

Lower Female Representation at Top Positions

A Study in Telecom Sector

S. Malik, A. Aamir

Student of MBA, National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences at Islamabad, Pakistan.

e-mail: sehrish.maliik@gmail.com

Abstract

Our study examines the under-representation of women at top positions in telecom companies of Pakistan, a topic that has received no attention in the corporate sector of Pakistan. We have studied the factors contributing to under-representation of women at the top position of telecom sector and impact of these factors in a sample of 93 employees from all five telecom companies of Pakistan. The study is based on collection of primary as well as secondary data and the analysis of existing factors that create impediment to women progression in telecom sector.

Keywords: Women Representation • Telecom Sector • Gender Stereotypes • Sex-Based Promotion • Pakistan

Introduction:

Despite the progress made on humanitarian basis including a number of initiatives taken world-wide and great progress being done on the issues like women rights, women empowerment, gender-equality, yet women continue to be underrepresented at top positions in various spheres of life and that too not just in under developed countries but in developed countries as well.

Several research studies have been conducted highlighting underrepresentation of females at top positions across several industries in various countries

One of the earlier studies conducted in this area was done in U.S where the data was collected from the top companies in America, some of the findings of this research stated that women held 17 percent of the managerial positions in 1972. This proportion increased to 42.7 percent in 1995 (Ragins, Townsend and Mattis, 1988¹). Although women are flooding the managerial conduit, they have been thwarted in their progression while making it up to reach the top-level positions and currently only less than five percent of executive positions are held by women. One of the interesting findings of this research is that all these females are not just capable but are well qualified even then they are not being promoted on higher level positions in these companies.

¹ Beile Rose Ragins, Bickley Townsend, and Mary Mattis, 1998. "Gender gap in the executive suite: CEOs and female executives report on breaking the glass ceiling", Academy of Management Executive, Vol. 12, No. 1.

Similar studies have been conducted in Pakistan examining the under-representation of women in some sectors including the banking sector where the effects of gender-stereotyping have been explored on the women bankers at managerial positions (Mirza and Jabeen, 2011²). When we analyze the situation of Pakistan, lower female representation is not just evident in the corporate sector but quite apparent in the senate of Pakistan and a huge gender gap exists there as well. There are a number contributing factors for such a huge gap, one of the reasons behind lower female representation in senate is the limited quota set for the females. The other factors contributing to underrepresentation of female senators in the senate includes gender-stereotyping that prevails corresponding to women being in a leading role. Moreover certain perceptions also exists such as females cannot take immense responsibility, they are not good in decision making and critical thinking which is highly desirable for senate roles so on and so forth (Tabassum, Afzal and Taherani, 2013³).

Although considerable amount of research studies are being conducted around the world on women issues and much of the research is conducted on issues like gender discrimination, gender stereo types, glass ceiling etc. and has focused explicitly on under representation of women at top position in the corporate sector, yet no such research has ever been conducted particularly on cellular companies in telecom sector. Moreover, majority of the studies done on these issues are conducted in West, after our extensive research we have found that unfortunately very limited research have been done in Pakistan pressing on the issues such as gender discrimination, sex-based promotion, glass-ceiling, gender stereotypes so on and so forth and not even a single study has been carried out in Pakistan to examine the lower female representation at top positions specifically in the telecom sector and our research will be the first ever study on this topic in Pakistan.

Therefore keeping the issue in mind with the aim of bringing it into the limelight, our study focuses on the above mentioned areas. The scope of this project is limited to the cellular companies of Pakistan. Thus the basic objective of this study is to look for any evidence related to the under representation of females in the top management of telecom companies of Pakistan. Furthermore we want to explore the factors that directly or indirectly contribute towards less female representation at top positions in cellular companies. Apart from this our objective is to investigate the cultural barriers preventing females to reach to the top position and to evaluate the areas of improvement in these companies to make the working environment conducive for female progression. Another important objective of this research is to explain the importance of gender diversity at senior management positions. Moreover we want to identify and suggest how the above mentioned limitations, revealed in this study can be catered for in the best interest of females and their career growth.

This study will not only form the foundation for future studies in the area of women representation in the corporate world but it will also be beneficial for the cellular companies of Pakistan along with other organizations around the world which are interested in improving their working environment and being known for providing equal opportunity and competitive plat-form to both the genders, humanizing the areas where gender-biases exists the most.

² Amani Moazzam Baig Mirza, Nasira Jabeen, July-December 2011. "Gender Stereotypes and Women in Management The Case of Banking Sector of Pakistan" South Asian Studies A Research Journal of South Asian Studies Vol. 26, No. 2, pp.259-284

³ Dr. Naima Tabassum, Tabassum Afzal, Dr. Abida Taherani and Huma Tabassum, 2013. "Women's Representation in the Senate of Pakistan"

Literature Review:

This part of the research focuses on the literature review conducted by studying a number of articles which are taken from well-known journals to scrutinize most of the earlier findings relating to this topic. It enlightens what different author's point of view is related to this research topic and related studies conducted in other countries around the sphere.

We have been able to find a number of good articles and journals relating to women representation in various sectors in different countries, however, no journal is found representing Pakistan except one or two articles highlighting the women in politics. There are very few studies done on women in the corporate sector and none, specifically conducted in the telecom sector.

Impact of Gender Characteristic:

Since history leadership has been considered as a masculine characteristic and this phenomenon is also supported by a number of research studies. One such similar study findings show that males contribute more opinions, ideas and suggestions in comparison to females suggesting that it is one of the qualities of a leader to be more participative which females lack in general (Kolb,1997⁴).

Some authors are also of the view that no glass ceiling phenomena exists in the organizations and according to their point of view women are being paid lesser salaries, only because it is noticed that women are less career oriented, they work on limited time spans and don't take part in risky jobs. They build two arguments to support their point of view, firstly those women at the top positions in companies are only holding higher positions on the basis of their competencies and skills, secondly family responsibilities is one of the major obstacle in career progression of these women (Rai and Srivastava, 2008⁵). Some studies do provide ample explanations for women lagging behind and not being able to conquer top positions or leading roles and provide appropriate justification to support their arguments however, in contrast majority of the studies also suggest that males opt for short-cuts in order to attain high positions and promotions in their respective organizations.

Another similar study stated that, in order to attain top positions men use certain strategies such as self-promotion, networking and becoming more visible to their seniors, on the contrary women always pursue extra high performance, prefer just rewards and rely on system fairness which leaves these women at disadvantage. The results of this study also indicate that if women continue to rely on high quality work and stern commitment to their work while completely ignoring the tactics adopted by their male peers, will certainly impact their career paths (Singh, Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2002⁶). Women not only ignore embracing such approaches which males benefit from in order to attain promotion at higher

⁴ Judith A. Kolb, August 1997. "Are We Still Stereo Typing Leadership? A Look at Gender and Other Predictors of Leader Emergence", *Small group research*, Vol.28, No. 3, 370-393.

⁵ Rai, U. K. & Srivastava, M. (2008). Women Executives and the glass ceiling: Myths and Mysteries from Razia Sultana to Hillary Clinton. *BHU Management Review*, 1(2), 79.

⁶ Val Singh, Savita Kumra and Susan Vinnicombe, 2002. "Gender and Impression Management: Playing the Promotion Game", *Journal of Business Ethics* 37: 77-89.

level, but females also overlook those strategies which are necessary for survival in the corporate sector. Such as networking and building relationships. In this regard one study examined and found that it becomes difficult for women in a male dominated environment to indulge in strategies like self-promotion which are essential for survival in the teamwork (Williams, Muller and Kilanski, 2012⁷).

Women Representation in the Corporate-Sector World Wide:

In different societies around the world gender inequalities still exist which are now transformed in various cultures and environments. It emerged from what was historically known as gender differences where women were forbidden in different societies around the world to take decision on their own and were known to be controlled sex. Women have always been faced by rigid career path ways which hinder working women the most including other obstacles such as gender-stereotyping and unfair promotion procedures etc. (Barmao, 2013⁸). But with time great changes have been observed where role of women is being accepted around the world and many super power countries, boastfully declare that they are inclined towards empowering women whereas the facts state otherwise. According to the recent survey which was conducted in United States government accountability office in 2007, only 40% women in the United States are present in the higher positions in organizations and only 1% rise is expected that will take place in women representation in top position since 2000.

America is one of those developed countries who talk a lot on gender-equality, women rights, women empowerment, yet the studies show great underrepresentation and gender biasness that exists in American organizations, even some of which are included in the top fortune 100 companies of America. Study conducted in Michigan, examined fortune 300 firms and found that men were preferred as executives in committees stating that there exists strong evidence in sex-based biasness in those firms (Bilimoria, 1994⁹). According to one study where an analysis of the 100 best-performing CEOs worldwide is done, only one woman Meg Whitman CEO of EBay is present in the list of female CEOs and other 99 are male CEOs (Hansen, Ibarra and Peyer 2010). (Federal GC Commission Fact Report 1995¹⁰) found that women and some minorities face significant barriers during their work career, research findings show that different barriers which are being faced by women during their career progression include being paid less for similar work and other sexual, ethnic, racial, religious discrimination and harassment at the workplace. It also includes dominating culture in various organizations, lack of family-friendly workplace policies or on the flipside, policies that discriminate among employees non-parents, single parents and vice versa.

⁷ Christine L. Williams, Chandra Muller and Kristine Kilanski, August 2012. "Gendered organizations in the new economy, Gender and society". Vol. 26 No. 4, 549-573

⁸ Catherine and Barmao, 2013. "Factors contributing to under representation of female teachers in headship positions in primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya" International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies (July): Vol. 5(3), pp. 43-52,

⁹ Diana Bilimoria, 1994. "Board committee membership: effects of sex-based bias", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 37. No. 6:1453-1477

¹⁰ Federal GC Commission, 1995. Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human

Impact of Social Structures and Cultural Obstacles:

Some factors found in previous studies for underrepresentation of females at top positions in the corporate sector also include the cultural and social factors as being the major obstacle in their career path way. However, there are some authors who are not in support of this point of view and argue that women representation in top positions is not less in comparison with men. No cultural or environmental issues are being faced by women at their work place, and they argue that women are under-represented in the corporate sector is just a myth (Rai and Srivastava 2008¹¹). According to (Burle and Mckeen¹², 1990), women are more frequently filling management positions in the top 500 fortune companies. They are not facing issues of glass ceiling, culture and societal barriers. These women are being promoted to higher positions and are now present in the senior-management positions.

However, in many countries absence of gender diversity is evident in various sectors of life and can be clearly seen in the corporate sector due to the fact that culture of that country creates hindrance for women to work in the corporate sector. The underrepresentation of female leaders in the corporate sector of various countries show continues biasness and discrimination against working women. Although the women in these countries are have capability and required skills for reaching on the upper levels but their career advancement is hindered by many obstacles such as cultural factors as well as environmental factor (Weyer,¹³ 2007).

According to one study cultural and environmental factors are issues in taking decisions in selecting mid-level and upper level management, however women are equally qualified in their experience, even then they are facing lower probability of being selecting or nominated than men (Hitt and Barr,¹⁴ 1989).

Women play a very positive role in any organization (DK, JC and R.E,¹⁵ 1989). As women have the gender characteristic of being humble and humane, they promote harmony and bring people together while effectively corresponding to challenging work environment issues. (Black,¹⁶ 2004) was of the opinion that there are many benefits to increase diversity in the workplace. In a recent article by (Catalyst,¹⁷ 2004) shows that the companies having “woman at the top have 35% higher return on equity and 34% higher return to the shareholders than the companies with the fewer women at the top” .

In light of the various observations above, our broad view is that, indeed there exists some realities associated with different factors which contribute towards female under-representation at top positions taking this as a research base we are going to examine and

¹¹ Rai, U. K. & Srivastava, M. (2008). Women Executives and the glass ceiling: Myths and Mysteries from Razia Sultana to Hillary Clinton. *BHU Management Review*, 1(2), 79.

¹² Catalyst (1990). Women in corporate management: Results of a catalyst survey. New York: Catalyst

¹³ Weyer, Vianen and Fischer, 2007. “Glass ceiling and female career advancement”

¹⁴ Hitt, M. A., Barr, S. H, 1989. “Managerial Selection Decision Models: Examination Of Configure Cue Processing”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74: 53-61.

¹⁵ Hurst DK, Rush JC, White RE, 1989. “Top management teams and organizational Renewal, *Strategic Management*.”(January):87 – 105

¹⁶ Susan Black, Catalyst Vice President, 2004. “Women on board a catalyst imitative”

¹⁷ Catalyst (1990). Women in corporate management: Results of a catalyst survey. New York: Catalyst

probe into the issue at hand and highlight the factors that contribute to women under representation at top position in telecom sector of Pakistan.

Methods:

Our research study is exploratory and descriptive in nature which aims to explore impact of different variables including all those possible factors which can contribute to women underrepresentation at top positions in telecom sector. We have taken 8 variables to tap each of these factors. A questionnaire consisting of 25 questions is designed in English and as our target population consists of educated employees who are all white collar people working in the corporate sector who communicate in English and can understand this language well, so the questionnaire is not translated into any local language. The questionnaire consisted of questions that are directly related to our variables major part of the questionnaire is closed-end. However our questionnaires also consists few open-ended questions to know the views of respondents and the response is collected in the descriptive form, besides there is also a section of demographics as well and respondents had the option, if they would want to disclose their age, current designation etc.

Sample Size and Data Collection Procedures

In our study, data is collected from both secondary and primary sources. For the literature review portion information is gathered from a number of journals, research articles, online reports, student reports, books and publications etc.

Primary data is collected both in the form of qualitative data and quantitative data. Data is collected at individual level, as group level data collection is not helpful for our research study because people are more likely to get influenced by the response of their fellow colleagues/seniors.

Questionnaires were distributed among 150 employees equally in each of the five telecom companies of Pakistan. Some of the survey questionnaires are collected online, as per the employees' ease we converted our questionnaire in soft-form as well. The link of the survey was shared via e-mail with only those employees who were willing to participate in taking our survey, keeping in view their work commitments and time constraints, as most of the employees in these companies do not have time during working hours to spend on taking a survey on immediate basis and providing with their honest responses in limited time so our respondents had the opportunity to take the survey as per their own convenience.

Some of the questionnaires were filled by doing the field survey in these telecom companies of Pakistan. Additionally 10 responses were collected from only those female employees who are holding top positions in these cellular companies, for which a separate questionnaire was designed consisting of open-ended questions to enrich our data as well as to gain further information and in depth knowledge of various factors contributing to their success and to reveal those factors which have caused hindrance in their career progression. The data collected through these questionnaires was purely qualitative in nature. The idea of conducting these interviews in semi-structured form through questionnaires instead of conducting a formal interview was that as most of these female professionals could not

sphere time at their working hours as all of them are belonging to senior positions, having serious work commitments and busy schedule so the questionnaires were distributed to them for their ease so that they can take time and provide with their honest opinions. These questionnaires were collected from them after a week's time.

As for the other survey where input is taken from both the genders through the same questionnaire, out of the 150 distributed questionnaires we have received 98 responses from which 93 questionnaires are correct. So our sample consists of 93 employees including both males and females, out of which 59 respondents are male and 34 of the responses are from female employees. Age of these respondents vary between 23-55 years, however, most of our respondents lie in the age of 28 years. 12 respondents mentioned their age of 28, then we have 9 respondents at the age of 35 and then different age group of different respondents so our data is collected from a mix age group of people those who are quite mature along with those who are young. The working experience of our respondents, data ranges from the working experience of 1 to working experience of 19 years but most of our respondents are having working experience of 4 to 5 years in the telecom sector.

Our research is a cross-sectional study as we have collected the data only once due to the time and the budget constraint.

Measures

All the variables are measured using self-reports and SPSS. The responses are tapped using 6-point Likert-Scale with the anchors that are ranging from the option 1 as strongly disagree to option 6 as strongly agree, there are few questions designed using ordinal scale where responses are tapped through multiple categories along with their order of importance.

Results and Discussions:

As mentioned in our methodology portion we have collected data from all the five cellular companies of Pakistan in which our sample consisted of 93 employees in total out of which 19 respondents are from company A, 16 from company B, 16 from company C, 25 from D and 17 from E. The result of our research findings and their detail interpretation is given as below:

The first variable of our research was **industry**; the extent to which a particular sector provides or has growth opportunities for a particular gender. As telecom sector in Pakistan is a male dominated industry very few or less growth opportunities for females exists. Females find cellular companies as less attractive organizations to work for where in, most of the departments technical knowledge is required or due to nature of job roles in this sector.

Table 1: Our questionnaire consists of 4 questions based on this variable and the questions and their corresponding responses are presented as below:

FACTOR	INDUSTRY							
No.	Question	Strongly	Moderately	Slightly	Slightly	Moderate	Strongly	

		Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	ly Agree	Agree
Q.1	There is noticeably great under-representation of females at top positions in telecom organizations of Pakistan.	9.7	9.7	16.1	17.2	21.5	25.8
Q.2	Females have to be more proficient in their work than men in order to be promoted on higher positions.	18.3	10.8	15.1	33.3	11.8	10.8
Q.3	There should be sufficient female representation at senior management positions	17.2	9.7	8.6	18.3	25.8	20.4
Q.4	Men have surpassed women especially/particularly in top positions in telecom sector	19.4	7.5	6.5	22.6	26.9	17.2

When we examined the situation whether under representation of females at senior level positions exists in the cellular companies of Pakistan it is noticeable that majority of the employees (including males) 25.8% have strongly agreed, and only 9.7% have disagreed that there is not underrepresentation of women at the top positions in telecom sector. Similarly, when respondents were asked for their opinions regarding sufficient female representation at senior management positions 20.4 % of the respondents have strongly agreed and only 8.6% have slightly disagreed. These results outline a clear picture that there is considerable underrepresentation of females at senior level positions in these cellular companies of Pakistan.

In order to know whether female employees need to prove their capabilities more to be considered for promotion in comparison with their male colleagues and the responses show that 33.3% employees slightly agree and only 10.8% employees moderately disagree.

Moreover, when respondents were asked that either men have surpassed women especially in top positions in telecom sector 26.9 % employee have moderately agreed and 6.5 % employees have slightly disagreed with this statement .As it can be clearly seen from the above results, industry is one of those factors in Pakistan that affects women representation at top position in cellular companies.

The second variable of our study was about **gender stereotyping**; which are the generalizations, or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an image about what people in that group are alike, we were interested in knowing whether this factor has an effect on women so we asked few questions from our respondents and on the bases of the responses we have interpreted our findings.

Table 2: Four questions are designed in order to tap this factor and the results are as follows:

FACTOR	GENDER STEREOTYPE						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	Female potential candidates are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse than their male counterparts	34.4	18.3	14.0	16.1	9.7	7.5
Q.2	Negative perceptions and stereotypes about women's professional capabilities constitute hindrance in their career advancement.	12.9	11.8	9.7	32.3	17.2	16.1
Q.3	Women react more negatively than men to many aspects of criticism.	15.1	16.1	8.6	23.7	18.3	18.3
Q.4	Women cannot become as good managers.	29.0	20.4	8.6	18.3	12.9	10.8

The results show that 34.4% employees have strongly disagreed with the statement that female employees are less competitive and less confident and only 7.5 % have strongly agreed. Similarly, 29% of the respondents have strongly disagreed to the statement that women cannot become as good managers and only 10.8 % have strongly agreed.

Moreover, 32.3% employees have slightly agreed to the statement that negative perceptions and gender stereotypes about women's professional capabilities constitute hindrance in their career advancement and only 9.7% employees slightly disagree. Hence it proves from the results that although female employees in the telecom sector of Pakistan are capable and confident yet certain barriers such as gender stereotypes cause hindrance in their career progression.

Interesting result that can be observed from the data above is that 23.7% of the respondents slightly agree that women react more negatively than men to criticism and only

8.6 % slightly disagree (which are mostly females). So, we can see that the gender-characteristic of females is perceived to be more reactive which can also act as a barrier in their professional career.

In response to the open ended question regarding this factor when we asked the respondents that whether male employees outperform women in the leading roles, most of the employees responded as “NO” and mentioned that it is only a perception.

Table 3: The third variable of our study was **individual factor**; the extent to which individual’s own abilities, capabilities, emotional strength impacts their growth. Three questions were included in our survey regarding this variable and results are:

FACTOR	INDIVIDUAL						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	Women lack skills and personality characteristics important for top management and leadership positions	29.0	23.7	12.9	15.1	9.7	9.7
Q.2	Women are less assertive compared with men to obtain fair remuneration, promotion or development opportunities	17.2	16.1	24.7	30.1	8.6	3.2
Q.3	Women are usually not as willing as men to take on extra responsibilities outside their usual duties, e.g. as a representative in committees.	16.1	7.5	17.2	19.4	22.6	17.2

29% of the respondents strongly-disagreed that women lack skills and personality characteristic as the reason for their under-representation at top positions and only 9.7% strongly agree to it. So we can see that gender characteristic is not the reason for underrepresentation of women at senior positions in telecom sector. When respondents were asked if women are less assertive compared with men to obtain fair remuneration,

promotional opportunities, 30.1% slightly agreed and 3.2% strongly agree with this point of view. Moreover 22.6% of the respondents moderately agree that women are not as willing as men to take extra responsibilities and only 7.5% moderately disagree so this can be one of the contributing factors causing hindrance in women progression to higher position.

As we wanted to know the rationale behind for assigning a challenging task to only a particular gender so we included an open ended question in our survey that whether employees would assign a challenging task to a particular gender? But interestingly out of 93 respondents' majority of them have replied as "No" that they would not prefer a particular gender rather they would assign the task based on personal capabilities of the individuals. So this shows that female employees do get the opportunity in the telecom companies to prove their capabilities.

From the above results we can see that in Pakistan it is quite noticeable that individual factors and gender characteristics do affect women in their career progression, as revealed from the findings that most women although are capable and do get the opportunity to prove themselves but most of them not willing to take extra responsibilities hence it causes barrier in their career progression.

Table 4: The fourth variable of our study is **environmental factor**; which are those identifiable elements in the physical, cultural, demographic, economic, political, regulatory, or technological environment that affects the survival and growth of an individual or an organization. For this factor we included three questions in our survey and the results are given as below:

FACTOR	Environmental						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	Women are substantially more likely than men to perceive the organizational environment as highly competitive and biased against female employees.	5.4	10.8	21.5	29.0	24.7	8.6
Q.2	To create a real change, the personnel policy must be very clear; in that; in the course of x number of years x women will hold management positions.	15.1	11.8	24.7	29.0	12.9	6.5
Q.3	Line managers give	8.6	11.8	26.9	15.1	11.8	25.8

	equal opportunities to all subordinates regardless of their gender						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

29% of our respondents slightly agree that women do find the working environment as highly competitive and only 5.4% disagree with this statement, so it clearly shows that telecom sector is highly competitive for female employees.

In order to get the response of employees on set quota for females to be promoted on managerial positions over some time, 29% respondents slightly agreed and 11.8% have moderately disagreed, so it could be one of the suggestion for these telecom companies to have a set quota for females to be promoted at managerial position over the period of time.

We were interested in knowing whether the line managers give equal opportunities to all subordinates regardless of their gender and results show that 26.9% slightly disagree to the statement and 25.8% strongly agree, interestingly most of the respondents who have strongly agreed are males which shows that line managers in these cellular companies provide more opportunities to their males subordinates.

So from the above analysis, we can conclude that in Pakistan environmental factors also have an impact on women reaching top positions.

Table 5: The fifth variable of our study was **organizational factor**; the extent to which the employees see the organization being responsible for lack of performance of employee or the extent to which the organizational barriers, organizational structure, culture and practices influence employee development in that particular organization. The results are presented below:

FACTOR	ORGANIZATION						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1.	Women see wide-ranging benefits to female leadership in your organization	3.2	15.1	11.8	34.4	21.5	14.0

From the sample of 93 employees 34.4 % of the respondents have agreed that there exists benefits to female progression in their respective organization and only 3.2 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, which are mostly females, so it shows that women in telecom companies of Pakistan believe that their organizations do not provide sufficient career progression opportunities to female employees.

In order to probe further into detail regarding the organization as a factor effecting career progression, there was an open-ended question where respondent were asked to list

down the areas of improvement in their respective telecom company to make the working environment conducive for gender progression, and most of our respondents attempted this question only few did not provided a response. Among those who listed areas of improvement include equal employment opportunities and equal rights as both being very important in any organization.

Table 6: The sixth variable of our study is **family factor**; the extent to which relations affect the career and work performance of an employee. It reflects, the support extended by family members for success in one’s professional life. The questions included probing this factor and their corresponding responses are given below:

FACTOR	FAMILY						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	Women who seek to reach a top position in their career have to compromise on their family responsibilities	3.2	5.4	11.8	24.7	24.7	30.1
Q.2	Women have greater family-work conflict than men.	6.5	7.5	7.5	22.6	22.6	33.3

We wanted to know whether family plays a significant role in the career progression of female employees so we asked the respondents for their opinions. 30.% of the respondents have strongly agreed that females have to compromise on their family responsibilities when they are seeking career progression in their professional lives and only 3.2% have strongly disagreed with this statement most of which are females. So it shows that family responsibilities are one of those barriers which cause hindrance for females in achieving career advancement in Pakistan. Moreover, 33.3% of the respondents including males strongly agree to the fact that women have to face greater family work conflict than men and only 6.5% have strongly disagreed. So, it is supported from the above results that people who have great family support who are able to achieve work-life balance are able to grow professionally as well and family plays a very important role in females’ career advancement in Pakistan.

Table 7: The seventh variable of our study is **social factor**; the extent to which social norms & beliefs play a role in individual’s career growth and professional life. To tap this factor following questions were included in our survey and the responses are presented as below:

FACTOR	SOCIAL						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

Q.1	Men have greater employment security than women.	28.0	18.3	19.4	15.1	7.5	11.8
Q.2	Women who are able to establish themselves in corporate world are not able to achieve due status in our society	9.7	19.4	20.4	28.0	15.1	7.5

We were interested in knowing whether Pakistani society provides equal opportunity to both the genders in the corporate sector. Our responses show that 28% of the employees have strongly disagreed that men have greater employment security than women and only 7.5% have moderately agreed. So this shows that very little to no gender biasness exists in these telecom companies of Pakistan in terms of employment security. Similarly when asked if successful working women are able to achieve due status in our society, 28% of the respondents have slightly agreed and 7.5% have strongly agreed to this statement, this shows that our society does provide respect to those females who have established themselves in the corporate sector and have been able to attain a good position in Pakistani society

Moreover, it is observed and can be seen from the above results that in Pakistan, social factors also play a significant role in life of women working in the corporate sector and does have an effect on women reaching the top positions in the telecom sector of Pakistan.

Table 8: Last variable of our study is **cultural factor**; the extent to which the values, beliefs, traditions, principles of a particular country or a particular organization, influence the employee development and career progression. In order to tap this factor following questions were included in our survey questionnaire and their corresponding responses are presented below:

FACTOR	CULTURE						
	Question	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	Pakistani corporate	11.8	10.8	14	20.4	30.1	12.9

	culture is not very conducive for females to climb up the ladder of leadership.						
		Presented as simple minded	Equal with Men	Submissive or passive	Dependent on men	Strong and independent	Placing value on physical appearance
Q.2	In your opinion, which of these could be considered negative representations of women in our culture?	16.1	17.2	23.7	18.3	10.8	14

When we asked from the respondents if Pakistani corporate culture is not conducive for female career progression 30.1% of the respondents have moderately agreed and only 10.8% have moderately disagreed with this statement. So this shows that although more and more women are getting into the work force but the Pakistani corporate culture does provides many opportunities to female progression and it not conducive for females to attain leading roles in Pakistani corporate sector.

We were interested in unveiling those factors which can be considered as negative representation of women in Pakistani culture so designed the above question where we have assigned a different scale. According to the responses 23.7% of respondents are of the view that being submissive and passive is considered to be a negative representation of women in our culture and interestingly only 14% of the respondents are of the view that placing value on physical appearance is considered to be as negative representation of females in Pakistani culture, this result is very much contradictory to the general notation that exists across various countries about Pakistani culture.

Qualitative Analysis:

As observed from the findings of our quantitative above it is quite evident that under-representation of women at top position in telecom sector exists and it is basically due to the fact that, women face huge barriers in reaching the top positions leading to their under-representation in the managerial positions which ultimately results in few success stories.

In order to tap those factors in detail we further gathered data from our qualitative research and the information was collected from those few females who are at the top positions in the cellular sector of Pakistan. These respondents have revealed some factors that contribute to the career progression for females and those factors and barriers are analyzed as given below.

One of the success factors in women progression in telecom sector includes having a detailed knowledge and information of the systems and work so as to come up with certain strategies that will assist women in reaching the higher positions. Also by strategizing ideas and planning tactfully always help in breaking the barriers and reaching the top. Apart from these women for a smooth career advancement should understand the factors that directly or indirectly affect the career growth which can then help females to develop their career path in the most favorable manner possible.

Another important factor involves understanding the corporate politics of the organization and the industry in which they are currently employed. That is although education and hard work are few of the prerequisites for being successful but an in depth understanding of how corporate politics work is extremely important as organization politics is one of the factors which is a barrier to female progression as revealed by our female respondents.

Furthermore, being engaged into informal and formal trainings and continuous effort in transforming their weaknesses into strengths is mandatory. Then trainings from women who have actually reached the top managerial positions play a very important part in developing a greater career path for females and to retain the positions they are employed in, learning and understanding the role they are working in. Women should assess the risks and identify weaknesses and gaps and should also focus on their strengths to turn it into opportunities.

Apart from this the analysis of our qualitative data suggests that transparency is also very important that is the organization procedure and policies should be just and fair for both the genders.

Some other factors which are identified as success factors by these senior female professionals of cellular companies of Pakistan include the common virtues such as being honest and committed to the work they are doing as being extremely important, the deliverable should be flawless and staying motivated, being up to date when it comes to job roles, career etc. As a woman these success stories suggest that female employees need to engage in and struggle to understand the environment, the factors affecting the job roles and gain as much knowledge as they can to become competent to succeed. Then self-motivation and determination is very important since it is a marathon in which staying motivated is very essential so as to compete with hundreds, and thousands of other male colleagues heading in the same direction and fighting for the same goal.

An examination of our research findings unveils that in order for woman to attain higher position in any telecom organization of Pakistan, requires them to put in an extra effort to prove their capabilities and on their way to career progression they have to face a considerable number barriers along with very few supporting factors as being a female in the telecom sector of Pakistan.

Conclusion:

The women of 20th and 21st century have obtained a brilliant opportunity to expand their professional potential by acquiring higher studies and absorbing the many different perspectives of life and society. However, still women are under-represented at top positions

across the world in various industries. Apart from the fact that it is a very pressing issue, still there exists minimal research on the career advancement of females in the telecommunication industry to be specific. Similarly very few studies exist regarding the factors that help the females to progress or the factors that contribute to the career progression for females.

The study findings of our research are that there are several factors which are contributing to underrepresentation of women at top positions in telecom sector. Some of these factors include industry type, gender-discrimination, organizational politics, and sex-based promotion hinders women to aspire top positions as endorsed by our Pakistani Culture. As most of the respondents in our research have agreed to the fact that there is underrepresentation of women in senior positions in telecom companies there lies a huge responsibility on these companies to work on the areas of improvement.

Women empowerment in the telecom industry is very important since they have the skills, education and the training but they should be provided with a chance to prove themselves, and work for this sector. As recommended in other studies that in order to ensure equal opportunity is given to both the genders, there should be elimination of discrimination in appointments and recruitments one (Barmao, 2013). Similarly as recommended by most of our respondents in the survey, the hiring in the companies should be done in such a way that every department should have significant representation of females if they can qualify on merit. Our research also recommends all these five telecom companies of Pakistan to formulate and implement such strategies to promote women and provide them the opportunity to prove their capabilities and give them an equal platform to compete among their male colleagues for senior positions and the procedures that may be adopted should be transparent in order to avoid inconsistencies such as gender-based promotions.

Our study reveals interesting facts regarding career progression of female employees in the telecom sector of Pakistan and the results of our research have several implications for future study in this area.

Theoretical and Practical Contribution

The topic of this research is also important in practice as the companies and researchers will benefit from finding the link between various factors contributing to individuals for attaining top positions in corporate sector. Organizations can use this research to take internal initiatives in order to improve their internal culture and to nurture female representation in top organizational positions.

This research will help bridge competency gap for females and the rare findings from our research will help in explaining the importance of gender diversity at top positions in telecom companies of Pakistan

In addition to the research study, it is also extremely important as the telecom sector has become highly competitive and companies are finding new ways to retain their high potential employees who yield great value to their organization and to provide equal opportunity platform to both the genders and to become employer of choice.

Educational institutions can use this research to explain students' the gender diversity predicament in telecoms of Pakistan as well as business institutions can use this research to educate their workforce on managing diversity

Although our research study is confined only to cellular sector but our study provides very useful information for further research implications in other industries of Pakistan as well. This study not only forms the foundation for future studies in the area of women representation in corporate sector but it is also the first study done in this regard in Pakistan with finish data.

References:

1. Baldez, Lisa. 2006. "The Pros and Cons of Gender Quota Laws: What Happens When You Kick Men Out and Let Women In?" *Politics and Gender* 2 (May):102-109
2. Beile Rose Ragins, Bickley Townsend, and Mary Mattis. 1998. "Gender gap in the executive suite: CEOs and female executives report on breaking the glass ceiling", *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 12, No. 1.
3. Catherine and Barmao, 2013. "Factors contributing to under representation of female teachers in headship positions in primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya" *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies* (July): Vol. 5(3), pp. 43-52,
4. Christine L. Williams, Chandra Muller and Kristine Kilanski, August 2012. "Gendered organizations in the new economy, *Gender and society*". Vol. 26 No. 4, 549-573
5. Catalyst (1990). *Women in corporate management: Results of a catalyst survey*. New York: Catalyst
6. Dr. Naima Tabassum, Tabassum Afzal, Dr. Abida Taherani and Huma Tabassum, "Women's Representation in the Senate of Pakistan".
7. Diana Bilimoria, 1994. "Board committee membership: effects of sex-based bias", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 37. No. 6:1453-1477
8. Federal GC Commission, 1995. *Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor
9. Hema A. Krishnan, 2005. "A few good women—on top management teams", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58 pg: 1712 – 1720
10. Hurst DK, Rush JC, White RE, 1989. "Top management teams and organizational Renewal, *Strategic Management*."(January):87 – 105
11. Hitt, M. A., Barr, S. H, 1989. "Managerial Selection Decision Models: Examination Of Configure Cue Processing", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74: 53-61.
12. Judith A. Kolb, August 1997. "Are We Still Stereo Typing Leadership? A Look At Gender and Other Predictors Of Leader Emergence", *Small group research*, Vol.28, No. 3, 370-393.
13. Morrison, A. M., White, R. P., Velsor, E., 1987. "Breaking the GC: Can women reach the top of America's largest corporations? Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley" The Center for Creative Leadership
14. National Post. June 5, 2014. "Decline in working women could stagnate economic growth".
15. National Post. November 19, 2014. "Children don't ruin women's careers- husbands do".

16. Richard A. Bernardi, Susan D. Bosco, 2004 “Leadership In The Fortune 500: Women At The Executive Level Of Corporate Management”
 17. Susan Maloney, 2004. “The Journey of Women Up The Corporate Ladder: A Study of the Representation of Women in Top Corporate Positions in New York State”, New York Economic Review.
 18. Susan Black, Catalyst Vice President, 2004. “Women on board a catalyst imitative”
 19. Scandura, T., 1992. “Breaking the GC in the 1990s”. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau.
 20. U.S.A today. January 27, 2003. “Female void at the top.”
 21. Val Singh, Savita Kumra and Susan Vinnicombe, 2002. “Gender and Impression Management: Playing the Promotion Game”, Journal of Business Ethics 37: 77–89.
 22. Weyer, Vianen and Fischer, 2007. “Glass ceiling and female career advancement”
-