2018) revealed that workplace conduct consisting of explicit or implicit sexual proposals, as well as conduct consisting of sexual touching however, could fit squarely within the prior statutory prohibition against coerced sexual conduct. Those cases do not necessarily establish that the new, broader definition of sexual harassment is being internalized by the courts. Similarly, Smith (2005) found that workplace environment has a strong influence on the student's decision to pursue further studies in banking sector. The research also found that students are likely to be influenced by their family. A better understanding of student interest to the accounting profession is critical to both the academy and the profession if the department of accounting needs to attract the best and brightest students in large numbers into accounting (Jones & Wright, 2011).

In the context of Nepal, Women's health is prioritized in global research, structural barriers and strategies to promote female leadership and gender equality in the global health research workforce, especially in low-income and middle-income countries (Gurung *et al.,* 2021). Similarly, Gender discrimination in the workplace has always existed, and the pay gap is a prominent topic worldwide (Khatri, 2022). Further, Priyanka *et al.* (2022) defined that gender stereotype refers to bias, preconceptions, and preconceived notions that cause one to assess gender issues based on one's view which may or may not be correct. Moreover, Regmi *et al.* (2009) explained that more education and awareness, coupled with changing managers' and employees' attitudes, perceptions and behaviors in today's organizations, are important strategies in tackling discrimination and promoting a more diverse workforce. Further, Niraula (1995) concluded that the sons in the family receive more love, care, and support from their parents because people believe that sons will look after and carry on the family tradition when their parents grow old. Sharma (2016) found that components such as paternalism, power distance, religion, and gender ere significant cultural components in the study of equality and diversity.

The above discussion shows that the empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the Gender stereotype and workplace bias in commercial

bank. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the gender stereotype and workplace bias in Nepalese commercial bank. Specifically, it examines the impact of education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor and glass ceiling on workplace environment in Nepalese commercial bank.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section two describes the sample, data and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and the final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 122 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on of education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor and glass ceiling on workplace environment. The study used descriptive and casual comparative research design.

The model

The model estimated in this study assumes that workplace environment depends on education, self-interest, cultural factors, influence of reference group, glass ceiling Therefore, the model to be estimated in this study is stated as follows:

$$WE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \, E + \beta_2 \, SI + \beta_3 \, IRG + \beta_4 \, CF + \beta_5 \, GC + e$$

Where,

WE = Workplace environment

E= Education

SI= Self-Interest

IFG=Influence of reference group

CF= cultural factors

GC=Glass ceiling

Education was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Education leads

to achieve the higher position in the organization", "To what extent you feel that your educational background is valued and utilized in your current role" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α=0.851).

Self-interest was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "I am interested and satisfied with my job position", "I have been working hard for achieving higher level position" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.760$).

Influence of reference group was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "The behavior and attitudes of your colleagues and coworkers influence your own behavior in the workplace", "I seek validation and approval from my reference group in order to feel accepted and valued in the workplace" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.835$).

Cultural factor was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "My workplace values and promotes diversity and inclusion among employees", "Religious beliefs that assume men as superior than women hold back women from participating in office works" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.794$).

Glass ceiling factor was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "There is an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women to obtain upper-level positions in the bank", "Lack some necessary skills to be effective in banking positions" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.752$).

Workplace environment was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "My workplace fosters a positive and supportive culture among employees", "My workplace encourages open communication and collaboration among

team members" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.752$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

Education

Education professional qualification is also an important factor for ethical judgment. There are studies that supported the idea that educated individuals that hold professional qualification are more ethical compared to less educated individuals (Swaidan *et al.,* 2003). Similarly, Castleberry (2007) found that the postgraduate students are more ethical in their behaviors and actions and also stricter in making decisions and do not tolerate ethical issues. Marques and Pereira (2009) found no significant relationship between professional qualification and ethical decision making. Further, Deshpande *et al.* (2008) found that employees with specialized skill in US hospitals are less likely to exhibit ethical behavior. The results also found that employee with specialize skill are less ethical in their behavior. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_3: There is a positive relationship between education and workplace environment.

Self-interest

Schneider (2005) argued that researchers, educators, practitioners and professional bodies all have their own agendas serving their own self-interests. Interest is a mental device that consists of a mixture of feelings, hope, conviction, prejudice, fear or other trends that directs individuals to a certain thought (Astami, 2001). Similarly, Jackling and Calero (2006) found that students who studied accounting at secondary school level tend to choose accounting as their career if compared to those who never study accounting at secondary school level. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_4: There is a positive relationship between self-interest and workplace environment.

Influence of reference group

Choices are subject to many influences – individual, cultural, social, and environmental. The combination and interaction of various influences on individual decision-making are unique to their situation (Venable, 2011).

Further, Leppel *et al*. (2001) found that female students are more likely to be influenced in choice of major by a professional father, and that women from "high" socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to major in business. Moreover, Burke (2012) documented that most of their respondents who are the school leavers, agreed that parents are the most influential referent on their career decisions although not considered very influential. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between influence of reference group and workplace environment.

Cultural factors

According to Glisson and James (2002), the potential role of organizational climate as a mediator of the effects of organizational culture on work attitude. The organizational norms and expectations regarding how people behave and how things are done in the organization (Verbeke *et al*., 1998). The study found that defensive cultures, on the other hand, are characterized by norms of conformity and submissiveness that encourage or implicitly require interaction with others in ways that are self-protective and will not threaten perceived personal security (Cooke and Szumal, 2000). Further, Glick *et al*. (2004) documented that cross-cultural variation in attitudes towards women and men are connected with societal gender inequality, culture might be important in its own right. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_2: There is a positive relationship between cultural factors and workplace environment.

Glass ceiling

The concept of the glass ceiling originated during the middle 1980s to describe the invisible and artificial barriers that have kept women from promotion to upper management and other higher leadership positions in the business world (Maume, 2004). According to Bryce (1989), artificial barrier significantly affects the career advancement of the women by not letting them to reach authoritative positions with the same ease as their male counterparts with similar positions, backgrounds and qualifications as themselves. Similarly, Cotter *et al*. (2001) found that artificial barrier has negative impact on the career advancement of women and minorities. Moreover, Azeez & Priyadarshini (2018) found that there is a positive significant impact of glass ceiling factors on women career advancement. Based on this, the study develops following hypotheses:

H_5: There is a negative relationship between glass ceiling and the workplace environment.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations have been computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 122 observations. The dependent variable is WE (workplace Environment). The independent variables are E (education), SI (self-interest), IRG (influence of reference groups), CF (cultural factor) and GC (glass ceiling).

variable	Mean	S.D.	E	SI	IRG	CF	GC	WE
E	3.970	0.857	1					
SI	3.75	0.803	0.502**	1				
IRG	3.660	0.790	0.407**	0.415**	1			
CF	3.780	0.869	0.361**	0.488**	0.576**	1		
GC	3.626	0.787	0.260**	.0406**	0.425**	0.437**	1	
WE	3.870	0.886	0.383**	0.417**	0.419**	0.535**	0.421**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables. The study indicates that education is positively correlated to the workplace environment indicating that education increases workplace environment. Likewise, self-interest is positively correlated to the workplace environment. This implies that increase in self-interest leads to the increase in workplace environment. Similarly, influence of reference groups is positively correlated to the workplace environment. It indicates that higher the influence of reference groups, higher will be the workplace environment. However, cultural factor is also positively related to the workplace environment that leads to the increment of workplace environment Moreover, glass ceiling is negatively correlated to the workplace environment that indicates that increase in glass ceiling intention lads to the decrease in

workplace environment.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor and glass ceiling on workplace environment in commercial bank of Kathmandu valley.

Table 2

Estimated regression result of education, self-interest, influence of reference group, cultural factor and glass ceiling factor on workplace environment in commercial bank of Kathmandu valley

The results are based on 122 observations using linear regression model. The model is E= $\beta_0 + \beta_1 PS + \beta_2 P + \beta_3 CS + \beta_4 CL + \beta_5 PI + \varepsilon$ where the dependent variable is (WE) Workplace environment. The independent variables are (E) education, (SI) self-interest, (IRG) influence of reference groups, (CF) cultural factor and (GC) glass ceiling.

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar2	SEE	F-value
		E	SI	IRG	CF	GC			
1	1.226 (4.182) **	0.666 (9.231)**					0.410	0.68079	85.219
2	1.059 (3.719) **		0.748 (10.093) **				0.455	0.65474	101.874
3	1.301 (4.353) **			0.702 (8.796) **			0.387	0.69418	77.377
4	1.110 (4.402) **				0.730 (11.226) **		0.508	0.62177	126.024
5	1.356 (4.510) **					-0.693 (8.556) **	0.374	0.70163	73.207
6	0.794 (2.726) *	0.309 (2.896) *	0.492 (4.327) **				0.374	0.70163	73.207
7	0.607 (2.063) *		0.517 (5.598) **	0.360 (3.839)			0.511	0.62019	64.140
8	0.660 (2.472) *		0.369 (3.798) **		0.483 (5.380) **		0.558	0.58967	77.274
9	0.648 (2.190) *		.0530 (5.666) **			-0.339 (3.547) **	0.503	0.62527	62.142
10	0.592 (1.955)	0.449 (5.512) **				-0.413 (4.652) **	0.497	0.62885	60.758
11	0.661 (2.445) *	0.308 (3.623) **			0.526 (6.277) **		0.553	0.59256	75.940

Notes:

i.   Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
ii. The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
iii. Workplace environment is dependent variable.

The table 2 show that the beta coefficients for education are positive with the workplace environment. It indicates that education has positive impact on the workplace environment. This finding is consistent with the

findings of Westbrook and Woods (2009). Likewise, the beta coefficients for self-interest are positive with the workplace environment. It indicates that self-interest have positive impact on the workplace environment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lee and Hwang (2016). In addition, the beta coefficients for influence of reference groups are positive with the workplace environment. It indicates that influence of reference groups has a positive impact on the workplace environment. This result is consistent with the findings of Fornell (1992). Further, the beta coefficients for cultural factor are positively related with the workplace environment. It indicates that cultural factor has a positive impact on the workplace environment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Wang *et al.* (2004). Moreover, the beta coefficient for glass ceiling are negative with the workplace environment which indicates that glass ceiling has nagative impact on the workplace environment. This result is consistent with the findings of Chi (2008).

4. Summary and conclusion

Gender stereotype refers to the equal participation of men and woman in an organization. That sound simple but there are variety of differences between people in the banking firms. Banking sector was generally perceived as being complicated, tough and masculine, as an issue that motivated woman to choose other major for academic studies, and resulted in a low share for woman in working environment. Idea of assigned gender roles can be explained through the idea of descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes that are stereotypical assumptions of what men and women are like and are consistent through time.

This study attempts to examine the gender stereotype and workplace bias: A case of Nepalese commercial bank. The study is based on primary data with 122 observations.

The study also showed that education, self-interest, influence of reference group and cultural factor has positive relationship with workplace environment and glass ceiling has negative relationship with workplace environment. The study concluded that education, self-interest, influence of reference group and cultural factor have a significant role in increasing workplace environment and glass ceiling have a significant role in decreasing workplace environment. The study also concluded that the most influencing factor is education followed by self-interest and cultural factor that explains the workplace environment.

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